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**Newcomer Learning and Adjustment in Small Firms:
Social Networks as a Mechanism Underpinning the Socialisation Process**

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ABSTRACT

Recognition of the increasing importance of organisational socialisation for individuals and organisations needs to be viewed against the background of the current challenges and changes facing employees and employers that include global competition, economic uncertainty, restructuring, labour mobility and attempts to attract and retain a talented workforce. The nature, scope and speed of these challenges are affecting the world of work and changing the nature of the employment relationship between employee and employer. These factors have resulted in a greater number of newcomers requiring more frequent socialisation to their new environments and organisations having to socialise newcomers more often, in ensuring newcomers learn and adjust to their new environment and are able to contribute to individual and organisational outcomes.

Small firms that represent the majority of businesses in most developed countries such as New Zealand and make a major contribution to economic development and employment generation are not immune to these challenges and changes. Given the capacity of the small firm sector to make a contribution to employment and economic growth and the importance attached to the effective and efficient socialisation of newcomers on individual and organisational level outcomes, from a small firm perspective it is argued that the key role of socialisation is just as, even if not more important and challenging in achieving desired outcomes. Underpinning the socialisation process is an implicit understanding that social networks formed through the interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders are a key factor influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant individual and organisational outcomes.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role of social networks underpinning the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes in small firms. The research design adopted for the current study was a mixed methods approach that consisted of two phases. The first phase of the study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process and made use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms. The second phase of this study adopted a quantitative approach, using a survey questionnaire as the data collection method to examine the impact of social networks on the

relationship between the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms from a newcomer perspective.

Overall, the findings of the qualitative phase of the study provide evidence of the important role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms. More specifically, during pre-encounter socialisation social networks consisting of individuals from newcomers' social and familial milieu play a key role in initiating newcomer socialisation. In addition, social networks contribute to facilitating information exchange during the selection process that contributes to newcomer learning and adjustment. During the encounter phase, social networks contribute to establishing and developing effective workplace relationships that facilitate socialisation and providing access to informational sources that influence newcomer learning and adjustment.

The findings for the quantitative phase of this study suggest that social networks do not significantly mediate the relationship between the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. These findings raise the likelihood that there might be additional situational and contextual factors that play a role in determining the role of social networks as a mediator of the relationship between socialisation factors and socialisation outcomes.

The study is fairly unique in that, in contrast with most socialisation research being undertaken in large firms, the context of the study was the small firm sector. This study is also one of the first to integrate the socialisation and social network literatures and makes an important contribution by examining how social network and socialisation variables are linked, and what the possible effects of this are on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes. A number of implications that can support newcomer learning and adjustment are outlined. Various limitations are identified and opportunities for future research that can assist in increasing understanding of the important role of social networks during socialisation that can be of benefit to researchers, organisations and society are discussed.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Key Terms	Definitions
Organisational Socialisation	The process by which a newcomer learns and adjusts to their new environment in order to function as fully effective members of the organisation (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).
Newcomer	A label or status applied to an individual who is employed in a new job, in a new work environment, who undergoes socialisation (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012).
Socialisation Agents	An employee of the organisation who plays an important and integral role in facilitating newcomer socialisation (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998).
Socialisation Tactics	Approaches and activities initiated by the organisation to facilitate newcomer learning and adjustment to their new environment during the socialisation process (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).
Newcomer Proactivity	Newcomers who play a proactive role in facilitating their own socialisation through engaging in behaviours that include information seeking, displaying imitative and building relationships (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).
Pre-encounter Phase of Socialisation	The first stage of the socialisation process that occurs before a newcomer enters into the organisation, when newcomers are prepared for and provided with indications of what life in the organisation is like and expectations are created (Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986).

Encounter Phase of Socialisation	The second stage of the socialisation process that occurs from the time a newcomer enters the organisation and the early period thereafter, when a newcomer experiences what the organisation is really like (Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986).
Adaptation Phase	The stage in the socialisation process during which newcomers learn and adjust to their job, work group and the organisation as they become integrated into their new environment (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012).
Proximal Outcomes	Primary outcomes of the socialisation that are direct indicators used to assess the effects of socialisation on newcomer adjustment that precede the more distal outcomes (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007).
Distal Outcomes	Secondary outcomes of the socialisation process that are influenced by and are subsequent results of the more proximal outcomes (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007).
Social Networks	A specified set of people and their relationships, interactions and the positions they hold in a workplace setting (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012).

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter first provides the background to the study, and is then followed by a detailed discussion of organisational socialisation in the small firm context. Gaps in the field of organisational socialisation (OS) research are then introduced and discussed. This is followed by an outlining of the contributions of the study. Thereafter, the overall research question is introduced. Finally, an overview of the thesis chapters that follow is provided.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

OS is the process where new employees acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours required to adjust to their new work environment and in doing so effectively transition from outsider to insider (Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986; Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). OS is ubiquitous, occurring each and every time an individual enters an organisation (e.g. commencing new employment) or when an employee crosses an internal organisational boundary (e.g. a departmental transfer within an organisation) (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Whenever this occurs, functionally, the individual is considered a ‘newcomer’, with ongoing learning crucial to successful adjustment of the new employee to the work environment (Van Maanen, 1978). Recognition of the growing importance of new employees making a successful transition from organisational “outsiders” to fully integrated, participating and contributing “insiders” is evidenced by the increasing focus on understanding the process of OS or “onboarding” and how it relates to newcomer learning and adjustment in the new work environment (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Fang, Duffy & Shaw, 2011; Saks, Uggerslev & Fassina, 2007).

The increasing significance of socialisation for individuals and organisations needs to be viewed against the background of the current challenges and changes facing employees and employers that include global competition, economic uncertainty, restructuring, and attempts to attract and retain a talented workforce (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Du Plessis, Beaver & Nel, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2011). The nature, scope and speed of these challenges are affecting the world of work and changing the nature of the employment relationship between employee and employer (Millward & Brewerton, 2000; Payne, Culbertson, Boswell & Barger, 2008). This has led

to an increase in the degree of workforce mobility during the past decade (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas, Anderson & Cash, 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Simosi, 2009), decreasing loyalty towards organisations (Fang et al., 2011) and a decline in employee engagement (Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2011). These factors have resulted in a greater number of newcomers requiring more frequent socialisation to their new environments and organisations having to socialise newcomers more often, which further emphasises the growing importance of socialisation for organisations and newcomers (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011; Rollag, Parise & Cross, 2005).

The criticality of efficient and effective socialisation of newcomers for both individuals and organisations is supported by numerous studies into the OS process. Research has repeatedly demonstrated positive relationships between successful newcomer learning and adjustment and outcomes beneficial to both employee and employer (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012; Gruman, Saks & Zweig, 2006; Kim, Cable & Kim, 2005; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks, Gruman & Cooper-Thomas, 2011; Saks et al., 2007; Taris, Capel & Feij, 2006; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). Specific indicators of successful newcomer adjustment that are of particular importance for the organisation include the learning of new tasks and roles, assimilating into the work group and acquiring knowledge of organisational values and norms, as these variables have positive effects on critical outcomes that include employee performance, staff retention, decreased turnover and organisational commitment (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyer, 2006; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks et al., 2007).

The importance of OS from a newcomer perspective needs to be understood against the backdrop of the expectations, uncertainty and stress that exists when an employee joins an organisation and the reality encountered when adjusting to a new environment (Allen, 2006; Louis, 1980). Newcomers face work situations not previously experienced, they encounter values and norms they are unfamiliar with, are expected to fit in with new work colleagues and need to 'learn the ropes'. In order to do this newcomers are required to acquire and develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to function as fully-fledged members of an organisation (Arnds, Jansen & Van der Velde, 2001). For the newcomer, the positive indicators of successful socialisation include reduced stress and anxiety, better functioning in a new role, the increased ability to master certain tasks, integration into the

work group and understanding of a new working environment (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1981; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Saks et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Most newcomer socialisation takes place during the early period before organisational entry (pre-encounter phase) and soon after organisational entry (encounter phase) of the OS process (Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen & Anderson, 2004; Filstad, 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Kickul, 2001; Klein, Fran & Preacher, 2006). These two phases are critical stages of the socialisation process as the successful socialisation of newcomers through these early phases play a key role in establishing the long lasting relationship between the new employee and the organisation and ensuring that newcomers adjust and adapt to their new environment and in so doing become fully integrated and functioning members of the organisation (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Filstad, 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein et al., 2006; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski & Erez, 2001; Slattery, Selvarajan & Anderson, 2002; Vandenberghe, Panaccio, Bentein, Mignonac & Roussel, 2011).

Successful progression through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process results in newcomer learning and adjustment as they adapt to their new environment that is reflected and measured in relation to socialisation outcome variables (Feldman, 1981). A fairly recent development in the socialisation literature is the differentiation made between two categories of socialisation outcomes, namely, the “proximal” (primary) outcomes (e.g. task mastery, role clarity, organisational knowledge and social integration) that are direct indicators of newcomer learning and adjustment occurring early in the socialisation process that in turn lead to the more “distal” (secondary) outcomes (e.g. intention to quit and organisational commitment) (Bauer et al., 2007; Carr et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007). Given the effects of the proximal outcomes on the more distal outcomes, distinguishing between these two different types of outcomes is important (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007).

Traditionally, OS has been viewed from the perspective of Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) theoretical framework that provides a typology of socialisation tactics, where the organisation is viewed as the primary influence on newcomer learning and adjustment. Early OS research focused on socialisation tactics (e.g. Jones, 1983; Jones, 1986) and the role of the organisation as the primary facilitator (agent) of newcomer learning and adjustment (Harrison, Sluss & Ashforth, 2011; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). This approach regards newcomers as largely passive and reactive participants in the socialisation process (Gruman et al., 2006). The focus on the organisation as the controller of the OS process underestimates the role of individual socialisation

factors and from about the 1990s onwards, the role of individual newcomers as active participants in the socialisation process started receiving more attention (e.g. Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1994; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 1993b). Subsequently, several studies have shown that newcomers that display behaviours that include taking initiative, seeking out information and forming networks with insiders, facilitates their learning and adjustment (Griffin, Colella & Goparju, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Kim et al., 2005; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Bauer et al.'s (2007) meta analytical review of the OS process identifies the specific organisational factor of socialisation tactics and the specific individual factor of newcomer proactivity as key socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment. Ponte and Rizzie (2010) describe the influence of these two main socialisation factors from: (1) an organisational perspective characterised by a "top-down" approach that focuses on the socialisation tactics that organisations employ; and (2) a newcomer perspective that takes a "bottom-up" approach that examines the role of newcomers in socialisation.

Recognition of the growing importance of the role of newcomer proactivity during socialisation is reflected in increasing calls in the socialisation literature for research investigating the relationship between proactive behaviours displayed by newcomers and socialisation outcomes (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Saks, Gruman & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). The increasing focus on newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process has also occurred in tandem with environmental changes impacting on the workplace (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). These changes have resulted in expectations of organisations that newcomers are required to display more proactive behaviours in order to adjust to an unpredictable and uncertain work environment more quickly and effectively (Ashforth, 2012; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

While research is able to provide certain useful insights into the dispositional characteristics of newcomers that engage in proactive behaviours (e.g. personal initiative, information seeking and active attempts to adjust to new environments) and the resultant influence on newcomer learning and adjustment, very little is known about the work context under which individual proactivity is more or less likely to occur (Grant & Ashford, 2008). However, according to Griffin et al. (2000) and Gruman et al. (2006) newcomer proactivity is less likely to occur and is probably not as effective in socialising newcomers in an organisational environment characterised as institutionalised (e.g. as represented by large firms). In institutionalised environments, organisational approaches to newcomer socialisation tend to be formal and structured and newcomers are more readily exposed to attempts by the organisation to socialise them (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). On the other hand, newcomer proactivity is expected to facilitate

newcomer adjustment in a work environment characterised as individualised (e.g. informal and unstructured), as newcomer proactivity 'compensates' for the lack of formality and structure, and newcomers are required to play a more active role in socialising themselves (Griffin et al., 2000). This individualised work environment is more reflective of small firms than large firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Thus, it is argued that newcomer proactivity is likely to play a key role during the socialisation process in small firms and have a greater influence on newcomer learning and adjustment in small firms than in large firms. However, this is open to question because, as far is known, no research to date has specifically examined the effects of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process in the small firm context.

In addition, although the role of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process has been researched, this has not been investigated from a multi-perspective that includes additional mechanisms that may influence the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. In order to better understand the key mechanisms underpinning the socialisation factors (including newcomer proactivity) influencing newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process, there have been calls by various socialisation researchers to integrate and further understand the socialisation domain by including an examination of additional mechanisms and how they may influence newcomer socialisation (e.g. Bauer et al., 2007; Gruman et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2007). One of the key mechanisms identified in the socialisation literature is social networks (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). Although socialisation researchers have recognised the importance of the influence of various socialisation factors on newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process, viewing the socialisation process from the narrow perspective of organisational socialisation factors (e.g. socialisation tactics) and individual socialisation factors (e.g. newcomer proactivity) fails to recognise and underestimates the importance of workplace social systems, including social networks, on newcomer learning and adjustment (Fang et al., 2011; Korte, 2010).

Underpinning the effects of socialisation factors on newcomer learning and adjustment is an implicit understanding that organisational socialisation factors and individual socialisation factors results in newcomers interacting and developing relationships with organisational insiders (e.g. supervisors and colleagues) (Fang et al., 2011). Socialisation researchers have argued that through these interactions and the establishment of relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders underpinning individual and organisational socialisation factors, social networks are formed that in all likelihood are a key factor in ensuring newcomers becoming fully effective and functioning members of the organisation (Fang et al., 2011; Korte & Lin, 2012). It is only recently

that the socialisation literature has emphasised the role that social networks are likely to play during the socialisation process (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). Moreover, the little empirical research that has been conducted examining the relationship between organisational socialisation and social systems, and in particular social networks, has mostly been recent and focused on large firms (e.g. Korte, 2010; Korte & Lin, 2012).

It is argued that these social networks, together with socialisation factors such as newcomer proactivity, are likely to play a far bigger role in the socialisation process than is currently acknowledged (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Bauer et al., 2007; Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller, Livingston & Liao, 2011; Morrison, 2002). This also underscores the belief that proactive newcomers do not operate in a social vacuum, but rather that they seek out opportunities to build social network ties with organisational insiders in order to learn and adjust more quickly and effectively to their new environment (Thompson, 2005). Thus, newcomer proactivity is likely to have a positive effect on newcomer socialisation through its impact on social networks (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Fang et al., 2011).

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979) approaches to OS are not associated with any specific type of organisation and in theory apply to any organisational setting. The majority of OS literature and research assumes that similarities exist in OS processes across different types and forms of organisations (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005). However, approaches to OS, like any other process, is dependent on and reflected in the specific context in which it takes place (Johns, 2006). Organisational size, in particular, is regarded as a key contextual variable that influences the approaches organisations take to implementing OS practices and programmes (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Ashforth, Saks & Lee, 1998; Fisher, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Wanous & Colella, 1989), with the literature suggesting that OS processes between small and large firms are likely to differ (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

Given the important contribution of small firms to employment creation, business activity and economic growth in countries such as New Zealand (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), 2014) and the challenges small firms face in attracting, developing and retaining high performing staff (Cardon & Stevens, 2004), the efficient and effective onboarding of newcomers that contributes to the achievement of positive individual and organisational outcomes is especially important for small firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). Despite this, little is known about OS in the small firm context and this raises certain questions that require

further investigation. Section 1.2 (below) provides a more detailed review of organisational socialisation in the small firm context.

1.2 ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION IN THE SMALL FIRM CONTEXT

This section provides a review of organisational socialisation in the small firm context. First, the importance of organisational socialisation in small firms is discussed. Thereafter, approaches to employee practices between small firms and large firms are examined. This is followed by a discussion of small firm approaches to socialisation and the significance of these socialisation approaches for small firms is highlighted. The way in which small firms are defined for this study is then discussed.

1.2.1 The Importance of Organisational Socialisation in Small Firms

Small firms (however defined) represent the majority of businesses in most countries (Storey & Greene, 2010). Approaches to socialisation in small firms and their significance needs to be viewed against the background of the contribution of small firms to business activity, economic growth and employment generation in countries such as New Zealand (Battisti & Perry, 2008; Massey, 2005; MBIE, 2014). In addition, the HRM challenges many small firms are likely to face emphasises the importance of organisational socialisation for these firms in achieving desired outcomes (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Heneman & Tansky, 2003; Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

According to Statistics New Zealand (2014) approximately 97% of firms employ 1-49 employees, and these firms account for in excess of 56% of all people employed in New Zealand. A further breakdown of firms employing 1-49 employees indicates that firms employing 1-9 employees make up approximately 23% of the workforce and those firms with an employment count of 10-49 account for more than 33% of total employment in New Zealand and the Hawke's Bay region (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Although large enterprises also generate many jobs, and are responsible for the majority of innovations and exports, firms in New Zealand that employ 1-49 employees and create more than half of all jobs also: contribute a significant proportion of gross domestic product (GDP); are an important source of innovation that supports growth; and are able to take advantage of increasing international exporting opportunities (MBIE, 2014). Accordingly, employment practices that contribute towards ensuring employees learn and adjust to their new environment, which in turn result in positive employee and organisational outcomes, is crucial to

the development and economic growth of these firms. In rural regions in particular (such as the context of this study), the small firm sector is regarded as a significant source of employment and economic growth (Alonso, 2009; Vaz, Cesario & Fernandes, 2006). In the Hawke's Bay region where this study was conducted, small firms make up in excess of 90% of businesses in the region; they play a vital role in creating employment and are regarded as the backbone of regional economic growth (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

The capacity of the small firm sector to make a contribution to employment generation and economic growth is contingent upon the ability of these firms to attract, develop and retain high performing employees (Deshpande & Golhar, 1994; Kickul, 2001; Wiesner & McDonald, 2001). However, small firms face challenges in attracting and retaining talented employees (e.g. Cameron, Coetzer, Lewis, Massey & Harris, 2006; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Froelich, 2005). The labour market conditions in regional and rural areas, such as the case for this study, make attracting and retaining high performing, skilled staff especially problematic (Mayson & Barrett, 2006). As previously noted, the efficient and effective socialisation of newcomers plays a key role in achieving outcomes that are important to both employers and employees (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks & Gruman 2011; Saks et al., 2007). The successful onboarding of newcomers as they progress through the socialisation process is likely to be particularly important for small firms due to the challenges they face and the distinct approaches these firms have to managing staff (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

During the socialisation process newcomer progression through the pre-encounter and encounter phases have an important influence on newcomer learning and adjustment that affects key outcomes that include turnover and performance (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Of the OS outcomes, turnover is probably the most important for the organisation due to costs of recruiting, selecting, training and the time it takes for newcomers to become fully productive (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Reducing employee turnover is likely to be especially important for small firms given the problems small firms have in attracting and retaining competent staff (Cameron et al., 2006; Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Despite the importance of minimising voluntary employee turnover in small firms, very few studies have examined the impact of employee practices, including OS, on turnover in these firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

In addition, OS is also a key contributor to getting newcomers "up to speed" in terms of their work performance as quickly and effectively as possible (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Required levels

of newcomer performance are important for: the organisation as a form of “return on investment” on employment; the newcomer to ensure ongoing employment and increased well-being; and for work colleagues who expect newcomers to “pull their weight” (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). During the early encounter phase of socialisation in small firms, newcomers are, typically, a net drain on productivity, drawing a salary, incurring orientation and training expenses and consuming co-workers time without providing much in return (Rollag et al., 2005). In order to be competitive small firms require newcomers to function as fully effective members of the organisation that contribute to positive individual and organisational outcomes as quickly as possible during the socialisation process (Rollag, 2003; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). Thus, investigating and understanding the approaches small firms take to socialisation and the associated practices implemented in ensuring the positive effects of the speedy and effective learning and adjustment of newcomers’ results in the achievement of desired outcomes are of particular significance (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; McAdam, 2000; McAdam, 2002).

1.2.2 Small Firm and Large Firm Employee Practices

A large body of evidence shows that the ways in which smaller firms operate and implement employee practices are different when compared to large firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Massey, 2003). However, this is not always considered when developing SME theory (Battisti, Lee & Cameron, 2009). In addition, some researchers view SMEs as smaller, scaled down versions of larger organisations to which large firm theory and approaches can merely be applied (Massey, 2005) and the implementation of employee practices is simply a matter of scale (Malik & Nilakant, 2011). However, the assumption that small firms approaches to employee practices should be the same way as large firms, but on a smaller scale, is problematic in that small firms have their own unique and distinct approaches to implementing HRM processes and practices that are shaped by and specific to their context (Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Barrett & Meyer, 2010; Cassel, Nadin, Gray & Clegg, 2002; Gilbert & Jones, 2000; Massey, 2003).

A key factor to consider is that most small firms do not to have a dedicated, formal HR function, department or HR professional (Pearson, Stringer, Mills & Summers, 2006) and this influences the approaches small firms take to implementing HRM practices (Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). Small firms are also characterised by flat and basic structures, with few hierarchical levels, that impact on the way in which they deal with HR issues and implement HRM practices (Kotey & Sheridan, 2004; Kotey & Slade, 2005). The ‘organic’ nature of the structures found in

small firms also allow for more informal and flexible approaches to managing staff (Ashforth et al., 1998). In addition, the small scale nature of small firms means that each employee represents a larger proportion of all employees when compared to large firms, with associated increases in the importance of the impact of HRM practices on the managing of people (Brand & Bax, 2002). At the same time, small firms face challenges in ensuring HRM practices add value (Tocher, Shook & Giles, 2007). Thus, there is a need to be sensitive to the context of 'smallness' when exploring HRM processes and practices, including OS, in small firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Marlow, 2006).

Research indicates that the majority of small firms approaches to managing their staff can be characterised as informal, unstructured, flexible and the use of a personalised style (e.g. Brand & Bax, 2002; Cameron et al., 2006; Heneman & Berkley, 1999; Hill & Stewart, 2000; Jack, Hyman & Osborne, 2006; Kotey & Slade, 2005; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). The degree of informality and formality is a key difference that distinguishes small firms from large firms respectively when it comes to the implementation of HRM practices (Bartram, 2005; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). To illustrate, a study of 247 smaller firms by Hornsby and Kuratko (2003) found that HRM practices employed by firms employing less than 50 employees (as is the case for this study) are characterised by informality, with formality increasing as firm size increased from 50 to 100 employees and then 101 to 150 employees respectively. Storey, Saridakis, Sen-Gupta, Edwards and Blackburn (2010) identify 12 measures of formality and they then go on to demonstrate that on every dimension of formality smaller firms are more informal workplaces. These findings are consistent with studies undertaken by Kotey and Folker (2007) and Kotey and Sheridan (2004) that shows that the use of more formal HRM practices tends to increase with the growth in firm size.

Conditions that include the supply and demand of labour, availability of resources, cost, time and expertise are key factors in explaining why small firms are characterised by an informal approach to employment issues (Mayson & Barrett, 2006). Furthermore, factors such as geographical location and differences between rural and urban small firms that are of similar industry and size have been found to influence approaches to HRM (Gilbert & Jones, 2000). For example, small firms in regional rural areas, such as the case for this study, are more likely to make use of inexpensive informal methods such as word of mouth and community networks to recruit employees (Hartney & Dundon, 2006). On the other hand, small firms in urban areas are more likely to use more expensive conventional methods such as formal advertising in order to compete in the urban labour market (Gilbert & Jones, 2000).

The informal approaches to HRM favoured by small firms are generally regarded as more appropriate and effective than formal approaches (Kotey & Slade, 2005). This view is supported by HRM research in New Zealand small firms that found that sound reasons exist for using informal HRM approaches and that formal approaches were likely to be unsuitable for these firms (Gilbert & Jones, 2000). Despite the preference small firms have for informal approaches to implementing HRM practices that can be well-founded and appropriate for their context (Cameron et al., 2006), at a certain point in time informal approaches to employment issues by small firms can result in ‘diminishing returns’ (Mayson & Barrett, 2006). For example, smaller firms in rural areas could exhaust their local pre-employment informal networks (e.g. word of mouth referrals by family and friends) as sources for attracting new employees and might need to resort to more formal approaches to attract a larger pool of suitable new recruits. Soon after commencing employment, formal orientation of newcomers in small firms can also contribute towards reducing uncertainty, familiarising the newcomer with their new environment, which in turn gets them up to speed more quickly and contributing to performance (Kaman, McCarthy, Gulbro & Tucker, 2001).

In addition, commentators have suggested that small firms may have particular difficulty in attracting and retaining employees because small firms are likely to have lower levels of perceived employer legitimacy and are more likely to be seen by prospective newcomers as less desirable or appropriate employers than larger firms (Cardon & Tarique, 2008; Pajo, Coetzer & Guenole, 2010; Williamson, 2000). For example, the implementation of remuneration packages and systems by small firms is commonly uncoordinated and ad hoc (Cardon & Stevens, 2004), and small firms tend to pay less than large firms (Golhar & Deshpande, 1997; Macky & Johnson, 2003). Small firms are also less likely to provide formal training and development for their employees than larger enterprises (Brand & Bax, 2002; Cassell et al., 2002). In small firms, few opportunities for career development exist (Kotey & Slade, 2005) and succession planning is virtually non-existent (Sambrook, 2005).

The various HRM practices (e.g. recruitment, selection, induction and training) that are employed by organisations to assist in the onboarding of newcomers are regarded as standard and common elements of the socialisation process (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2011). More specifically, these HRM practices serve as “concrete personnel instruments” that are likely to play an important role in newcomer learning and adjustment during socialisation (Ardts et al., 2001). A better understanding of these practices and how they influence the approaches used by

organisations to socialise newcomers is important, as they assist in speeding up newcomers' adjustment to their jobs, roles and the organisation, in ensuring they become effective members of the organisation (Klein & Polin, 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2011). Understanding the socialisation process in the small firm context is especially important, given the challenges faced by small firms and the distinct characteristics of these firms that are likely to be reflected in small firms approaches towards socialisation (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

1.2.3 Small Firm Approaches to Organisational Socialisation and their Significance

Approaches to socialisation can be classified as institutionalised or individualised, with an institutionalised approach characterised by, for example, formal, structured, systematic and collective practices, while an individualised approach is characterised by informal, unstructured, random and individual practices (Jones, 1986). According to Johns (2006) organisational size is a key contextual variable likely to influence approaches to socialisation. The limited exploratory research investigating socialisation in small firms suggests that socialisation processes and practices in small firms are likely to differ from those in large firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

When comparing approaches to socialisation between large and small firms, research has found that large firms tend to favour an institutionalised approach to socialisation, with resultant positive outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Viewed from a large firm perspective, the lesser degree of institutionalised HRM practices, including OS, found in small firms usually results in these firms being regarded as having a severe 'HRM deficit' (Behrends, 2007). However, it is argued that the preference small firms are likely to have for an individualised approach to newcomer socialisation that includes informal activities may be appropriate and suitable for the small firm context (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). For example, an individualised approach requires fewer resources, allows for flexibility and can be more readily integrated into the daily operations of small firms (Hill & Stewart, 2006). In addition, the mechanistic structures that characterise many large firms are associated with formalisation and structure, while small firms structures tend to be characterised as more organic (i.e. less formalisation and more flexibility) (Ashforth et al., 1998). Ashforth et al. (1998) found that institutionalised socialisation is positively related to the mechanistic structures that are likely to be found in large firms. In contrast, small firms represented by more organic structures are likely to opt for a more individualised approach to socialisation.

Some commentators have argued that when compared to larger firms' socialisation in smaller firms is likely to be quicker, more inclusive and extensive, with resultant positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and productivity (Cardon, 2003). Reasons for this include the smaller number of employees in small firms and the prevalence of informal processes (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). It is worth noting that within small firms there is a differentiated degree of co-existence, rather than counter-existence between formal and informal approaches to managing people (Marlow, 2006). While small firms tend to favour an informal approach to socialisation, the optimal balance between formal and informal approaches to socialisation is unknown (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

Factors such as the lack of resources found in small firms are also likely to favour the use of informal approaches to socialising newcomers (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012). The need for formality during the socialisation process in small firms may also be reduced due to the close relationships and frequent interactions between individuals found in small firms that leads to the establishing of social relationship (Nordqvist, Hall & Melin, 2009; Woods, Dale, Shepherd & Oliver, 2005). This is likely to result in newcomers in small firms being less isolated from work colleagues who serve as socialisation agents and being more readily included in the social milieu of the organisation, through aspects such as involvement in meetings and participation in social events, that facilitates socialisation (Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

During the pre-encounter phase of socialisation, the recruitment and selection processes and practices play an important role in pre-employment socialisation (Wanous, 1992). From a small firm perspective owner/managers and trusted employees are likely to attract and recruit new employees pre-employment through the use of their social networks that include their family and friends (Carrol, Marchington, Earnshaw & Taylor, 1999). These "tried and trusted" methods of onboarding newcomers are likely to have a preference for using informal techniques such as "word-of-mouth" to recruit newcomers who are "known quantities" (Carroll et al., 1999). In addition, the information exchanged between newcomers and organisational insiders known to each other during the employment process in small firms is likely to be an important part of informing newcomers as to 'how things are done' and commencing the process of social embeddedness (Ram & Holliday, 1993). This is consistent with the view that the employment of newcomers by small firms is primarily regarded as a social process that is undertaken by existing employees (Behrends, 2007). It is argued that these social sources of employment (e.g. existing employees who are family and friends of newcomers) used by small firms are likely to have early contact with prospective newcomers and also play a proactive role in pre-employment newcomer socialisation (Coetzer,

2006). A further distinctive feature of the use of these informal approaches used by small firms to onboard newcomers is the importance of establishing “fit” between the newcomer and the new environment (Marlow & Patton, 2002; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). Coetzer (2006), and Coetzer and Perry (2008), argue that employment practices in small firms aimed at recruiting and selecting newcomers who are able to “fit in” are likely to make valuable contributions toward pre-employment socialisation and reduces the amount of learning and adjustment required post-employment.

In addition to the likely role of the employment process in onboarding newcomers and the importance of establishing newcomer and organisation fit during the pre-encounter phase of socialisation, it is argued that the embeddedness of small firms in their communities and the use of social networks to recruit local sources of labour are likely to extend the duration of the pre-encounter phase of newcomer socialisation. This is likely to be especially so in rural, regional businesses where small firms are usually an integral part of the local community with whom they form “thick social bonds” (Desouza & Awazu, 2006) and most employment in these firms tends to be from local sources of labour (Gilbert & Jones, 2000).

The early entry (encounter) phase of newcomer learning and adjusting to their new environment in small firms is for the most part very informal and ‘on-the-job’ (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). It is further argued that newcomers’ informal exposure to job related aspects from the early period of entry into the organisation supports quicker and more extensive socialisation, resulting in more positive outcomes (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). This early socialisation phase in small firms tends to also be characterised by activities such as a brief tour of the workplace and an introduction to fellow employees (Gilbert & Jones, 2000; Rollag, 2003). Post-entry socialisation continues during the encounter phase through the implementation of induction and training practices (Saks & Gruman, 2012; Wanous, 1992). Insofar as induction and training is concerned, socialisation in small firms is viewed as a major component of the training process that is characterised by an informal, unstructured approach that is frequently used as a substitute for more formal approaches to training (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Chao, 1997; Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

Notwithstanding the significance of the finding by Storey et al. (2010) that small firms are for the most part informal workplaces, it is important to note the heterogeneity of the small firm sector (Storey & Greene, 2010). Small firms are extremely diverse; not all small firms are informal

workplaces. Both formal and informal approaches to HRM practices (including OS) can co-exist and be implemented within the same firm (Barrett & Mayson, 2006). For example, the degree of formalisation in small firms is likely to be dependent on an awareness and understanding of meeting legislative compliance in areas such as health and safety and disciplinary procedures (Mayson & Barrett, 2006). To illustrate, in New Zealand, legislative requirements (e.g. the Health & Safety in Employment Act) have shifted the responsibility for safety from central agencies to the firm level (Gilbert & Jones, 2000). The responsibility placed on the organisation in ensuring that newcomers meet the necessary requirements related to compliance issues is likely to result in a more formal approach to learning and adjustment during the socialisation process. Further research is required to investigate and to understand aspects such as the preference small firms may have for combinations of informal and formal approaches to socialising newcomers, as well as the role of interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders as newcomers' progress through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process.

A further distinctive characteristic of the majority of small firms, including those in New Zealand, is that they are represented by 'family businesses', rather than 'non-family businesses' (Battisti, Deakins & Perry, 2012; Nicholson, Shepherd & Woods, 2009). Ram and Holliday (1993) define employees as part of the 'family' in small family businesses if they are blood relatives of other employees, as well as those that are not necessarily related to other employees, but have been enculturated into the family metaphor and they identify as 'one of the family'. Although family businesses make up more than two-thirds of small firms in New Zealand and they are critical to spurring economic growth and employment (MBIE, 2014), the literature on small firms in New Zealand makes little specific reference to small family businesses (Nunns & Cameron, 2004). Research specifically investigating small family and non-family businesses HRM practices is even more difficult to come by than research on human resource issues in small firms (Kellermanns, Eddleston, Barnett & Pearson, 2008).

The unique qualities and dynamics that characterise these small family firms, due to the combination of the institutions of 'family' and 'business', is likely to influence the approaches these firms use to implementing HRM practices (Nicholson et al., 2009; Reid, Morrow, Kelly, Adams & McCarten, 2000). Especially in rural regions such as the one where this study was conducted, the role of 'family' is regarded as crucial to understanding the social relations in these small firms and how this influences the management of people (Ram & Holliday, 1993). Small firms with family ownership/management are less likely to use "professional" (e.g. formal and structured) HRM practices as social interactions between employees, and in particular owner/managers and

employees, allow for the use of more informal approaches and cultural mechanisms to manage people (De Kok, Uhlaner & Thurik, 2006).

A key feature of many of these small family businesses is the influence of family in creating and maintaining an organisational culture where employees feel they belong to the same ‘family’ and becoming part of the family requires employees, including newcomers, to ‘fit in’ to the culture of the firm (De Kok et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2000). The organisational culture and the associated values, beliefs and norms in small family firms is also a key dimension affecting the way all employees, whether they are family or not, are managed in these firms, as their origins emanate in the family firm itself (Benavides-Velasco, Quintana-Garcia & Guzman-Parra, 2013; Reid et al., 2000). According to Vallejo and Langa (2010) socialisation is the primary process that contributes to maintaining the culture of the family firm and ensuring employees adjust to the familial nature of the new work environment.

The important role of socialisation in ensuring ‘fit’ between not only the new employee and the job, but especially the culture of the organisation is supported by research (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994; Chatman, 1991). This is particularly pertinent to the small firm context, especially small family firms, where the “ideology of the family” (Ram & Holliday, 1993) and the ability of employees to “fit in” with the organisational culture and the work group are of critical importance (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Heneman, Tansky & Camp, 2000). The importance of suitable fit between the employee and the organisation, as well as the work group, for small firms is reflected in these types of fit tending to carry more weight than employee fit with the job (Cameron et al., 2006). Benefits for small firms of ensuring organisational fit include strengthening and maintaining a consistent culture for the organisation, as well as assisting newcomers in understanding and buying into the associated values, beliefs, norms and behaviours that are important to the organisation (Hargis & Bradley, 2011).

From a small firm perspective, a further aspect to consider in terms of newcomers fitting into their new environment are “local” factors that include the interpersonal and social interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders, which form part of the immediate work context that plays a key role in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012). Newcomers tend to think in terms of a local context when asking themselves questions as to how they will fit into their new environment (e.g., Will my work colleagues like me? Will I be accepted into the social milieu of the organisation? Are co-workers friendly? How do I access information from those I work closely with?). As previously noted, in small firms newcomers tend to have close

contact and frequent interactions with colleagues that results in the establishment of social relationships (Nordqvist et al., 2009; Woods et al., 2005) and they are more likely to be readily included in the social milieu of the organisation (Rollag & Cardon, 2004). These local considerations are likely to be particularly relevant to socialisation in the small firm context and much can be learnt from examining the influence of these local factors during the socialisation process.

Another distinctive characteristic of many small firms is the nature of the social interactions and relationships between small firm owner/managers and employees. These interactions and relationships are reflected in the direct and personal involvement of small firm owner/managers in employee related matters (Battisti & Deakins, 2010; Storey & Greene, 2010) that influences their approaches to managing people (Bartram, 2005; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). Small firm owner/managers tend to manage their staff in informal ways, use a personalised style and have a flexible approach (Brand & Bax, 2002; Cameron et al., 2006; Hill & Stewart, 2000; Kotey & Slade, 2005). These approaches to managing staff are also represented more specifically by the way in which small firm owner/managers implement HRM practices (Bartram, 2005; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). Research has found that owner/managers in small firms prefer to retain personal control over HRM practices, more so than is the case for other managerial functions such as accounting and marketing (Arcdichvili, Harmon, Cardoza, Reynolds & Williams, 1998). The direct and personal nature of the social interactions and relationships between owner/managers and employees in small firms are likely to reduce the need for formal and structured approaches to implementing HRM practices (De Kok et al., 2006). From a socialisation perspective, it is argued that small firm owner/managers are likely to take a fairly 'hands-on' approach to onboarding newcomers that include the establishment and building of relationships with newcomers and taking a personal interest in newcomer learning and adjustment to their new environment throughout the socialisation process.

1.2.4 Defining the Small Firm

"Small firms" are typically defined in terms of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are made up of a diverse group of firms (Stenkamp & Kashyap, 2010). In some countries defining a business as an SME is determined by the number of employees, certain countries use financial figures (e.g. annual turnover), and some even use indicators such as number of years in business (Desouza & Awazu, 2006). Although the term SME includes a range of definitions, the criterion

used by OECD countries, including New Zealand, to classify firm size is the number of employees (OECD, 2013). However, even in instances when SMEs are defined by the number of employees, the actual number of employees used to classify SMEs by number of employees differs from country to country (Malik & Nilakant, 2011). For example, the European definition for ‘small’ firms is typically characterised as those firms employing up to 250 employees (Mayson & Barrett, 2006), whereas the USA definition of ‘small’ includes firms of up to 500 employees (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Gilbert & Jones, 2000). A further differentiation in terms of firm size is that of ‘micro’ sized firms, which are defined by the OECD (2013) as those firms employing less than 10 employees.

Despite the differences in measures used to define small firms, most commentators agree that there are fundamental differences between small firms and large firms and that this filters through to their human resource practices, including OS (Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Bartram, 2005; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Kotey & Slade, 2005; Mayson & Barret, 2006; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). Moreover, even amongst SMEs it is generally accepted that the HRM needs and the way in which HRM practices are implemented in firms employing a maximum staff complement of: 1; 10; 50; and 250 employees are likely to be significantly different and “co-joining” firms of different sizes into overall categories when conducting research is problematic (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

While in New Zealand and internationally, no official and universally accepted definition of what constitutes a small business exists (MBIE, 2014), of those small firms in New Zealand that employ staff, the threshold of 49 employees is often used by researchers to define and conduct HRM studies in small firms (e.g. Cameron & Massey 1999; Cameron et al. 2006; Gilbert & Jones 2000; Lewis, Massey, Ashby, Coetzer & Harris 2007; Massey 2005). More specifically, small firms employing 10-49 employees are likely to have some management processes and a degree of ‘functional’ HRM in place to deal with employee related issues (Coetzer, 2006; Innes & Wiesner, 2012). Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, a firm is defined as small if it employs 10-49 employees. A further advantage of using this size category is that it aligns with both the OECD (2013) and the European Union classification of a small firm (European Commission, 2005). This size definition also matches those used in other New Zealand small firm studies on employee learning (e.g. Coetzer, 2005; Coetzer, 2006; Coetzer, Peter & Peter, 2011).

In summary, small firms have distinctive characteristics and face unique challenges that are likely to influence their approaches to socialisation, while at the same time ensuring newcomers learn and adjust to their new environments as efficiently and effectively as possible as they progress through the socialisation process. This is especially important when viewed against the background of the contribution of small firms to employment generation and economic development in countries such as New Zealand. Small firms' characteristics such as a smaller scale and informality are likely to allow for more extensive, inclusive and rapid adoption of socialisation practices. In addition, in small firms newcomers are more readily included in the social milieu of the organisation and tend to form inclusive, close ties with frequent interactions between themselves and organisational insiders. The approaches used by small firms to socialise newcomers, together with the type and characteristics of the interactions and relationships established between newcomers and organisational insiders in small firms, differs from that of large firms and is likely to play a key role in newcomer learning and adjustment and achieving desired outcomes during the socialisation process.

1.3 GAPS IN THE SOCIALISATION LITERATURE

According to Heneman and Tansky (2003) small firms have for a long time been treated as “second class citizens by authors in the HRM literature”. This view is supported by Dabic, Criado and Martinez (2011) who are of the opinion that “little serious academic work has been conducted on HRM practices in smaller firms” (p. 17). Furthermore, disparities exist between the relevance of HRM issues for owner/managers of small firms and the small number of studies that have been undertaken in HRM areas identified by owners/managers as requiring further investigation (Bartram, 2005; Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Massey, 2003; Nguyen & Bryant, 2004). For example, despite the importance of staff retention and turnover for small firms very few studies have examined the HRM practices influencing retention or turnover (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). ‘Gaps’ between owner/manager concerns about HRM issues in small firms and the small body of research literature focusing on these areas of concern is problematic for theory, research and practice (Heneman et al., 2000). It has also been noted that the focus of the little research on HRM in small firms is largely on ‘mainstream’, ‘formal’ practices related to how these firms train, manage performance and reward their employees, to the neglect of practices such as socialisation (e.g. Edgar & Geare, 2005; Gilbert & Jones, 2000; Kotey & Slade, 2005; Massey, 2003). Thus, over and above the lack of research on HRM in small firms, even less research has investigated OS in the small firm context.

The primary focus of previous research into OS has been large organisations (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Gruman et al., 2006; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Hart, Miller & Johnson, 2003; Klein et al., 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2011). Little is understood about how socialisation occurs and the implications of different approaches to socialisation in different contexts that include differences in firm size (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Despite the significance of small firms to the economy and employment in New Zealand (Battisti & Perry, 2008; Massey, 2005; MBIE, 2014), the distinctive approaches small firms have to employee management processes and practices that are shaped by their context (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Cassell, Nadin, Gray & Clegg, 2002; Massey 2003) and the role of socialisation in achieving important individual and organisational outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Saks et al., 2007), there remains an acute shortage of research, little is known and many questions remain unanswered as to how newcomers are socialised in small firms (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Cardon & Stevens, 2004). Clearly, there is a need for empirical studies that assist in understanding the socialisation process and associated socialisation factors and underlying mechanisms influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes in small firms.

Researching the OS process requires a multidimensional approach that is characterised by inclusion of the pre-entry and early entry antecedent-adjustment and later adjustment-outcome relationships (Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2009). Although Bauer and Erdogan's (2011), Bauer et al.'s (2007) and Saks et al.'s (2007) reviews of the socialisation literature have highlighted the increasing importance of socialisation for organisations and individuals that has been accompanied by advances in socialisation research in recent times, the current OS literature remains fragmented, a lack of clarity exists and a unified and integrated perspective is required (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Bauer et al., 2007). As part of a more integrated approach that examines the antecedents of newcomer adjustment and outcomes, various commentators have called for research that explores the *mechanisms* (e.g. social networks) through which organisational socialisation factors and individual socialisation factors influence newcomer learning and adjustment (e.g. Allen, 2006; Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011; Gruman et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2007).

The socialisation literature recognises that newcomers are socialised into an existing network of relationships established through interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders that result in the formation of social networks (Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002; Rollag et al., 2005). Despite recognition of the role that social networks are likely to play in facilitating socialisation, not

much is known about aspects such as the types, characteristics and patterns of these social networks and the probability exists that these social network factors have a far greater influence on socialisation than is currently understood (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Korte, 2010; Morrison, 2002). Thus, there remains a distinct lack of research on the role of social networks as a key mechanism influencing newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process (Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2009).

The first and one of the few known studies that specifically examined the effects of social networks on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the socialisation process undertaken in a large firm by Morrison (2002) found that this is still an area warranting further research attention. The way in which social networks influence socialisation and how social networks are perceived by newcomers and socialisation agents remains largely unexplained. For example, very little is known about the effects of the structure and patterns of social networks on socialisation (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011), and more specifically: the type; number; status; strength; and frequency of these relationships on newcomer socialisation (Morrison, 2002). Advances in social network theory during the past decade provide an opportunity and a “fine-grained theoretical lens” for unifying and advancing the socialisation literature through exploring the role of social networks during the socialisation process (Fang et al., 2011; Korte, 2010). This is especially so in the small firm context.

As previously noted, most newcomer socialisation takes place during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation and these phases play a key role in determining the degree of successful newcomer adaptation to their new environment that is reflected in socialisation outcomes. Notwithstanding the importance of the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation being recognised in the literature, little research has been conducted that examines both of these phases of the socialisation process, with the resultant effects of both phases on newcomer learning and adjustment being unclear (Carr et al., 2006; Riorden, Weatherly, Vandenberg & Self, 2001). Future research examining the antecedents of newcomer adjustment during pre-encounter socialisation and post-entry socialisation will improve understanding of the relationship between antecedents, adjustment and outcomes of the socialisation process (Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). This is especially so in the small firm context, where, as far as is known, no research has examined newcomer socialisation during both the pre-encounter and encounter phases in small firms.

A fairly recent development in socialisation research has been examination of progression through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation in relation to the proximal outcomes first and the resultant distal outcomes thereafter (Bauer et al., 2007; Carr et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2007). Despite recent research differentiating and examining the proximal and distal outcomes, the main focus continues to be on the distal outcomes of newcomer adjustment, to the neglect of the proximal outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007). Further research into the proximal outcomes of newcomer adjustment and the subsequent distal outcomes is required (Saks et al., 2007).

Socialisation research identifies and acknowledges the roles of both the socialisation factors of organisational tactics and newcomer proactivity as important influences on newcomer learning and adjustment (Bauer et al., 2007; Gruman & Saks, 2011). Although the increasing importance of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process has been recognised in recent socialisation literature (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012), most socialisation research continues to focus on the role of the organisation, and more specifically socialisation tactics, as the key factor influencing newcomer learning and adjustment (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2007). This has been to the neglect of investigating the role of newcomers with a proactive personality in their own socialisation (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Thus, certain fundamental questions remain unanswered in relation to the role of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Kim, Hon & Grant, 2009). Aspects that require further research include the need to investigate the intervening mechanisms and processes involved in the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Crant & Bateman, 2000; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Fang et al., 2011; Klein & Heuser, 2008; Morrison, 2002).

In summary, the purpose of this study is to investigate the socialisation process in small firms from a unified and integrated perspective. This is done by exploring and examining the role of social networks as a primary mechanism underpinning socialisation factors such as newcomer proactivity that influence newcomer learning and adjustment, and resultant proximal and distal outcomes during the socialisation process.

1.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

The background to the study and discussion of socialisation in the small firm context, as well as certain gaps identified in the socialisation research, have highlighted the need for a multidimensional approach towards studying the OS process in small firms. This approach is

characterised by inclusion of the mechanisms underpinning the key socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes and addresses the need for socialisation research that examines the antecedent-adjustment and adjustment-outcomes relationships during the socialisation process (Bauer et al., 2007).

A first contribution of this study is to examine the socialisation process and associated socialisation variables relevant to this study in the small firm context. The majority of socialisation research has been conducted in large firms and the small body of research conducted on socialisation in small firms indicates that important differences exist in approaches to socialisation between small and large firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004). For example, the little research undertaken that compared socialisation approaches between small and large firms found that small firms' approaches to socialisation are likely to be more informal, while the approaches favoured by large firms are more formal (Rollag & Cardon, 2004). Notwithstanding the results of this research, an acute shortage of socialisation research in small firms exists and many questions remained unanswered in relation to socialisation in the small firm context.

A common criticism of the socialisation literature is that it remains fragmented and suffers from a lack of integration (Bauer et al., 2007). In response to calls to unify and integrate the socialisation literature, the second contribution of this study that investigates socialisation in small firms is to explore the role of social networks as a core mechanism underpinning socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes. Very little is known about the role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning socialisation factors during the socialisation process. This is especially so in small firms. According to Morrison (2002) and Fang et al. (2011) socialisation provides the appropriate context to explore the role of social networks during the socialisation process. Morrison's (2002) large firm study is one of the few known to date that has examined the socialisation process from a social network perspective. As an area of future research, Morrison (2002) highlighted the need to include the specific variables of socialisation tactics, newcomer proactivity and work experience as important socialisation factors to be considered when investigating the relationship between social networks and socialisation.

A third contribution of this study is to explore and understand how specific types of social networks ties influence newcomer learning and adjustment as they progress and transition through the pre-encounter and encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms. In addition, a further contribution is to explore this progression through the pre-encounter and encounter phases, together with the role of social networks, from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. Although

most newcomer socialisation occurs during the pre-encounter and encounter phase of socialisation and it is argued that social network factors are likely to play a significant role in the successful transition of newcomers during these phases (Fang et al., 2011), to the best of this researcher's knowledge, no previous research has explored the role of social networks during both the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms from both a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. Exploring the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation from this perspective will contribute to understanding the relationship between antecedent and learning and adjustment factors of the socialisation process.

As a fourth contribution, this study examines the effects of the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity, together with the social networks underpinning this factor, on proximal outcomes of newcomer adjustment and the resultant distal outcome. This answers increasing calls for socialisation research to examine the effects of newcomer proactivity on socialisation outcomes. In addition, although the socialisation literature has recently highlighted the need to differentiate more between proximal and distal outcomes, the primary focus of most socialisation research continues to be on the distal outcomes to the neglect of the proximal outcomes. Focusing on the proximal and distal outcomes will contribute to calls in the socialisation literature to examine both types of outcomes (Ashforth, Sluss & Harrison, 2007).

A final contribution is the employment of a mixed methods research design in this study that combines qualitative and quantitative research using an exploratory and descriptive approach. The specific research questions and research objectives guiding this study focus on seeking answers to the "how" (exploratory) and "what" (descriptive) of the socialisation process. A further contribution to the mixed methods research design is to collect data from both newcomers and socialisation agents during the qualitative phase of the study. The primary focus of most socialisation studies is the collection of data from newcomers only using quantitative methods and a need exists to obtain data from both newcomers and socialisation agents.

In summary, this study extends previous research and contributes to the socialisation literature by examining the socialisation process in small firms from an integrated perspective that examines the relationship between pre-encounter and encounter antecedents (i.e. organisational factors and individual factors, as well as social networks underpinning these socialisation factors) and the proximal and distal outcomes of newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process. Thus, the overall research question this study seeks to answer is: how do social networks

underpin the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the socialisation process in small firms?

1.5 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. This chapter laid the foundation of the thesis by providing a background to the study and a discussion of organisational socialisation in the small firm context. Gaps in the socialisation literature were identified and the contributions of the study were outlined. The overall research question that guided the study was then introduced.

Chapter Two provides a review of the OS literature with the aim of locating the study within the context of the relevant OS theory and research. This included five relevant areas: (1) the nature and significance of OS; (2) stages of the OS process; (3) the role of socialisation factors during the OS process; (4) social networks as a primary mechanism underpinning newcomer socialisation; and (5) the specific research objectives and research questions this study seeks to address. This chapter provides further support for the need to examine socialisation in small firms from an integrated perspective that includes the role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning the socialisation process.

Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology employed in the current study. The mixed methods research design adopted for the study that combined a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase is explained and justified. A detailed description of each of the two phases of the research that includes the methods used to collect data, sampling strategy and participants, data collection and data analysis is provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical issues that were considered prior to and during the conducting of the research.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present and report the results and discussion of the findings of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. Chapter Four presents the results and a discussion of the findings of the interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents that explored the role of social networks in newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process. Chapter Five presents the results of the analysis of the survey data collected from newcomers that examined the role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. The results of the analysis of the survey data are discussed in Chapter Six.

Finally, Chapter Seven presents the conclusions that include a discussion of the main findings of this study that address the individual research questions. Chapter Seven also includes a discussion of the major contributions of this study and a summary of implications of the study's findings are provided. Finally, limitations and opportunities for future research are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an analysis of the organisational socialisation literature with the aim of locating the present study within the context of the existing body of theory and research. The key literatures reviewed relate to: (1) the nature and significance of OS; (2) stages of the OS process; (3) organisational and individual socialisation factors influencing the OS process; and (4) social networks as a mechanism underpinning newcomer socialisation. The final section introduces the specific research objectives and research questions for this study.

2.1 THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION

This section commences with a discussion of the nature of OS that is followed by a review of the significance of OS for the organisation and newcomers.

2.1.1 The Nature of Organisational Socialisation

OS is defined by Schein (1968) as “the process by which a new member learns and adapts to the value systems, the norms, and the required behaviour patterns of an organisation, a society, or group” (p.1). The socialisation process entails new employees “learning the ropes” through acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in order to adjust to their new environment (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). During the socialisation process newcomers make the transition from organisational “outsider” to fully integrated, effective, participating and contributing “insider” (Bauer et al., 2007; Chao et al., 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Feldman, 1989).

An underlying theme in the socialisation literature and research is the continuing focus on two key ‘traditional’ aspects of OS, namely: (1) that it is a learning process; and (2) it concerns newcomer adjustment to their new environment (e.g. Ardts et al., 2001; Ashforth et al., 2007; Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2011). As newcomers make the transition from outsider to insider the focus is on *how* newcomers learn (process) and *what* newcomers learn (content) as they adjust to their new environment in order to become fully integrated and contributing members of the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2007; Chao, 1997; Chao et al., 1994;

Feldman, 1997). The effective and efficient progression of newcomers through the socialisation process as they learn the necessary content in order to adjust to their new environment is particularly important for both the newcomer and the organisation (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks et al., 2007).

2.1.2 The Significance of Organisational Socialisation

The turbulent environment in which many organisations currently operate is reflected in the frequency and scope of organisational changes that has important implications for socialisation (Saks & Gruman, 2011). These organisational changes include business process re-engineering, mergers, acquisitions, outsourcing, downsizing and the increasing usage of contingent workers that is affecting the world of work and the nature of the employment relationship between employer and employee (Du Plessis et al., 2006; Millward & Brewerton, 2000; Saks & Gruman, 2011).

In advanced industrialised countries, in particular, these structural changes are leading to the demise of orderly and stable employment patterns (Buchman, 2002), which has resulted in increasing labour mobility and decreasing employee loyalty towards organisations (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011; Saks & Gruman, 2011). In addition, the challenges faced by many organisations in this type of environment include a competitive labour market characterised by a “war for talent” and the constant battle for employee retention (Crainer, 2004; Glen, 2006). This environment of increasing employee mobility and decreasing loyalty towards organisations emphasises the increasing importance of socialisation for organisations and newcomers. Newcomers are required to learn and adjust to new environments with increasing frequency and organisations need to ensure that newcomers become fully effective and integrated members of the organisation as quickly as possible (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Rollag et al., 2005; Saks et al., 2007).

Newcomers are employed by organisations to contribute towards individual, group and organisational outcomes and the significant and long lasting effects of OS in achieving these outcomes is supported by studies into the OS process that demonstrate a positive relationship exists between effective and efficient OS processes and outcomes beneficial to both employee and employer (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Gruman et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Saks et al., 2007; Taris et al., 2006).

The Significance of Organisational Socialisation for the Organisation

The speedy and effective adjustment of newcomers during socialisation to new tasks, roles, the work group and organisational values and norms is of particular importance to the organisation because these variables have a positive effect on critical OS outcomes such as performance and staff retention (i.e. decreased turnover) (Bauer et al., 1998; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks et al., 2007). Of these, reducing employee turnover is frequently identified as being the most critical OS outcome for the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese & Carraher, 1998; Carr et al., 2006; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; De Vos, Buyens & Schalk, 2003; Feldman, 1981; Foote, 2004). This is supported by research findings that show that across all organisations the highest turnover rates are for newcomers (Allen, 2006; Chao, 1997; Wanous, 1992).

The implications of the inability of organisations to successfully socialise newcomers and resultant higher levels of turnover is underpinned by an established body of research indicating that employee turnover can be very costly (Dess & Shaw, 2001) and of primary concern for most organisations (Foote, 2004). Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006) emphasise the high direct costs (e.g. separation, replacement, training and general administration support costs) and indirect costs (e.g. lower productivity, reduced customer loyalty and the adverse effects on staff morale) related to the inability of organisations to retain staff. Turnover occurring soon after entering the organisation is especially costly (Dess & Shaw, 2001). By the time the newcomer leaves, organisations might not yet have obtained a 'return on investment' on initial outlay in recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration and other associated direct and indirect costs. In addition, the organisation is likely to experience replacement costs of having to employ another newcomer (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Wanous, 1980). Organisations need to retain newcomers who are able to contribute towards outcomes for sufficient time to at least warrant the initial outlay incurred (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Rollag et al., 2005). To this end, the successful socialisation of newcomers that enables them to learn to master job tasks, socially integrate into the work group and acquire the necessary knowledge to adjust to their new environment contributes towards reducing newcomer turnover (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Slattery et al., 2002).

An additional important outcome of successful newcomers learning and adjustment is the contribution to individual, group and organisational performance (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Before becoming fully productive members of the organisation newcomers are a drain on resources while they adjust to their new environment (Rollag et al., 2005). Newcomers, who are a

net drain on productivity and incur costs as they go through a learning curve, whilst providing little in return, are a luxury that many firms can ill afford (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Rollag et al., 2005). This highlights the significance of socialisation for organisations in getting newcomers up to speed as quickly as possible and performing to the required levels (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

The Significance of Organisational Socialisation for Newcomers

The significance of OS from a newcomer perspective needs to be viewed against the background of the expectations, uncertainty and stress that exists when a new employee joins an organisation and the reality they encounter as they attempt to adjust to new employment (Allen, 2006; Louis, 1980). Newcomers face work situations not previously experienced, they encounter values and norms they are unfamiliar with, are expected to fit in with new work colleagues and learn the ropes (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In order to successfully adjust to their new environment, newcomers are required to acquire and develop attitudes and behaviours necessary to function as fully-fledged members of an organisation (Ards et al., 2001). Successful socialisation reduces newcomer uncertainty and assists them in making sense of their new environment as they learn to adjust to their job, work group and the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). For the newcomer, the resultant indicators of successful socialisation include reduced stress and anxiety, better functioning in a new role, the increased ability to perform certain tasks, integration into the work group, enhanced job satisfaction and understanding of the new working environment (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Feldman, 1981; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Saks et al., 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Despite the significance of OS for organisations and newcomers being recognised by various commentators, organisations are not always aware of the OS process and actual socialisation experiences newcomers are exposed to in their attempts to adjust to their new environment (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Many organisations and employees weather the OS experience unconsciously, going through the process 'blindly', unaware of its powerful influences and numerous long lasting effects (Kwesiga & Bell, 2004). In an attempt to better understand the process that newcomers progress through when transitioning from an outsider to becoming a fully functioning insider that contributes to organisation and individual outcomes, stage models that depicted the phases a newcomer moved through during the socialisation process started receiving increasing research attention and support from the 1970s (e.g. Feldman, 1976; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

2.2 STAGES OF THE ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION PROCESS

This section provides an overview of stages of the OS process. These stages represent the different phases that newcomers progress through as they learn and adjust to their new environment, and the resultant effects on socialisation outcomes.

The majority of earlier socialisation theorists and researchers view OS as a multistage process consisting of three main stages (phases) through which a newcomer transitions from an outsider to a fully functioning insider (Feldman, 1976; Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992). Despite differences in terminology used to describe the different stages, these stage models of the socialisation process tend to be similar in terms of process and sequence (Bauer et al., 1998; Reichers, 1987). The three distinct stages (phases) of the OS process consist of: (1) a pre-encounter stage (“anticipatory” phase) that occurs prior to organisational entry and when expectations are formed; (2) an encounter stage (“accommodation” phase), when the newcomer enters the organisation, observes and experiences what the organisation is really like, and where expectations and reality are tested; and (3) lastly, an “adaptation” phase during which the newcomer adjusts, settles in and relatively long-lasting change occurs (e.g. Ards et al., 2001; Bauer et al., 1998; Feldman, 1976; Feldman, 1981; Filstad, 2004; Garavan & Morley, 1997; Louis, 1980; Schein, 1978; Van Maanen, 1976). Griffith et al. (2006) designated these stages as “getting in”, “breaking in” and “settling in” respectively. Stage models of the socialisation process provide a systematic, theoretical framework that can be useful in understanding and conducting further empirical socialisation research (Feldman, 1976; Feldman, 1981). In addition, there is general agreement that the periods before organisational entry (pre-encounter) and on entering the organisation (encounter) are quite distinct and the nature and type of learning that takes place during these two stages is different (Fisher, 1986).

Although there is research that supports stage models of the socialisation process, it is important to note that there is a tendency to over generalise for all newcomers, jobs and organisations in terms of the sequence, duration and content of the different stages of the socialisation process (Fisher, 1986; Wanous, 1992; Wanous & Colella, 1989). The socialisation process does not always follow a fixed and sequential approach of a certain duration that consists of specific and standard content (Fisher, 1986). Notwithstanding this, stage models contribute to our understanding of the socialisation process. There is general agreement and research evidence supports the view that the pre-encounter and encounter phases perform a vital role in influencing newcomer learning and adjustment,

establishing the long lasting relationship between employee and employer, as newcomers adapt to their new environment, and in achieving OS outcomes (Ashford & Black, 1996; Buckley et al., 1998; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Filstad, 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003, Kickul, 2001).

2.2.1 The Pre-encounter and Encounter Phases of Socialisation

The transition period prior to and soon after crossing an organisational boundary, such as the ‘outsider-to-insider’ passage that occurs during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation is critical, as adjustment is at its most intense and problematic for newcomers (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This is because the gap between newcomer perceptions and expectations of the organisation formed prior to entry and the actual reality experienced soon after joining the organisation is probably at its widest during this period (Fisher, 1986; Nicholson & Arnold, 1991). At the same time, most newcomer socialisation takes place during the early period before organisational entry and soon after organisational entry (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Kickul, 2001). The learning and adjustment that take place during these two early stages have long lasting effects on the relationship between the new employee and the organisation and are also critical in achieving successful OS outcomes such as employee performance and an organisation’s ability to retain staff (i.e. minimise voluntary turnover) (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Chao et al., 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Klein et al., 2006; Mitchell et al., 2001; Slattery et al., 2002).

The Pre-encounter Phase

As noted by Fisher (1976) “the socialization process begins even before employees enter the organization” (p.65). During the pre-encounter phase that occurs prior to organisational entry newcomers experience initial contact with the organisation and employees (e.g. during the employment process) (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012) and receive varying amounts of formal and informal information from different sources about their new job, the organisation and work group that influence their later adjustment and resultant outcomes (Bauer & Green, 1994; Carr et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein et al., 2006). These sources of pre-encounter information that influence newcomer socialisation include interactions with organisational members (e.g. organisational insiders during the recruitment and selection processes) and additional information sources (e.g. friends and media) (Riordan et al., 2001; Rollag, 2004). The information newcomers are able to access and the experiences they are exposed to during the pre-encounter phase creates expectations about what the new environment will be like (e.g. job and organisation),

assists in preparing a newcomer for entry into the organisation and affects subsequent adjustment (Fisher, 1986; Klein et al., 2006). The more successful the pre-encounter phase of socialisation is in providing sufficient and accurate information, as well as creating realistic expectations, the easier it is for newcomers to make the transition into the new environment on entering the organisation and the quicker it is for newcomers to adjust (Fisher, 1986).

The Encounter Phase

The encounter phase represents the initial entrance point and early entry phase into the new organisation where newcomers first experience what life in the organisation is really like (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012). Most organisational socialisation theorists and researchers agree that the encounter phase of OS is a key stage for the newcomer as they become aware of the organisational context and they begin to explore their role in the organisation and start recognising and evaluating the gaps between their expectations and the reality they experience (De Vos et al., 2003; Jones, 1993).

On entering the organisation newcomers are exposed to new sources and different types of information, they are faced with the reality of what life in their new environment is really like and additional pressures are placed on them to get up to speed as quickly as possible (Fisher, 1986; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein et al., 2006). At the same time learning is at its most intense during this phase as newcomers attempt to master the job and organisational related socialisation content required to adjust to their new environment (De Vos et al., 2003; Fisher, 1986; Klein et al., 2006). This is accompanied by newcomers likely experiencing high levels of uncertainty, some degree of disorientation, surprise and reality shock, and they will attempt to reduce uncertainty by trying to make sense of their new work environment and their place in it (Allen, 2006; Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Simosi, 2009). Typically, newcomers ask themselves the key question of “how do I fit in here?” as they face the reality of confronting and adjusting to their new environment (Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

According to Reichers (1987), the encounter phase ends when newcomer anxiety is reduced and the meanings newcomers and insiders attach to organisational life is similar. The importance of the encounter phase of the socialisation process is supported by research that shows that newcomer attitudes and behaviours during the early period after entry are highly correlated with those many months later and influence the success of newcomer adjustment during the socialisation process (e.g. Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Morrison, 1993a; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Wanous, 1992).

In summary, the pre-encounter phase and the encounter phase of socialisation are quite distinct and each of these phases play a critical role in determining the success of newcomer adjustment as they go through the process of learning to adapt to their new environment (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Kickul, 2001).

2.2.2 Adaptation Phase and Outcomes of the Organisational Socialisation Process

The adaptation phase is the period of the socialisation process when the newcomer has undergone most of the learning required while adjusting to their new environment, they have to a large degree settled in and made significant progress in transitioning from outsider to becoming a fully functioning insider (Feldman, 1976; Fisher, 1986). This phase is characterised by newcomers having familiarised themselves with new tasks, clarified their roles in the organisation, learnt about ‘the way things are done’ in the organisation and integrated into the work group (Feldman, 1976; Fisher, 1986). Specific indicators of successful newcomer adaptation is reflected in the degree to which socialisation content is mastered and is assessed against criteria related to the job, work group and organisation (Chao et al., 1994; Klein et al., 2006). More specifically, role clarity, task mastery, social integration, job satisfaction, organisational knowledge, organisational commitment and intention to quit/remain are consistently viewed by researchers as indicators of successful newcomer adaptation to their new environment that represent socialisation outcomes of the socialisation process (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007).

A fairly recent development in the OS literature is to differentiate between two categories of socialisation outcomes, namely “proximal” (primary) outcomes that are direct indicators of newcomer learning and adjustment occurring early in the OS process, and “distal” (secondary) outcomes that are influenced and are subsequent results of the more “proximal” outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007; Carr et al., 2006; Gruman et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007). A breakdown of proximal outcomes obtained from examining socialisation research literature identifies four key, salient proximal outcomes that are indicators of successful newcomer adjustment (Bauer et al., 2007; Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 2002; Saks et al., 2007). These are: (1) role clarity (understanding job responsibilities and relationships in relation to other jobs and the organisational context); (2) social integration (inclusion and fitting in with the work group); (3) task mastery (knowing how to perform in relation to the requirements of the job); and (4) organisational knowledge (knowledge of the organisations culture, history, structures and policies). These proximal outcomes are consistent with the four key content domains of job/task related factors, role factors, group factors and organisational factors

highlighted in the socialisation literature as representing important outcomes of newcomer learning and adjustment (Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986; Morrison, 2002; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Distal outcomes are reflected in attitudinal indicators and behavioural intentions (Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007). The distal outcomes most frequently associated with the proximal outcomes of newcomer adjustment include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job performance and intention to quit/remain (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007).

The results of Bauer et al.'s (2007) and Saks et al.'s (2007) meta-analyses on newcomer adjustment and outcomes indicates that socialisation research should differentiate between proximal and distal outcomes and the primary focus should initially be on the proximal indicators of newcomer adjustment, since socialisation activities have a direct impact on these variables first, and on the resultant distal outcomes thereafter. According to Reio and Callahan (2004) proximal outcomes focus on how and why newcomers learn, while distal outcomes emphasise what newcomers learn, and understanding the relationship between the two types of outcomes is important. Despite recent calls to focus on both proximal and distal outcomes of the OS process, the primary emphasis of socialisation research continues to be on individual level, distal outcomes of newcomer adjustment, such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to quit, to the neglect of the preceding proximal outcomes that lead to the more distal outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Haueter, Macan & Winter, 2003; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Saks et al., 2007; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

2.3 THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL SOCIALISATION FACTORS DURING THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS

The two main socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process that have been identified in the literature are the organisational factor of socialisation tactics and the individual factor of newcomer proactivity (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Gruman et al., 2006; Gruman & Saks, 2011). This section provides a review of the literature regarding these two important socialisation factors.

2.3.1 Socialisation Tactics

One of the most widely used approaches to understanding OS is Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) theoretical model of organisational factors that influence newcomer socialisation. Van Maanen and Schein's model provides a typology of socialisation tactics that organisations use to structure the early work experiences of newcomers (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). These socialisation tactics are defined by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) as "ways in which the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another are structured for them by others in the organisation" (p. 230). Since Van Maanen and Schein's ground-breaking theory was developed over 30 studies on socialisation tactics have been conducted. This research suggests that the use of socialisation tactics by organisations is a key socialisation factor influencing newcomer learning and adjustment (Kim et al., 2005; Saks et al., 2007).

According to Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model, organisations use a variety of tactics to socialise newcomers that are classified into six dimensions that exist on a bipolar continuum. These tactics are: (1) *Formal versus Informal* tactics that refer to newcomers going through a structured process of socialisation activities with the express purpose of being exposed to socialisation experiences, as opposed to a more unstructured, flexible approach to socialisation; (2) *Collective versus Individual* tactics where approaches to newcomers being socialised are as part of a group who are exposed to and share common learning experiences or being individually exposed to unique experiences separate from other newcomers; (3) *Fixed versus Variable* practices referring to newcomers proceeding through the socialisation process according to a fixed schedule or plan, which is clearly communicated, as opposed to having no specific schedule or plan; (4) *Sequential versus Random* approaches that entails newcomers being aware of a systematic process or being uncertain as to how the process will progress or unfold; (5) *Investiture versus Divestiture*, which affirms a newcomer's identity and individual attributes, as opposed to attempting to nullify or change a newcomer's identity and personal characteristics; and (6) a *Serial versus Disjunctive* process that refers to newcomers being socialised with the assistance of experienced organisational members who serve as role models or being left to largely experience 'learning the ropes' on their own, with the lack of/absence of role models. These socialisation tactics are viewed as general characteristics of actual actions or approaches taken by organisations to facilitate newcomer adjustment (Ards et al., 2001; Barge & Schlueter, 2004; Bauer et al., 2007).

Building on Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) conceptual model of OS, Jones (1986) designed scales for each of the six tactics and then conducted the first empirical study on the relationship between socialisation tactics and newcomer adjustment. Based on the results the six socialisation tactics can be classified into two main categories, namely *institutionalised* (formal, collective, fixed, sequential, investiture and serial) or *individualised* (informal, individual, variable, random, divestiture and disjunctive). The socialisation tactics are categorised into an additional three factor framework, namely *context* (collective-individual and formal-informal), *content* (sequential-random and fixed-variable) and *social aspects* (serial-disjunctive and investiture-divestiture) that affect newcomer adjustment in different ways (Jones, 1986). According to Jones, *institutionalised* tactics reduce uncertainty experienced during early entry into the organisation and through this approach the organisation attempts to reinforce the organisational status quo. This approach regards newcomers' primarily as passive participants in the OS process. On the other hand, an *individualised* approach represents reduced organisational involvement and as providing less structure during socialisation. This requires newcomers to become more active participants in their own socialisation. It is expected that institutionalised socialisation are likely to be found in larger bureaucratic organisations, while individualised socialisation will occur in smaller, more organic organisations (Ashforth & Saks, 1996).

Empirical studies (e.g. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997) support the basic propositions and the classification of the socialisation tactics into the categories proposed by Jones (1986). However, research examining the relationship between Jones' classification of tactics and resultant outcomes found that different approaches to using socialisation tactics affect newcomer learning and adjustment in different ways (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). For example, Saks et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis of socialisation tactics and newcomer adjustment found that the social tactics of serial and investiture were the most strongly related to adjustment outcomes. These findings are consistent with the importance attached to social tactics in the first empirical study on socialisation tactics conducted by Jones (1986).

The majority of OS research continues to focus on socialisation tactics, with more than 30 studies on the role of socialisation tactics in newcomer adjustment being undertaken up to the mid-2000s (Saks et al., 2007). Research findings tend to provide support for the relationship that exists between socialisation tactics and newcomer learning and adjustment outcomes (e.g. role clarity, task mastery, social integration and organisational knowledge) (e.g. Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Saks et al., 2007). It would appear that a point has been reached in the socialisation tactics literature where it is possible to identify the effects of

certain tactics on newcomer adjustment (Saks et al., 2007). Institutionalised tactics are probably better suited to large organisations that reflect a more formal, structured approach towards socialisation, where newcomers are likely to be formally allocated a more experienced colleague who serves as a mentor or role model and follows a specific plan (Ashforth et al., 2007). On the other hand, small firms represent an environment characterised by a more individualised, informal approach to socialisation (i.e. disjunctive tactics) (Cardon & Stevens, 2004) that is likely to require newcomers to show a bit more initiative in interacting and forming relationships with fellow workers.

Notwithstanding the fairly extensive research covering socialisation tactics (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2012), the different tactics used by organisations remain to a certain extent a “black box”, insofar as determining the actual activities associated with specific tactics (Ashforth et al., 2007). This is mainly because socialisation tactics research focusses on examining the effects of the “structural side” of socialisation tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and not the specific activities or how the actual content of organisational approaches used to socialise newcomers is being implemented (Ashforth et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2012). For example, with the socialisation tactic of ‘collective’ it is not known *what* newcomers are actually ‘doing’ and *how* it is being ‘done’ together; it is only known that what they are ‘doing’, is being done together. According to Klein and Polin (2012) and Saks and Gruman (2012) this is the most problematic aspect of research on socialisation tactics and further research on organisational approaches to socialisation is required to provide a detailed understanding of what organisations actually do, as well as the specific activities or events that occur within each particular tactic. In addition, Saks et al.’s (2007) meta analytic review of the relationship between socialisation tactics and newcomer adjustment found that it remains unclear as to the relative importance and strength of different socialisation tactics and the effects on outcomes. Future research on the influence of socialisation tactics during the socialisation process should benefit by focusing more on examining the specific activities related to the different socialisation tactics, as well as the relative significance of different socialisation tactics.

2.3.2 Newcomer Proactivity

Traditionally, OS has been viewed from the perspective of Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) theoretical framework of socialisation tactics, where the organisation is regarded as the primary influence on newcomer learning and adjustment. This perspective tacitly portrays newcomers as passive and reactive participants in their own adjustment, subject to the influence of organisational

efforts to socialise them (Ashforth et al., 2007; Carr et al., 2006; Gruman et al., 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Although individual newcomer factors can also influence newcomer socialisation (Carr et al., 2006), the focus on the organisation as the only or major socialisation factor fails to fully recognise the potential role of newcomer individual factors during the socialisation process and results in newcomer characteristics receiving insufficient consideration in socialisation research (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 1998; Gruman et al., 2006; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 1993b; Reichers, 1987; Saks et al., 2007). Notwithstanding the lack of recognition and research into the role of different newcomer characteristics during socialisation, one key individual factor has been identified as likely to play an important role in influencing newcomer adjustment, namely newcomer proactivity (Ashforth et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Crant, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999).

The focus on the organisation as the controller of the OS process underestimates the important role that newcomer proactivity can play during socialisation through behaviours such as newcomers seeking out information and forming networks with insiders to facilitate their learning and adjustment (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Griffen et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Bryson, Pajo, Ward and Mallon (2006) suggest that proactive behaviour provides a useful “lens” for examining and understanding the role of individual differences in workplace learning. This view is supported by socialisation research during the last decade that shows that newcomers who display proactive behaviours are more able to facilitate their learning and adjustment to their new environment, which is reflected in positive proximal and distal outcomes (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Gruman et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Kammeyer-Wanberg & Mueller, 2003; Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). In addition, the nature and speed of workplace challenges and changes that have been previously outlined (e.g. increased competition, technological developments and restructurings) that are affecting the world of work and employment relationships have led to an increasing awareness in recent years of the key role that newcomer proactivity is likely to play during the socialisation process (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

Bateman and Crant (1993) define an individual with a proactive personality as “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who effects environmental change” (p.105). The individual’s proactive personality or personal disposition is a key factor determining the likelihood of an individual engaging in proactive behaviours directed at influencing their environments

(Bryson et al., 2006; Gruman & Saks, 2011). Socialisation research has found that those newcomers with proactive personalities, who display proactive behaviours, are able to adjust to their new environment much quicker and more effectively, and in so doing facilitate their socialisation (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). These proactive behaviours assist certain individuals in attempting to make sense and trying to maintain control of their new work environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Seibert et al., 1999; Crant, 2000). Typologies of proactive behaviour include information seeking, feedback seeking, positive framing, displaying initiative, building relationships and networking (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashforth, et al., 2007).

Recognition of the role of newcomer proactivity has highlighted the key role of information seeking behaviours by newcomers in taking active steps to seek out information in order to reduce the uncertainty they are faced with when confronted by their new environment (Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer et al., 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 1993b). According to Ashforth et al. (2007) a positive relationship between the amount and accuracy of information acquired by proactive newcomers and proximal and distal outcomes is expected. Over and above information seeking behaviours being identified as an important type of proactive behaviour newcomers use to facilitate their own adjustment (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Griffin et al., 2000), research has also found that newcomer proactive behaviours that lead to relationship building and those that enable newcomers to seek out opportunities to interact with organisational insiders are a powerful mechanism that is likely to support newcomer learning and adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2011; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

Although there has been an increasing recognition of the role of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process, during the last decade in particular, socialisation research continues to focus on the role of the organisation as the primary controller of the socialisation process to the neglect of newcomer proactivity (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Certain questions remain unanswered and further research is required to understand the influence of newcomer proactivity on other socialisation variables (e.g. social networks) and resultant socialisation outcomes (e.g. social integration) (Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002).

2.4 SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A MECHANISM UNDERPINNING NEWCOMER SOCIALISATION

Through newcomers being exposed to attempts by the organisation to socialise them (e.g. socialisation tactics) and the role newcomers play in their own socialisation (e.g. proactivity), they come into contact, interact and form relationships and are influenced by those inside the organisation (e.g. supervisors and co-workers) (Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). For example, proactive newcomers are likely to seek out information from organisational insiders, which results in them interacting and developing relationships with co-workers (Saks et al., 2011). The important and integral role of these organisational insiders, as “socialisation agents” who facilitate newcomer learning and adjustment across a broad range and in different types of organisations, is confirmed by empirical research and highlighted in the socialisation literature (e.g. Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 2002; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Reichers, 1987). As noted by Van Maanen and Schein (1979): “Any person crossing into a new organizational region is vulnerable to clues on how to proceed that originate within the *interactional zone*. Colleagues, superiors, subordinates and other associates support and guide the individual in learning the new role” (p.215). The interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders who serve as socialisation agents, together with the quality of relationships that are established, are regarded as primary mechanisms through which socialisation is likely to occur (Korte, 2010; Reichers, 1987). Although organisational insiders as socialisation agents are sometimes allocated formal roles to support newcomer socialisation, in most instances the role of these insiders tends to be characterised as informal (Saks & Gruman, 2012).

Through the interactions that occur between socialisation agents and newcomers, socialisation agents are likely to: serve as role models to newcomers; they are valuable sources of information and feedback; also support newcomer adjustment by way of establishing social relationships; and provide newcomers with opportunities to form social support networks that all contributes to newcomers becoming part of the organisation’s social networks (Ashford & Black, 1996; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Morrison, 2002; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Rollag et al., 2005). As newcomers continue to interact with these socialisation agents and build relationships, this is likely to contribute to the establishment of different configurations of social network structures that they are able to access and mobilise during the socialisation process (Fang et al., 2011). Rollag et al. (2005) define the social networks that are established and developed through interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders as “a specified set of

people and their relationships”. It is argued that these social networks ties make an important contribution to newcomer socialisation as they provide access to information and enable newcomers to mobilise resources that facilitate their learning and adjustment (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012).

According to Saks et al. (2007), providing newcomers with sufficient opportunities to socialise and network with organisational insiders from the pre-employment period should be a key aspect of any socialisation process. Contacts and interactions that newcomers have with organisational insiders prior to organisational entry (pre-encounter) are regarded as valuable sources of information and a primary vehicle through which socialisation occurs before newcomers enter the organisation (Carr et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein et al., 2006). These pre-encounter contacts may also include family and friends who are organisational insiders and are part of an existing social network that are an important source of information (Zagenczyk, Scott, Gibney, Murrell & Thatcher, 2010). Research has found that these pre-existing social networks made up of known contacts (e.g. family and friends) play a key role in contributing to the successful onboarding of newcomers that commences during the employment process (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). In addition, newcomers who obtain employment via social network ties made up of a family member or friend are less likely to quit the organisation than those employed through more formal channels (Weller, Holtom, Matiaske & Mellewig, 2009). The further benefits that newcomers are likely to obtain through the interactions and relationships established via social network ties during the employment process are that these ties serve as ‘bridges’ to their new environment on commencing employment (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). Thus, newcomers who have pre-existing pre-employment social network ties with employees are likely to further these social network relationships with these insiders, who are then able to provide further information that facilitates newcomer learning and adjustment, on entering the organisation (Reichers, 1987; Saks, 1994).

During the organisational entry process social networks that support newcomers’ interactions and relationships with superiors and colleagues are likely to serve as valuable information sources that reduce the uncertainty that many newcomers experience from the time they commence employment (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). More specifically, these social networks that are established and developed are likely to assist newcomers in making sense and understanding the meaning of their new situation through the interactions that take place and the relationships that are established (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012), which contributes to newcomer learning and adjustment and acceptance into their new environment (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Filstad, 2004). Newcomers who receive social support and build relationships with organisational insiders from the early period of organisational

entry also show higher levels of organisational fit than those newcomers who receive little or no social support (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004).

Social interactions with these organisational insiders also allow newcomers to observe and understand the requirements of their new environment that assist in the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge that facilitate socialisation (Filstad, 2004). Spending social time with these insiders also enables newcomers to internalise the values of the organisation (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chatman, 1991). In addition, involving newcomers as soon as possible after commencing employment in work related tasks and activities where they are required to interact with colleagues (*network assignments*) provides opportunities for newcomers to establish and build network relationships that contribute to newcomers adjusting more quickly and effectively to their new environment (Rollag et al., 2005). On the other hand, newcomers who are given individual assignments from the time they enter the organisation may find it more difficult to build relationships and are more likely to quit the organisation.

Fang et al. (2011) and Korte (2010) argue that the social networks established and developed through the interactions and relationships that are formed between newcomers and organisational insiders are a primary mechanism underpinning the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment. In addition, social networks as a mechanism, which newcomers are able to access and mobilise, underlying either an organisational or individual approach towards examining the socialisation process, is often overlooked or underestimated and probably plays a far greater role during the socialisation process than current understanding acknowledges (Fang et al., 2011; Korte, 2010). According to Morrison (2002) there is a lack of research into the effects of the specific nature, type and configurations of the social network structures formed through interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders on socialisation outcomes. Examining socialisation from a social network perspective provides an opportunity to identify the role of social networks during the socialisation process and the way in which the different types and specific characteristics of social networks effect newcomer adjustment (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012).

Social networks comprise newcomers' relationships with insiders that are configured in a network structure characterised by *network size*, *range*, *status*, *strength*, *frequency* and *density* that influence newcomer adjustment (Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002). *Size* refers to the number of contacts a newcomer has; *range* is the number of different work units/groups represented by the contacts; *status* is defined as the staff/hierarchical level of the contacts; *strength* is the closeness of the relationship between a newcomer and contacts; *frequency* refers to how often newcomers and

contacts exchange information; and *density* is the number of links between contacts in a network (excluding the newcomer) relative to the possible number of contacts (Morrison, 2002). Social networks can be further defined in terms of the types of social networks that might exist in an organisation, namely *advice/informational* and *friendship/social networks*, both of which contribute towards newcomer learning and adjustment to their new roles, organisational requirements and social milieu (Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002; Rollag, 2004; Rollag et al., 2005). *Advice/informational networks* are those through which newcomers and network members share job and organisational related information (Ibarra, 1995; Morrison, 2002). *Friendship/social networks* promote the relationships between newcomers and those they regard as important in supporting social assimilation and inclusion into a work group (Morrison, 2002).

Morrison's (2002) study was the first, and one of the few, to examine how the patterns of social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders influence socialisation outcomes. She found that the characteristics of different types of network structures relate positively to certain socialisation outcomes. For example, larger informational network ties (network size) that cut across work units (network range) related to increased task mastery and organisational knowledge. This is consistent with the view that to increase opportunities to acquire diverse information and to enhance information flow that newcomers require to master tasks and understand organisational requirements, there is value in newcomers building network ties with a large number of various insiders from different work units (Fang et al., 2011). However, the potential risks involved in building networks characterised by these types of ties include newcomers acquiring redundant information that reap no benefits (Podolny & Baron, 1997). Thus, newcomers that require a broad spectrum of job and organisation related information are likely to benefit by having a large network of non-redundant informational contacts that span across a range of departments (Morrison, 2002).

Research also suggests that newcomers with close network ties (network strength) adjust better to their new environment than those with weaker ties (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). In addition, newcomers are likely to get up to speed quicker when they are able to access networks on a regular basis (network frequency) that contributes to task mastery and assists in clarifying their roles (Morrison, 2002). Thus, close ties with frequent interactions may facilitate newcomer socialisation through enhancing social exchange and support, encouraging resource sharing and mobilisation, as well as information sharing and relationship building (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012).

Newcomers who are able to develop social network ties with insiders at different hierarchical levels (network status), including peers and those in more senior positions in the organisation, also offers opportunities for network benefits (Fang et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2005). For example, the opportunities newcomers have to connect with those in the network who hold more senior positions in the organisation (e.g. supervisors and managers) provide opportunities for newcomers to more readily access organisational resources and information that contribute to socialisation (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). In addition, Jokisaari and Nurmi (2012) argue that social networks ties between newcomers and co-workers in similar network positions provide newcomers with opportunities to observe, ask questions and learn more directly from colleagues working in close proximity to them, while adjusting to their new environment. More specifically, social network ties with insiders occupying different 'status' positions has been found to be positively related to socialisation outcomes that include task mastery, role clarity, social integration and intention to remain (Gruman et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2011).

The structural characteristics of social networks are typically viewed and examined using an entire ("whole") network analytical approach or from an egocentric ("personal") perspective (Marsden, 2005). Whole network studies focus on the structural characteristics of sets of interrelated individuals in a network, which make up an entire social structure of a population (Marsden, 2005; Morrison, 2002; Scott, 2000). For an entire network study, all or most of the individuals in, for example, a work unit are requested to report their connections with each other (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Scott, 2000). This approach enables researchers to map patterns of relationships in different social domains within the social environment being examined and makes use of network analysis as the statistical method (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012).

An egocentric network refers to a focal individual's unique set of direct ties to which they are linked in a network (Morrison, 2002). An egocentric approach is particularly helpful for examining and understanding interactions from an individual's perspective and the characteristics of the relationships that make up the unique web of contacts to which they are linked in the network (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Karsai, Kaski & Kertesz, 2012; Marsden, 2005). Thus, egocentric network studies do not examine the entire social structure of all the connections in a network, but instead examine an individual's unique web of contacts (Morrison, 2002; O' Malley, Arbesman, Steiger, Fowler & Christakis, 2012). As the focus of the quantitative phase of this study is on examining individual newcomer's perspectives of their unique set of social network ties and not

those of all the individuals in an entire social system, a focus on egocentric networks is regarded as appropriate for this study (e.g. Morrison, 2002).

Despite Morrison's (2002) large firm study that specifically examined the effects of social networks on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the socialisation process, recent socialisation literature recognises the distinct lack of research on the effects of the structure and patterns of social relationships (i.e. social networks) during the socialisation process (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011). The recognition that newcomers are socialised into an existing network of workplace relationships and the lack of research investigating the role of social networks and different socialisation factors (e.g. newcomer proactivity) during the socialisation process supports calls for the need and value of conducting further research in this area (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). This is especially so in the small firm context, where no known previous research has specifically investigated the relationship between social networks and socialisation.

Advances in social capital/network theory during the past two decades provide a fine-grained theoretical lens for understanding, unifying, and advancing socialisation literature (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011). This can be done through examining how social networks as a key mechanism underpinning organisational factors (e.g. socialisation tactics) and individual factors (e.g. newcomer proactivity) relate to newcomer learning and adjustment (e.g. role clarity, task mastery, organisational knowledge and social integration) and resultant outcomes (e.g. organisational commitment and intention to quit) (Fang et al., 2011).

In summary, Fang et al. (2011) and Morrison (2002) argue that social network ties of certain patterns of configurations will be positively related to socialisation outcomes that include task mastery, role clarity, organisational knowledge and social integration. In addition, it is argued that certain socialisation factors (e.g. newcomer proactivity) are likely to play a key role in providing newcomers with access to social networks that they can mobilise in order to facilitate learning and adjustment (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Morrison, 2002). However, despite the potential informational benefits of social network ties made up of certain characteristics in contributing to socialisation outcomes, the value of information obtained via different network structures is likely to be dependent on the type of information a newcomer requires and how the information is to be used during the socialisation process (Morrison, 2002).

There is a need for empirical studies that explore the OS process, together with an examination of the role of social networks as a key mechanism underpinning the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment, in small firms. Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate and develop an understanding of the effects of social networks during the socialisation process in small firms. As this field of study is largely unexplored, it was regarded as appropriate to formulate research questions and research objectives to conduct further investigation. The specific research objectives and research questions are outlined in the following section.

2.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As well as the overall research question that guided this study (see Chapter One), the research objectives and associated specific research questions are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Research Objectives and Specific Research Questions

Research Objectives	Specific Research Questions
<p>Objective 1: To explore the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms.</p>	<p>Research Question 1: How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?</p> <p>Research Question 2: How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?</p>
<p>Objective 2: To examine the role of social networks and employee proactivity for organisational socialisation in the small firm context.</p>	<p>Research Question 3: What is the effect of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and proximal and distal outcomes in small firms?</p>

In order to address the research questions, the methodology adopted for this study is a mixed method approach consisting of two sequential phases. The first phase of the study adopts a qualitative approach and makes use of semi-structured, face to face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms to address the first two research questions. This is followed by a second phase that employs a quantitative approach, using a survey questionnaire as the data collection method to address the third research question.

A key focus of the study is to explore and examine the role of social networks during the socialisation process in small firms. As there are no known previous studies that have specifically investigated how social networks underpin newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process in small firms, the qualitative first phase enabled the researcher to explore and

understand the role of social networks during the socialisation process in the small firm context. This provided a richer perspective and added depth to the phenomena being explored. The second phase examined the causal relationships, and more specifically the effects of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. This allowed for a broader understanding of the phenomena being examined. Thus, the utilisation of a mixed methods approach provided for a greater depth and breadth of understanding of the role of social networks during socialisation in small firms. The exploratory nature of the qualitative study also assisted in informing development of the survey questionnaire used for the quantitative study. In addition, combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches for this study enabled the researcher to use the complementary strengths of the methods used in both phases. The quantitative study was not used to triangulate results from the qualitative analysis.

As previously stated, question 3 seeks to answer: What is the effect of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and proximal and distal outcomes in small firms? The following model (see Figure 2.1) provides an integrative framework that depicts the relationships between the variables.

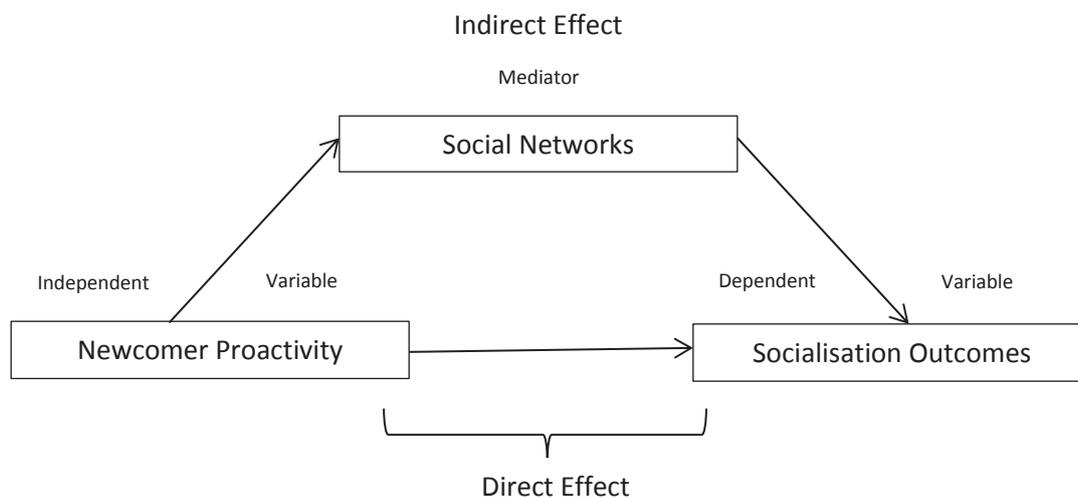


Figure 2.1

Social networks mediating the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes

As the model illustrates, a key focus is the central role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. The initial relationship is between newcomer proactivity (independent variable) that predicts the socialisation outcomes (dependent variable). The model suggests that this relationship is mediated by social network ties. This makes it possible to distinguish between the direct effect of newcomer proactivity on socialisation outcomes, which is the relationship between these variables controlling for social networks, and the indirect effect of newcomer proactivity on socialisation outcomes through social networks.

Although various studies, mostly conducted in large firms, have shown the existence of significant relationships between: newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Gruman et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Klein & Heuser, 2008); newcomer proactivity and the building of social network ties (Thompson, 2005); and social network ties and socialisation outcomes (Kim, Hon & Crant, 2009; Morrison, 2002), very little research has paid attention to social networks as an intervening mechanism linking newcomer proactivity to socialisation outcomes. This is especially so in the context of the small firm. Further research is required to examine and better understand the important role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. This includes examining the direct effects of newcomer proactivity on socialisation outcomes. Thus, the following hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 1:

Newcomer proactivity will be positively related to socialisation outcomes in small firms.

Hypothesis 2:

Building social networks will mediate the positive relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes.

A detailed discussion of the research design employed for this study is provided in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and methodology employed in the study. First, the mixed methods research design adopted for the study is explained and justified. Each of the two phases of the research is described in terms of the method used to collect data, sampling strategy and participants, data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical procedures that were considered prior to and throughout the research.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY

The research design adopted for the current study was a mixed methods approach that combined qualitative and quantitative research methodologies sequentially (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This approach of combining qualitative and quantitative research, methods and techniques at some point, each of which investigate the same underlying phenomena in a single study, represents a common strategy for mixed methods design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2010).

The choice of research design was determined by the research objectives and specific research questions outlined in Chapter Two and Table 2.1. As previously stated in Chapter Two, in order to address the research questions, the methodology adopted for this study was a mixed method approach consisting of two sequential phases. The first phase of the study adopted a qualitative approach and made use of semi-structured, face to face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms to address the first two research questions. This was followed by a second phase that employed a quantitative approach, using a survey questionnaire as the data collection method to address the third research question.

The research questions and research objectives guiding this study focused on seeking answers to the “how” and “what” of the socialisation process. This is consistent with socialisation literature that advocates an approach where the focus is on examining *how* newcomers are socialised (process) and the effects of this on *what* newcomers learn (content and outcomes) as they progress through the different phases of learning and adjusting to their new work environment (Ashforth et al., 2007; Chao, 1997; Chao et al., 1994; Feldman, 1997; Saks et al., 2007). In addition, mixed methods research typically makes use of “how” questions to address process related aspects and “what”

questions that focus on outcomes (Yin, 2006). Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) argue that “how” questions favour a qualitative approach to research, while “what” questions require a quantitative approach. When compared to a monomethod design, a mixed methods design that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies has the potential advantage of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem and research question(s) or the phenomenon being studied (Azorin & Cameron, 2010; Cameron, 2011).

As noted above, the mixed methods research design consisted of two phases, with the first phase of the study adopting a qualitative approach and making use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms. The research objective and specific research questions guiding the qualitative phase of the study was to explore and obtain a greater understanding of how the role of social networks, as a mechanism underpinning newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms, are perceived from the perspective of newcomers and socialisation agents. Most socialisation research tends to be dominated by either a newcomer or socialisation agent perspective. This qualitative phase of the study explores the socialisation process from both a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was employed as the primary data collection method and the critical incidents collected served as the unit of analysis (the CIT is explained in more detail in Section 3.2). The second phase of this study adopted a quantitative approach, using a survey questionnaire as the data collection method to examine the impact of social networks on the relationship between the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms from a newcomer perspective (described in Section 3.3).

As the first phase of the study was exploratory, social networks were explored from the perspective of participants’ perceptions and meanings of how the contacts, interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders played a role during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process. On the other hand, the second phase attempted to elucidate causal relationships by examining the impact of different types of social networks with certain characteristics on the socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. Emergent themes from the qualitative study such as the role of social networks in establishing workplace relationships and as informational sources related to the friendship and informational social network measures used in the quantitative survey. Mixed methods research is acknowledged by proponents of both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms as a practical

approach that can contribute towards addressing and overcoming problems that may be encountered in monomethod research (Creswell, 2003; Kelle, 2006). In addition, a mixed methods approach is regarded as appropriate in the social and behavioural sciences where an objective is attempting to understand human behaviour in the context of the environment (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In addition to describing the methodology employed in a research design as qualitative or quantitative, research designs can further be classified in terms of the primary purposes of research, namely to explore, describe and explain, with a study able to have more than one purpose (Babbie, 2004; Yin, 1994). According to Babbie (2004) and Patton (2002) exploratory research is appropriate for studies where little or no work has been done, not much is known about the nature of the phenomenon being studied and researchers start familiarising themselves with a topic. As previously noted in Chapter One, there are no known previous studies that have specifically examined how social networks underpin the socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes in small firms. This remains an unexplored area of research that has the potential to benefit from research attention. Descriptive studies, on the other hand, seek to answer questions about the “what” of situations and events, which favour the use of a quantitative approach using survey questionnaires when conducting research (Babbie, 2004; Yin, 1994). This approach to research is typically undertaken when there is an existing understanding of the phenomena being studied (Zikmund, 2003). Thus, the qualitative first phase of this study was characterised by an exploratory approach, followed by a quantitative phase adopting a descriptive survey research approach.

The importance of adopting a mixed methods research design that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches for this study has several potential benefits and purposes that include: using methods that utilises the complementary strengths of each method can overcome the limitations of monomethod research; sequential development (where the first method (qualitative) assists in informing the second method (quantitative)); and providing a broader perspective (breadth) and a deeper understanding (depth) of the phenomena being studied than those offered by monomethod designs (Azorin & Cameron, 2010; Cameron, 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Kelle, 2006). A feature that has characterised much socialisation research has been the employment of quantitative survey methods as the primary research methodology (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Gruman et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2006; Morrison, 2002; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2011). The prevalence of the use of quantitative survey

questionnaires as the primary research method during socialisation research is borne out by reviews of newcomer adjustment during socialisation conducted by Bauer et al. (2007) and Saks et al. (2007), which only examined and reported on socialisation studies that used survey questionnaires as the data collection method. It is likely that in order to explore, examine and obtain a comprehensive and complete understanding of the OS process, as well as the various socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment in the small firm context, requires employing a mixed method qualitative and quantitative approach.

A potential limitation of qualitative research is the lack of representativeness of small sample sizes typically found in qualitative studies that has the potential to restrict the transferability of findings and make it difficult to provide generalisations (Kelle, 2006). The mixed methods design employed in this study that combined qualitative research that included a small number of participants in a limited domain, followed by quantitative research with a larger sample size can assist in overcoming the limitations of the transferability of findings attributable to small sample sizes (Arozin & Cameron, 2010; Kelle, 2006). The efficient gathering of data from larger samples during the quantitative phase of this study also allowed for the utilisation of various statistical methods that extended the scope and range of the study (Newman & Hitchcock, 2011).

On the other hand, a possible limitation of quantitative research, where specific hypotheses are formulated and variables are defined, is that researching social phenomena requires an understanding of the context of patterns, structures and relationships that characterise social life (Kelle, 2006). Employing a qualitative and quantitative approach can reduce an over reliance on statistical data to explain social phenomena, which are for the most part subjective in nature, and enhance findings by providing more depth to a study (Jogula & Pansiri, 2011). This is particularly relevant to this study that investigated the phenomena of organisational socialisation and social network factors. Quantitative research that employs questionnaires to generate “hard” data is unlikely to capture the “soft” data of participants’ viewpoints and explanations of experiences in social settings (Parkhe, 1993).

As this study was undertaken in small firms in a specific region of New Zealand, when using only quantitative methods, the lack of a ‘local’ knowledge context in the field being investigated can result in irrelevant items being included and/or appropriate items being excluded from standardised survey questionnaires (Kelle, 2006). This approach to conducting research in small firms also minimises the distance between researcher and participants, as well as providing the opportunity to

explore a variety of perspectives and meanings attached to the experiences of different individuals (Hill & McGowan, 1999).

In summary, the mixed methods research design employed in this study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to address the overall research question, as well as related research objectives and specific research questions guiding this study. In addition, utilising the complementary strengths of both qualitative and quantitative method can assist in overcoming the limitations of a single method research design. This sequential two phase study, where a qualitative first phase was followed by a quantitative phase, also provided both depth and breadth to the study.

3.2 METHODS USED IN THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

3.2.1 Overview

This first phase of the study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach, using in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents. As previously noted, the objective for this phase of the study was to explore the role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning socialisation factors during the socialisation process, from the perspective of newcomers and socialisation agents. This was done by exploring *how* newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms. According to Yin (2014) the posing of “how” questions contribute to analytic generalisations emerging from a study’s findings that add to validity. The CIT was the method employed to collect data, with the critical incidents that were collected during the interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents serving as the units of analysis. Content analysis was the method employed to analyse the critical incident data obtained from interview transcripts. The following sub-sections describe the CIT method and provide detail of the procedures followed in employing the CIT that include preparation and planning, data collection and data analysis.

3.2.2 The Critical Incident Technique

To address the research objective and associated research questions guiding this phase of the study an exploratory, qualitative approach was taken that used the CIT to gather data through in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents. The CIT was

developed by Flanagan (1954), who in his ground-breaking paper on the CIT defined the method as “a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles” (p.327). In addition, the CIT used for this phase of the study ‘fits’ Creswell’s (1994) definition of qualitative research in that: the researcher explores social or human phenomena in a natural setting; data are collected by the researcher employing interviews or participant observation; data are analysed inductively using words to build a ‘picture’; and reporting is on participants perspectives (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2004).

During the past 50 plus years of use the CIT has been widely recognised as an effective qualitative research method to conduct exploratory research and is also the most frequently cited method in industrial and organisational psychology, where it has its origins (Butterfield et al., 2004). The CIT essentially follows a set of procedures that enable the researcher to elicit experiences from respondents referred to as “incidents” that are then captured, analysed and interpreted (Atkinson, 2007; Greenwell, Lee & Naeger, 2007; Lambrecht, Redmann & Stitt-Gohdes, 2004; Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2010). A critical incident is defined by Flanagan (1954) as “any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act” (p.327). Schluter, Seaton and Chaboyer (2007) go on to describe critical incidents as events, experiences, activities, or behaviours that are significant to those involved in a process and which positively or negatively affect the outcomes of a process.

A qualitative approach employing the CIT is regarded as an appropriate and particularly useful method to investigate, analyse, interpret and understand work incidents and the complexity of workplace behaviour from the perspective of those involved and to obtain rich and complete accounts of their real world of work in the social context in which they occur (Atkinson, 2007; Chell, 1998; Greenwell et al., 2007; Lambrecht et al., 2004; Schluter et al., 2007). As the purpose of this phase of the study was to explore the role of social networks during the socialisation process in small firms from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective, the CIT was regarded as an appropriate technique to collect data. Using the CIT contributes towards an understanding of processes and associated behaviours relevant to the phenomenon being investigated (Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro, 2010). From a small firm perspective, as a qualitative method, the CIT has been used and gained acceptance in small firm research to explore events from an employer and employee perspective (Chell & Allman, 2003; Coetzer, Redmond & Sharafizad, 2012; Giroux, 2009; Perren & Ram, 2004). It allows for an in-depth examination of behaviours in small firms that

provide insights into the complex, multi-faceted reality of individuals working in small firms (Marlow & Patton, 2002).

Strengths of the CIT include it being a practical methodology that allows for a flexible approach that can be adapted to the specific research situation (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001; Schluter et al., 2007), with Flanagan (1954) stating that the CIT “should be thought of as a flexible set of principles that must be modified and adapted to meet the specific situation at hand” (p.335). As is the case for this study, this allows the researcher to adapt the CIT to different application demands and employ the technique across a range of disciplines and research questions (Butterfield et al., 2004; Chell, 1998; Gremler, 2004). In addition, obtaining specific incidents from participants relevant to the research framework guiding the study makes the CIT a suitable method for exploring complex phenomenon that underscore the benefits of both flexibility and focus provided by the CIT (Coetzer et al., 2012; Gremler, 2004). More specifically, the CIT assists in capturing, interpreting and understanding: the antecedents that result in a critical incident; the subsequent experiences; and the resultant outcome(s) (Butterfield et al., 2004; Edvardsson & Roos, 2001; Mallak, Lyth, Olson, Ulshafer & Sardone, 2003).

The approach to using the CIT for this phase of the study followed the structure and procedures outlined by Stitt-Gohdes, Lambrecht and Redmann (2000), which is based on the five key steps advocated by Flanagan (1954), namely: (1) preparing and planning for use of the technique (pre-testing and sampling procedures); (2) using the technique to collect incidents from respondents (data collection); (3) identifying themes from critical incidents (initial data analysis); (4) sorting incidents into categories (final data analysis); and (5) interpreting and reporting results. The first four steps are discussed in more detail as part of the first phase of this study and the findings are presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The following of certain steps and the documentation of procedures, as was the case when employing the CIT, contributes to reliability when using a qualitative approach (Yin, 2014). In addition, the CIT process and procedures that focussed on eliciting specific critical incidents from interview participants also assisted in reducing any potential bias the researcher might bring to the study (Stitt-Gohdes et al., 2000). This reduction in any potential bias can add to the validity of research, which, in turn, contributes to the quality of a study (Creswell, 2009).

3.2.3 Pre-testing Procedures

As part of the initial preparation and planning the CIT process was ‘trialed’ and ‘piloted’. The purpose of the trial and pilot studies was to determine whether the procedures and questions were appropriate and adequate before implementation in the larger study (Dillman, Smith & Christian, 2009). Initial interview protocols and procedures of the type used by Myers and Oetzel (2003), Stitt-Gohdes et al. (2000) and Testa and Ehrhart (2005) that employed the CIT to conduct similar research were developed to assist in preparing for and guiding the interviews.

The trial was conducted with six knowledgeable persons, four who were newcomers and two socialisation agents. Based on the interviews and immediate feedback from those who participated in the trial, changes were made to the procedures, content and terminology of the CIT to be used in the larger study. An important change was to ensure that participants were comfortable and understood the process and ‘jargon’ of socialisation. For example, feedback obtained was that the provision of a basic model outlining the OS process could assist participants in understanding the broad organising framework guiding the study and would be useful. To this end, a basic visual model of the OS process that provided a framework for this phase of the study was developed and used during the pilot interviews to explain the OS process and to set the stage for the interviews that followed (Appendix A). In addition, the use and understanding of terminology such as “socialisation” and “pre-encounter phase” could be problematic to those participating in the study and it would be more beneficial to use language such as “learning and adjusting” and “before commencing employment” respectively. The use of OS terminology was changed to language that was more understandable to participants, while still in keeping with the research objectives and context for this phase of the study. The trialling of the CIT process by involving knowledgeable others and obtaining their feedback added to the validity of the research (Creswell, 2009).

After the trial and the changes that were made, the CIT was then piloted with the co-operation of two local small firms, with two interviews being conducted with socialisation agents and three interviews with newcomers. The changes were, for the most part, favourably received by participants in the pilot study. Further feedback received from these participants resulted in some final refinements and improvements in relation to language, content and procedures to be used during interviews. During the pilot study an interview agenda, questions and the use of the broad OS framework were found to be useful supplements when eliciting critical incidents. A final interview agenda was compiled to use as a procedural guideline during interviews (Appendix B) and questions to guide the actual interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents were finalised

(Appendix C and Appendix D respectively). Similar procedures followed during the pilot study were adhered to for all the future interviews that were arranged for the larger study.

3.2.4 Sampling and Pre-interview Procedures

Purposeful (intensity) sampling was used to obtain participants for this phase of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Patton, 2002). As the purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the role of social networks during the socialisation process from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective, purposeful intensity sampling allows for the exploration of ‘information-rich cases’ that provides a greater understanding and excellent examples of the phenomena of interest being studied (Patton, 1990; Patton, 2002). In addition, the use of purposive sampling in qualitative research increases the probability of maximizing the quality of information obtained (Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2009). This approach to sampling in qualitative research also requires the researcher to purposefully select sites and participants where the phenomenon in the study can be explored (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Sampling in qualitative research requires choices to be made regarding a range of parameters that include: the setting (the location in which and where the phenomena is being studied); actors (individuals to be interviewed or observed); processes (how people “make sense” of their habitual surroundings); events (activities relevant to the actors setting and processes); and outcomes (results of the process) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sampling parameters and choices for this phase of the study were as follows: the setting was small manufacturing firms in the Hawke’s Bay region where socialisation takes place; actors were newcomers and socialisation agents; processes focused on how social networks underpinning socialisation factors effects newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process; events are incidents that occur during the OS process; and outcomes, the resultant proximal and distal outcomes of the process.

Selecting the setting where the process being studied was likely to occur was a key factor on which the decision to use purposeful sampling was based (Silverman, 2000). Manufacturing is regarded as the type of small firm setting where the effective and efficient progression of newcomers through the socialisation process, as they learn the necessary content in order to adjust to their new environment, would be of particular importance in achieving desired outcomes. The importance of the manufacturing sector is borne out by it being the largest contributor to GDP in the Hawke’s Bay region over the six plus years from 2001 to 2008 (Ministry of Economic Development (MED),

2010). Manufacturing has also been the largest employer in the small firm sector and supports the important horticulture and viticulture sectors in Hawke's Bay. In addition, the manufacturing sector in New Zealand includes an important food manufacturing component, which forms part of the primary sector that is a major contributor to the country's GDP (Smallbone, Deakins, Battisti & Kitching, 2012).

The globalised and highly competitive environment that small manufacturing firms operate in requires owner/managers of these types of firms to identify opportunities, utilise their resources optimally and take actions to rapidly adjust to changes (Fabi, Lacoursiere, Raymond & St-Pierre, 2010). For example, small manufacturing firms must rely on developing new products and finding new markets in order to remain competitive (Fabi, Raymond & Lacoursiere, 2009; Fabi et al., 2010). In addition, the implementation of philosophies such as total quality management and just-in time production mean that employees in small manufacturing firms are required to focus on delivering high quality, reasonably priced products that meet customer's needs, on time (Deshpande & Golhar, 1994; Golhar & Deshpande, 1997). To meet these competitive challenges employees in small manufacturing firms need to be flexible and adaptable, and they must be capable and willing to continuously review work procedures and systems as they adjust to workplace changes (Fabi et al., 2009). The ability of newcomers, as part of the workforce in small manufacturing firms, to learn and adjust to their new environment is essential to the competitiveness and economic survival of small manufacturing firms (Coetzer, 2006).

The role and importance of HRM practices in the small firm manufacturing sector is supported by various studies (e.g. Coetzer, 2006; Deshpande & Golhar, 1994; Fabi et al., 2009; Fabi et al., 2010; Golhar & Deshpande, 1997). The competitive environment, changing market conditions, investment in new technologies and the novel work situations encountered by employees in small manufacturing firms requires the implementation of HRM practices with a strong learning focus that enables employees to adjust to changes in the workplace, master tasks and perform to a required standard (Badger, Mangles, Sadler-Smith, 2001; Lee, Bennett & Oakes, 2000). HRM practices in small manufacturing firms that support learning and adjustment also enhance research and development capabilities and supports the use of advanced manufacturing technologies that impacts on the competitiveness of these firms (Fabi et al., 2010).

In summary, the small firm manufacturing sector was purposefully selected as the setting from which to obtain participants to explore socialisation in order to obtain rich and complete accounts of the phenomena being studied. The decision to focus on the small firm manufacturing sector was

also based on the importance of this sector to the economy and employment, especially in the region where this study was conducted. In addition, the nature of the type of workplace the small firm manufacturing sector represents and the criticality of newcomers being able to learn and adjust efficiently and effectively to their new environment supported the decision to adopt the sampling approach chosen.

Based on the sampling parameters and the choices that needed to be made in deciding on the purposeful sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994), UBD, a commercial supplier of business databases, was used to obtain details of the small manufacturing firms in the Hawke's Bay Region of New Zealand that fitted the small firm size definition of 10-49 employees used for this study. Owner/managers of firms identified from the purposeful sample that matched the small firm size category for the sample frame were contacted telephonically in order to inform them of the nature and purpose of the research, what their potential involvement would entail and to determine their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study. Those owner/managers of firms who expressed an interest in voluntarily participating in the study were also asked if they were willing to approach and determine if any employee who fitted the definition of a socialisation agent (if not the owner/manager) and, if they had employed any staff within the last year, a maximum of two newcomers who were willing to voluntarily participate in interviews.

While the term "newcomer" is effectively a label or status attached to an individual undergoing socialisation (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Rollag, 2007), no universally acceptable definition for defining a newcomer exists in the socialisation literature (Rollag et al., 2005). However, since the transition from newcomer to organisational insider is largely a learning and adjustment process that occurs over a period of time (Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1976; Fisher, 1986), most socialisation research uses organisational tenure to define a newcomer when conducting studies (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Rollag, 2005). Socialisation is a dynamic process and the rate of newcomer learning and adjustment is affected by many factors (e.g. individual differences and the work context) (Ashforth, 2007) and the duration and the end point when employees cease to become a newcomer remains undefined (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Ashforth, 2012; Rollag et al., 2005). Notwithstanding this, the period of up to one year or less of tenure is most frequently used by researchers to define and classify employees as newcomers when conducting socialisation studies (Rollag, 2004; Rollag, 2007). Meta-analytic data confirms that most researchers study newcomer socialisation during and up to the first year of employment and there are strong indications that this is the critical period during which most newcomer socialisation tends to occur (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Thus, for the purposes of this study

an individual was regarded as a newcomer if they had been an employee for up to the maximum period of the first year of employment.

The recruitment of newcomers and socialisation agents was crucial for the collection of a sufficient number of critical incidents during the interviews that addressed the research questions for this phase of the study. Owner/managers were also informed that a focus of the research and the procedures was to enable the researcher to elicit “incidents” relevant to this phase of the study from respondents that could be captured, analysed and interpreted. As previously noted, these critical incidents would become the units of analysis.

Owner/managers of those small firms who expressed an interest and willingness to voluntarily participate in this phase of the study were sent a covering letter formally inviting the owner/manager and employees to participate in the study (Appendix E). The covering letter included information outlining the purpose of the study, the involvement of participants, participants rights, issues of confidentiality, anonymity, contact details of the researcher and research supervisors and sample interview questions for newcomers and socialisation agents. Owner/managers were requested to pass on the covering letters to employees who acted as socialisation agents (where this was somebody other than the owner/manager) and to employees categorised as newcomers (those with tenure of one year or less). Those interested in participating were asked to contact the researcher directly. Once agreement to voluntarily participate in the study had been reconfirmed, arrangements were made to conduct the interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents at the firm’s premises at a scheduled date, time and place that afforded sufficient privacy, had minimum distractions and that was suitable to participants. Sample interview questions were again sent out to be distributed to socialisation agents and newcomers who had voluntarily elected to participate in the study a few days prior to the scheduled interview to assist them in preparing for the interview.

3.2.5 Data Collection

Following agreement from newcomers and socialisation agents regarding their willingness to participate in the study, a consent form was signed by interview participants (Appendix F) and individual interviews were conducted with respondents at their respective firms’ premises during the period March 2009 to June 2009. The Interview Agenda (Appendix B) provided a framework to conduct the interviews using the CIT. Two different sets of pre-prepared questions were used to collect the interview data from newcomers and socialisation agents respectively. The format of the

questions and the associated probes, which are in keeping with the approach recommended by Rous and McCormick (2006), assisted in eliciting critical incidents from respondents by: (1) focusing on circumstances giving rise to a particular incident(s); (2) determining the role of key people involved in the incident(s); (3) reflecting on the resultant outcome(s); and (4) discussing what could have been done differently. The ability of the researcher to tease out specific and accurate descriptions of behaviour is important to the effectiveness of the CIT (Flanagan, 1954). The pre-prepared questions, together with the use of probes facilitated responses through providing more opportunity for discussion, obtaining clarification, more in-depth and richer responses from respondents, as well as more specific and accurate descriptions of incidents (Lambrecht et al., 2004; Schluter et al., 2007; Stitt-Gohdes et al., 2000; Tuuli & Rowlinson, 2009). Qualitative research findings obtained from in-depth, rich descriptions of settings, as is the case when using the CIT, can add to the validity of findings (Creswell, 2009).

A potential limitation of the CIT is that the majority of CIT studies make use of retrospective self-reports that rely on the ability of participants to recall previous experiences as accurately as possible and in sufficient detail (Butterfield et al., 2004; Gremler, 2004). In an attempt to address this limitation, participants were provided with information prior to the scheduled interviews that included the nature and purpose of the study, as well as sample interview questions for newcomers and socialisation agents (Appendices C and D respectively). This provided participants with the opportunity to prepare for the interviews and to consider possible critical incidents relevant to the study. The interviews commenced by the interviewer asking general questions, putting the interviewees at ease and establish a rapport. Once the participants were comfortable, questioning to gather the qualitative data that was relevant for this phase of the study commenced. Interviews were digitally recorded in order to enhance reliability of the content analysis, and to ensure the data were accurately transcribed and the interview information retained (Silverman, 2000). As this phase of the study obtained real life perspectives of experiences of the socialisation process from a range of newcomers and socialisation agents, this added to the credibility of the accounts, made them more realistic and, therefore, more valid (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The period of data collection, together with the time the pilot study was undertaken, also enabled the researcher to spend time in the field and develop an understanding of the phenomena being studied. This experience by the researcher of interview participants in their actual setting also contributes to the accuracy and quality of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

As previously noted, the critical incidents obtained from the interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents served as the units of analysis. Flanagan (1954) emphasises that, when employing the CIT in a study, the sample size is determined by the number of critical incidents rather than the number of participants in the study. The incidents also need to represent adequate coverage of the activity being studied. Sampling was terminated when the recommended minimum of 100 critical incidents was collected to ensure a sufficient quantity, as well as the necessary quality of usable data required to conduct data analysis, was obtained (Flanagan, 1954; Schluter et al., 2007). This resulted in 20 newcomers and 17 socialisation agents being interviewed for this phase of the study. Brief details of interview participants and firms are provided in the findings from the qualitative phase of the study (refer to Chapter Four).

3.2.6 Data Analysis

The use of the CIT to collect interview data yielded rich and complete accounts of the situations studied that included descriptions of critical incidents, which facilitated the categorisation of incidents (Atkinson, 2007; Greenwell et al., 2007; Lambrecht et al., 2004; Schluter et al., 2007). The interviews were transcribed verbatim to facilitate data analysis (Raub, Alvarez & Khanna, 2006). Copies of interview transcripts were then forwarded to participants in the study for review and to assist in verifying the accuracy of the transcription process (Appendix G).

As part of the initial data analysis the researcher read and reread the transcripts for accuracy and completeness of information. This process enhances reliability through the identification of consistencies and inconsistencies (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schluter et al., 2007). The repeated reading and sorting of individual incidents is also part of an inductive process that leads to the establishing of a coding system for classification of data into categories and themes (Lambrecht, et al., 2004; Patton, 2002; Stitt-Gohdes, et al., 2000; Testra & Ehrhart, 2005). During this process, reflective comments were recorded on the interview transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

In keeping with the principles of the CIT, the critical incidents were analysed (Schluter et al., 2007), with each critical incident being a self-contained unit of analysis (Patton, 2002). Data was sorted into categories using an organising framework developed from the OS literature. This was followed by the process of content analysis, which involved the coding and categorisation of data and the subsequent identification of themes within the categories (Babbie, 2004; Patton, 2002). When selecting critical incidents as the unit of analysis (as is the case for this study), content analysis is

the appropriate data analysis method to use (Ellinger, 1997). The process of content analysis made it possible to identify, code and categorise themes from the critical incidents identified (Babbie, 2004; Patton, 2002). Sentences were extracted from interview transcripts that met the criteria for being classified as critical incidents. During the review of transcripts, critical incident data that matched the category definitions were identified and coded.

In order to facilitate the identification of themes within each of the categories a matrix was developed (e.g. Lambrecht et al., 2004; Stitt-Gohdes et al., 2000). Columns in the matrix represented critical incidents (units of analysis) obtained from interview participants and rows represented the categories. Data strips identified as critical incidents from the interview transcripts were entered into the columns of the matrix representing the categories. The data were reviewed, compared and resorted to identify recurring themes emerging from the data (Patton, 2002). This provided meaning to the data in relation to the categories and themes identified and coded that are interpreted and reported in the study findings in Chapter Four. Peers who are familiar with qualitative research and the nature of the research being undertaken were also requested to examine and review the qualitative data and results in order to add to the validity of the accounts (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

As previously noted the qualitative first phase of the study was exploratory and focused on exploring answers to the “how” of the socialisation process, while the quantitative second phase examined the “what” of the socialisation process. Combining the qualitative and quantitative approaches also allowed for the utilisation of the complementary strengths of the different methods and added breadth and depth of understanding to the phenomena being studied (Azorin & Cameron, 2010; Cameron, 2011, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The qualitative phase of the study also assisted in informing instrumentation used during the quantitative second phase. For example, the uncovering of certain themes during the qualitative phase contributed to the development of the survey questionnaire and inclusion of certain measures. This included measures used to assess the different types of social networks (i.e. friendship/relationship and informational/advice networks), as well as characteristics of these types of networks (e.g. range and status), and newcomer proactivity. Section 3.3 that follows provides a discussion of the methods used in the quantitative study.

3.3 METHODS USED IN THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY

3.3.1 Overview

This second phase of the study employed a descriptive quantitative approach that made use of a self-report mail survey questionnaire (Appendix H) as the method to collect data from newcomers in small firms. The survey design choices and associated research measures were determined by the research question guiding this phase of the study, where the objective was to examine the effect of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and proximal and distal outcomes in small firms. The survey questionnaire collected data measuring the types and characteristics of social networks, socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and various proximal and distal outcomes. Demographic information was also collected from respondents who participated in this phase of the study. The following sub-sections provide detail concerning the design of the survey questionnaire, the procedures followed in pre-testing and implementing the survey, and the statistical analysis of the quantitative data.

3.3.2 Design of the Questionnaire

Guidelines recommended by Dillman et al. (2009) for questionnaire design such as grouping questions that covered related topics, attempting to order questions in a logical way that follows a sequence of events and creating a visual stimulus were also incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. The original survey questionnaire consisted of five sections (A-E) that attempted to primarily focus on measuring social networks and socialisation factors influencing newcomer learning and adjustment, as well as proximal and distal outcomes thought to be associated with OS. All the measures included in Sections A to E of the questionnaire were based on pre-existing scales used in previous research, where assessment showed that the scales used were robust and that they displayed stable and sound psychometric properties.

Guidelines recommended by Dillman et al. (2009) for questionnaire design such as grouping questions that covered related topics, attempting to order questions in a logical way that follows a sequence of events and creating a visual stimulus were also incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. Section A included 12 items about the amount and accuracy of pre-employment information individuals receive about the organisation, the work group and the job prior to commencing employment. Section B represented the social network part of the questionnaire that consisted of a friendship network part and an informational network part. Informal-Formal and

Serial-Disjunctive socialisation tactics scales used to measure approaches the organisation takes towards socialising newcomers were included in Section C. Section D included the socialisation outcomes of organisational knowledge, organisational commitment, intention to quit, social integration, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, task mastery and role clarity. Section E included a 10 item proactivity scale and the final Section F requested respondents to provide information of a demographic nature.

For each of Sections A, C, D and E, participants were requested to indicate the degree to which they disagreed/agreed with each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; and 5 = strongly agree). Section B (social networks) made use of a matrix of the type used by Morrison (2002) to collect information from newcomers related to the characteristics (number, size, status, frequency, strength and density) of the two different types of social networks, namely, friendship networks and informational networks. Section F required respondents to provide ‘general information’ of a demographic nature that included gender, age, ethnicity, employment status, job tenure, type of work, level of education and previous work experience. A more detailed discussion of the theoretical and empirical underpinnings, content, scales and measures influencing and used in the design of the survey questionnaire is included in section 3.3.3.

3.3.3 Research Measures

Details of the measures chosen for inclusion in the survey questionnaire (Appendix H) to collect data that were used in the data analysis are described below.

Social Networks

As previously mentioned, the focus of this study was on egocentric networks, which are useful for examining and understanding how a newcomer’s unique ‘web’ of social contacts relate to other variables being assessed (e.g. adjustment outcomes such as organisational knowledge, task mastery, role clarity and social integration) (Morrison, 2002). Various social network commentators have suggested that an egocentric perspective that examines an individual’s unique social contacts, as opposed to entire networks structures, is probably the most appropriate and useful approach for examining social network structures (e.g. Karsai et al., 2012; Lin, 1999; Morrison, 2002; Podolny & Baron, 1997). An egocentric approach requires individuals to identify those people that they interact with and the extent of their relationships (O’ Malley et al., 2012). Morrison’s (2002) study found that an egocentric approach can be particularly useful for examining the influence of newcomers’

social networks on their adjustment. One of the possible limitations of an egocentric approach is mono-source bias in instances where individuals are requested to identify the nature of interactions amongst all the network individuals (Fang et al., 2011).

Network characteristics were measured in relation to two types of social networks, namely friendship networks and informational networks. Measures used to assess network characteristics were modelled on previous scales employed by Morrison (2002) and include: size (the number of people making up the network); range (number of different work groups representing network colleagues); status (average hierarchical/staff level of network colleagues); strength (closeness of relationships); frequency (average frequency with which information is exchanged); and density (number of other individuals with whom network colleague listed by the newcomer interact in any given week). Elizabeth Morrison was contacted by the researcher in March 2010 requesting access and permission to use the survey instruments used in her study. A copy of the survey was sent to the researcher by Elisabeth Morrison and used, with modifications, during this phase of the study (refer to email correspondence, Appendix I).

The social network part of the questionnaire consisted of two sections (Sections B *I* and B *II* respectively), with the sections representing the two different types of social networks, namely friendship and informational networks. Respondents were requested to complete matrices related to the characteristics of each of the two types of networks. Friendship networks were defined as work colleagues newcomers consider being friends and who newcomers might also choose to see socially outside of work or when not working together. Informational networks were described as work colleagues who are regarded as regular and valuable sources of job or firm related information. For the size characteristic of friendship and informational networks (Item 1), respondents were requested to list in a row the initials of fellow employees who they considered to be friends or sources of job/organisational related information respectively. Once newcomers had responded to item 1 by writing the initials of each fellow employee across the first row, for each person listed they were asked to: specify the person's section/department/work group (network range); the staff level of each person that was listed (network status) (five point scale); the newcomer's closeness in terms of their relationship with the person listed (network strength) (three point scale); how often information was exchanged (network frequency) (five point scale); and the initials of individuals they had listed for the network size characteristic who are also friends/who they regularly interacted with, of the person listed in the column (network density). The size of each network was determined by the number of fellow employees listed, range by the number of different work units represented, status being the average hierarchical level of network people listed, strength by the average

closeness of the relationship and frequency by averaging how often the newcomer and persons listed interacted/exchanged information (refer to Section B of the questionnaire).

The two types of social networks (friendship and informational) were compared in order to determine the degree of distinctiveness between the two types of networks. Initials of each of the individuals (alters) listed by newcomers as valuable sources of information for each of the friendship and informational networks were compared. The results show that almost 38% of the individuals were listed in both the friendship and informational networks. This means that more than two thirds (72%) of the individuals listed in the two types of networks differed, which suggests that the networks were for the most part fairly distinct.

Formal/Informal and Serial/Disjunctive Socialisation Tactics

The specific use of formal-informal and serial-disjunctive socialisation tactics in small firms to facilitate newcomer learning and adjustment was another key theme to emerge from the findings of the exploratory qualitative phase of this study that informed development of the survey questionnaire. The degree of formality and informality is one of the key differences that distinguish approaches to socialisation between large and small firms, with large firms more likely to use more formal approaches, while small firms favour informal approaches (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag, 2003; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). As reported in the qualitative findings, receiving advice and observing more experienced colleagues contributes towards newcomer learning and adjustment. This approach to socialisation, where the role and assistance of organisational insiders in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment is recognised, is referred to as ‘serial-disjunctive’ socialisation tactics (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Saks et al.’s (2007) meta-analytic review of the relationship between socialisation tactics and newcomer learning and adjustment found that serial tactics had the strongest effect on learning and adjustment outcomes. Serial socialisation tactics are also likely to be a key factor in providing newcomers with access to social resources in the form of social networks that facilitate their learning and adjustment.

Complete versions of Jones’ (1986) socialisation tactics scales were used to measure formal-informal and serial-disjunctive tactics (Section C). Saks et al. (2007) advice against using shorter versions of a socialisation tactics scale as the content domain is incomplete, and together with lower reliabilities, raises questions related to the validity of findings when using shortened, modified versions. Each of the items represent a specific facet of the socialisation tactic domain being measured and items reflect “an active, behavioural, rather than an affective, evaluative tone in order to reduce common method variance” (Jones, 1986: p.268). Section C, items C1.1-C1.5 requested

participants to respond in relation to formal-informal socialisation tactics using the five item scale previously developed by Jones (1986) to assess formal-informal socialisation tactics. Item C1.4, “My training in this firm has mostly been on-the-job” is an example of an informal approach to socialisation. Items C2.1-C2.5 (serial-disjunctive tactics) measures the role of organisational insiders in supporting newcomer socialisation. Example items are: “Experienced work mates view advising or training newcomers as an important part of their job” (C2.1) and “I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this firm from observing my senior work mates” (C2.2).

Socialisation Outcomes

An objective of his study was to examine the effects of newcomer proactivity on proximal and distal outcomes during the socialisation process. OS theory and research consistently views the following proximal and distal outcomes as indicators of successful socialisation: organisational knowledge, organisational commitment, intention to quit, social integration, task mastery, role clarity and job satisfaction (e.g. Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 2002; Saks et al., 2007; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). From a theoretical and empirical perspective, it is beneficial to group each of these multiple proximal and distal socialisation outcomes at one of the three levels of organisation, work group or job for inclusion in the survey questionnaire (Haeuter et al., 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Saks & Ashforth, 1997), while still retaining each of the proximal and distal socialisation outcomes as separate constructs when conducting the data analysis. To this end, each of the following proximal and distal outcomes were treated as separate constructs for the purposes of the data analysis, while being grouped together for inclusion in Section D of the survey questionnaire as follows: Learning and Adjustment to the Firm (organisation level outcomes) - organisational knowledge, organisational commitment and intention to quit; Learning and Adjustment to the Work Group (work group level outcomes) - social integration; and Learning and Adjustment to the Job (job level outcomes) - job satisfaction, task mastery and role clarity. A discussion of each of the socialisation outcome constructs and associated items included in the survey questionnaire follows.

Organisational Knowledge

Organisational knowledge requires newcomers to learn about aspects such as the organisations values, history and rules (Chao et al., 1994). Acquiring knowledge and learning about the organisation is regarded as important as it facilitates identification and connectedness with the organisation, which has a positive effect on newcomer adjustment (Ashforth et al., 2007). Organisational knowledge was measured using Ostroff and Kozlowski’s (1992) eight item scale

(items D1.1 to D1.8). Example items include: “I feel very knowledgeable about the firms’ goals and objectives” (D1.1) and “I feel very knowledgeable about the history and stories about the firm” (D1.8).

Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, a particular organisation” (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982, p.27). The approach to organisational commitment most widely cited in the literature is the one that regards organisational commitment as an ‘affective attachment’ an employee has to an organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1988). Allen and Meyer’s (1990) ten item affective commitment scale was used to measure organisational commitment (D2.1-D2.10).

Intention to Quit

Intention to quit reflects the likelihood that an employee will stay or leave an organisation and is regarded as the most important variable influencing actual turnover (Bigliardi, Petroni & Dormio, 2005). Measures of newcomers intention to quit were modelled on Colarelli’s (1984) three item scale and measured intention to quit ‘within the next three years’, ‘within the next year’ and newcomers perceptions of ‘often thinking of quitting’ their job (Items D3.1-D3.3).

Social Integration

At the work group level, social integration concerns inclusion and fitting in with the work group (Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986; Reichers, 1987). From both a newcomer and organisational perspective, newcomer assimilation and social integration with work colleagues is regarded as a key outcome that is an indicator of successful newcomer adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 1993b; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Social integration was assessed using a total of seven items (D4.1-D4.7) based on scales used by Morrison (1993a) (three items), Morrison (2002) (three items), plus one item from Chao et al. (1994) (“With my co-workers I would easily be identified as ‘one of the gang’”). For this item the words “one of the team” replaced the original words “one of the gang”. Examples of other items are “I feel comfortable around my fellow workers” (D4.2) and “I feel little attachment to my fellow workers” (D4.6) (reverse scored).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction as an OS outcome is viewed from either a global perspective or in relation to specific facets of the job (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005). During the past 20 years research

using a single global rating of job satisfaction has been found to be more inclusive than facet measures using a multiple item scale and is also regarded as a reliable measure for the construct of job satisfaction as it is understood by respondents (e.g. Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Wanous, Reichers & Hudy, 1997). The item that assessed job satisfaction requested respondents to indicate the degree to which “All in all, I am generally satisfied with my job” (D6.1).

Task Mastery

Task mastery that requires newcomers to learn the knowledge and skills required to perform their new job tasks effectively is a key aspect of their adjustment from the time that they commence employment (Chao et al., 1994; Fisher, 1986; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Saks et al., 2007; Taormina, 1994). Task mastery measures were developed from a four item scale used by Morrison (1993a) and three items from Morrison’s (2002) study (D7.1-D7.7). Examples of items from each respective scale are “I feel competent doing my job tasks” (D7.2) and “I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job” (D7.7) (reverse scored).

Role Clarity

Over and above the knowledge and skills newcomers require to master their tasks, newcomers also need to understand the responsibilities and requirements of their jobs, and how their jobs relate to other jobs and the broader organisational context (i.e. role clarity) (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Louis, 1980). The ten items used to measure role clarity were the same as those used in previous studies by Morrison (1993a) and Morrison (2002) (Items D8.1-D8.10). Examples of items are: “I feel certain about how much responsibility I have on my job” (D8.1) and “The requirements used to judge my performance are very clear” (D8.10).

Proactive Personality

A key development in the socialisation literature is recognition of the role and importance of newcomer proactivity during socialisation (Saks & Gruman, 2011). In addition, newcomer proactivity was also an individual socialisation factor identified as an important theme influencing newcomer learning and adjustment that emerged from the qualitative phase of the study. A 10 item scale used by Seibert, Crant and Kraimer (1999) measured newcomer proactivity by requesting newcomers to respond in relation to their ‘approaches to learning and adjusting to situations’ (Section E, Items E1.1-E1.10). Examples of items are: “I am constantly on the lookout for ways to improve my life” (E1.1) and “Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality”

(E1.10). As the proactive personality items indicate those individuals with a proactive disposition are more likely to engage in proactive behaviours directed at influencing their environments (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Demographic Characteristics

Respondents were also requested to provide ‘General Information’ of a demographic nature (Section F) that included: gender, ethnicity, current employment status, tenure, nature of work, education level, age and previous work experience that might influence the socialisation process.

3.3.4 Pre-testing the Questionnaire

Pre-testing the draft questionnaire followed the guidelines recommended by Dillman et al. (2009) by first requesting and obtaining feedback from knowledgeable people with a variety of research expertise on different aspects of questionnaire quality and design, and then conducting pilot studies with two small firms recruited from sub-samples of the population. The purpose of the pre-testing was to evaluate the questionnaire, suitability of the questions and implementation procedures before implementation in the larger study. This assisted in determining aspects such as the clarity of instructions, layout, format, coverage and relevance of the content, understanding of meanings of items, clarity of language and time taken to complete the questionnaire. Knowledgeable people who participated in the pre-testing were able to provide valuable feedback that resulted in important modifications being made that it was felt improved the format, layout and content of the draft questionnaire.

This first stage of the pre-testing was followed by two pilot studies conducted with a total of nine newcomers at two small firms employing between 10–49 employees, which matched the definition of a small firm for the purposes of this study. Three participants were from a small firm employing approximately 20 newcomers and six respondents from a larger small firm employing close to the 49 employee threshold. The researcher was present and observed participants while they completed the questionnaires in order to note whether there were any potential problems that respondents had while completing the questionnaire. After piloting the survey questionnaire with each of the two groups, a focus group was conducted with each group where participants were asked questions in order to obtain feedback and identify any potential problems with the content, format, navigation and administration of the questionnaire. Based on feedback from the focus groups further refinements were made to the layout and format of the survey questionnaire. An attempt was also made to use language that would be understandable to potential participants and not to use

socialisation jargon. For example, language such as ‘newcomer learning and adjustment’, rather than organisational socialisation terminology was used.

3.3.5 Sampling and Implementation Procedures

A database (UBD business directory) of SMEs located in the Hawke’s Bay region where this study was undertaken was used to recruit a random sample of 572 small firms employing 10–49 FTE employees, which represented approximately 50% of SMEs in the region. The first step in the survey process was to send a covering letter addressed to owner/managers of the small firms randomly selected from the sampling frame requesting their voluntary participation in the study. The covering letter sent to owner/managers introduced the study, outlined the purpose and their involvement should they decide to voluntarily participate, guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and provided contact details of the researcher and research supervisors should there be any questions related to the research (Appendix J). Should the owner/manager of the small firm be willing to participate in the research, they were requested to distribute covering letters, questionnaires and pre-addressed postage paid return envelopes to a single newcomer who had been employed for up to one year or less in each small firm. The covering letter for the newcomer informed them that the owner/manager of the firm had been contacted to request their voluntary participation and invited them to also participate in the study (Appendix K). Survey data for this phase of the study was collected during the period November 2010 to February 2011.

Owner/managers and newcomers were informed in the covering letters sent to them that they could request a summary of the results of the study, which could possibly be of benefit to both employees and firms in developing a better understanding of how newcomers learn and adjust and identifying areas of improvement in employment practices. Providing information about the study, its purpose and importance, as well as mentioning potential benefits to participants can contribute towards the decision to participate in the study (Dillman et al., 2009). In an attempt to personalise and increase participation, addresses on envelopes mailed out and return envelopes were hand written and each letter was individually signed by the researcher. Where information on the owner/manager of the SME such as the person’s name and title was available this was hand written on the covering letter. Letters to both owner/managers and newcomers were reproduced using a colour letterhead with the Massey University logo printed on high quality paper. In addition, contact details for the researcher and both supervisors, should there be any questions related to the research, were provided. Contact details, other than those of the researcher and supervisor, were also provided, in the event of there being any concerns about the study participants wished to raise. Aspects such as the use of letter

heads on high quality paper, names, hand written addresses, signing letters and including free post envelopes contribute towards personalising correspondence and increases the likelihood of participation in the study (Dillman et al., 2009).

To maximise the response rate of the random sample of 572 small firms that, together with participation of a single newcomer from each small firm, were selected and invited to participate in this phase of the study, one reminder notice was sent out approximately six weeks from the initial mailing. A total of 87 firms indicated that they had not employed any new staff during the past year. A further 8 firms indicated that there was no interest in participating in the study. Eleven envelopes were returned undelivered by the postal services marked 'return to sender' for reasons such as 'box closed' and 'gone no address'. Where undelivered mail was returned, the local telephone directory was consulted and if an address other than the original mail address was available for the business, questionnaires were resent. This resulted in 4 of the 11 returned questionnaires being resent. Responses were obtained from 191 newcomers of those small firms surveyed. Excluding those firms from the random sample of 572 firms who had not employed any newcomers during the past year (87), and 7 of the 11 questionnaires that could not be resent as no known firm address was available, the 191 respondents represented an overall response rate of 40%.

3.3.6 Data Analysis

Data was coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical methods used to analyse the data included factor analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis. A factor analysis was conducted that reduced the large set of data into a smaller set of measurement constructs. In order to assess the internal consistency of the factor analysis constructs, reliability analysis was then undertaken. Descriptive statistics provided information by way of means and standard deviations and reliabilities for individual variables. To analyse the relationship between variables correlation analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationships between various variables with an independent variable. Prior to conducting further analysis the data was screened to determine its suitability.

Data Screening

The questionnaire included 12 pre-employment information items relevant to the pre-encounter phase of socialisation. However, given the focus of the quantitative study on the role of intra-organisational networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation

outcomes during newcomers first year of employment, these items were judged to be of little specific relevance and were therefore excluded from the data analysis. Likewise, the social network characteristic of density for both friendship and informational networks was not included in further analysis due to the amount of missing data for this variable and the number of respondents indicating “don’t know” for this network characteristic. In addition, screening of the data indicated that certain respondents might have had problems interpreting some of the negatively worded items. In light of this, and given the potential problems associated with the use of negatively worded items in survey questionnaires that include misunderstanding of items by respondents, concerns with the adverse effects on factor structure and issues with the reliability of scales (Schmitt & Stuits, 1985; Stewart & Frye, 2004; Wong, Rindfleish & Burroughs, 2003), after careful consideration a decision was made to exclude negatively worded items from further analysis. These included three formal/informal and three serial/disjunctive socialisation tactics items (C1.3-C1.5 and C2.3-C2.5 respectively), three organisational commitment items (D2.4, D2.6 and D2.8), three social integration items (D4.5-D4.7), two task mastery items (D7.3 and D7.7) and one role clarity item (D8.7).

In order to further assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis required the conducting of two tests, namely, the Kaiser-Myer-Olkin (KMO) test to measure sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s test of sphericity that established whether the correlations between variables were significant (Field, 2013). The value of the KMO statistic was .838, which is well above the minimum acceptable level of .5 and Bartlett’s test was highly significant ($p < 0.001$) (Field, 2013), indicating that data were appropriate and acceptable for conducting factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

Prior to undertaking the correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation analysis, factor analysis was conducted on the data obtained from newcomers’ responses to the survey questionnaire items that were retained. The use of factor analysis to refine scales to be used for the data analysis proceeded through two stages. First, a factor analysis was undertaken that separately examined the underlying factor structure for each of the individual measures of formal/informal and serial/disjunctive socialisation tactics items, organisational knowledge, organisational commitment, intention to quit, social integration, task mastery, role clarity and proactive personality. This initial analysis highlighted that certain individual measures loaded on more than one factor. The eight organisational knowledge items loaded on two factors and this resulted in items D1.4-D1.8 being excluded and the remaining items for the organisational knowledge measure (D1.1.-D1.3) being retained and included in the subsequent analysis. The ten proactive personality items also loaded on

two factors. The following proactivity items, namely E1.1, E1.6, E1.7, E1.9 and E1.10 loaded on factor one and this resulted in these items being retained for further analysis, while the remaining items (E1.2-E1.5 and E1.8) loaded on factor two and were excluded from further analysis. Items for the individual measures of formal/informal tactics, serial/disjunctive tactics, role clarity, task mastery, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit each loaded on one factor and were retained for the subsequent analysis.

For the second stage exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the complete set of items retained from stage one. The purpose of the EFA was twofold: firstly, to provide evidence attesting to the discriminant validity of the study constructs; and secondly, to reduce the large set of items into a smaller set of dimensions ('factors') of a more manageable size that could be used to carry out the subsequent correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation analysis (see Chapter Five), while attempting to ensure as much of the meaning of the original variables as possible were retained (Field, 2013). Eigenvalues and a scree plot were used to decide on the number of factors to retain after extraction (Field, 2013). Retaining factors to the left of the point of inflection on the scree plot (Field, 2013) resulted in seven factors being retained. The associated eigenvalues for the seven factors retained were all above Kaiser's (1960) criterion of 1. The criterion level of .50 was used as the statistically significant cut-off point for screening factor loadings (Field, 2013; Stevens, 2000), which resulted in 26 items with loadings greater than .50 on a single factor. Table 3.1 shows the factor loadings after rotation of the 26 items that loaded on the seven factors. The factor analysis results for the complete set of items, including those items that failed to load, are presented in Appendix L.

Table 3.1
Summary of Factor Analysis Results for Items that Loaded

Item	Rotated Factor Loadings						
	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D1.1: Knowledge of firm's goals				.647			
D1.2: Knowledge of firm's policies				.772			
D1.3: Knowledge of firm's unique language				.598			
D2.1: Happy to spend career with firm	.633						
D2.2: Enjoy discussing firm with outsiders	.549						
D2.5: Feel 'part of family' at firm	.655						
D2.7: Firm has personal meaning for me	.678						
D3.1: Often think of quitting job						.728	
D3.2: Think of quitting job in three years						.801	
D3.3: Think of quitting job within year						.736	
D4.2: Feel comfortable around colleagues							.630
D4.3: Feel accepted by colleagues							.803
D4.4: Am regarded as 'one of the team'							.630
D6.1: Satisfied with job	.604						
D7.1: Confident with job skills level			.749				
D7.2: Competent doing job tasks			.807				
D7.5: Learnt to perform job efficiently			.623				
D7.6: Mastered required job tasks			.706				
D8.1: Certainty about job responsibilities		.574					
D8.2: Understand job objectives		.613					
D8.4: Know job responsibilities		.784					
D8.5: Know job expectations		.799					
E1.6: Identify opportunities					.709		
E1.7: Look for better ways to do things					.626		
E1.9: Spot opportunities before others					.779		
E1.10: Seeing my ideas turn into reality					.640		

Note: Extraction Method: Exploratory Factor Analysis

The loadings on factor 1 comprised four items that relate to the distal outcome of organisational commitment (D2.1, D2.2, D2.5 and D2.7). The remaining three organisation commitment items (D2.3, D2.9 and D2.10) that related to protecting the organisation's image (e.g. Item D2.10: "I defend the organisation when other workers criticise it") failed to load on any of the seven factors and were excluded from further analysis. The sole job satisfaction item (D6.1) also loaded on factor 1. Because this item related to the job and not the organisation, it was excluded.

Items loading on factor 2 were represented by four of the eight role clarity items (D8.1, D8.2, D8.4 and D8.5). The four remaining role clarity items did not load on any of the factors and were omitted from further analysis. Factor 3 was represented by the proximal outcome of task mastery, with four of the five items indicating that respondents had mastered their job tasks (D7.1, D7.2, D7.5 and D7.6). Item D7.4 ("I rarely make mistakes when conducting my job tasks") had a factor loading of less than .50 and was eliminated.

All three organisational knowledge items (D1.1-D1.3) loaded on factor 4 and all three intention to quit items loaded on factor 6 (D3.1-D3.3). All these items were retained for the subsequent analysis. The four items loading on factor 5 all related to newcomers' proactive personality (E1.6, E1.7, E1.9 and E1.10). The remaining proactive personality item (E1.1) had a factor loading of less than .50 and was not included in further analysis. Three of the four social integration outcomes (D4.2-D4.4) loaded on factor 7. The remaining social integration item (D4.1) failed to load on any of the seven factors and were excluded from further analysis. The formal-informal socialisation tactics items (C1.1 and C1.2), the serial-disjunctive socialisation tactics items (C2.1 and C2.2), and the two organisational citizenship behaviour items (D5.1 and D5.2) also failed to meet the .50 cut-off point for screening factor loadings and did not load on any of the seven factors. These items were also excluded from further analysis.

After extracting the seven factors retained for subsequent analysis, composite measures were created for the items that combine to represent each of the factors used in the subsequent correlation and regression analysis. The seven factor analysis constructs retained were: (1) organisational commitment; (2) role clarity; (3) task mastery; (4) organisational knowledge; (5) proactive personality; (6) intention to quit; and (7) social integration. Prior to conducting the correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation analysis, reliability analysis was used in order to assess the consistency of the seven factor analysis constructs.

Reliability Analysis

The measure chosen to determine the reliability of the seven factor analysis constructs was Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2013). The results of the reliability analysis for the seven factor analysis constructs presented in Table 3.2 show that the constructs had alpha coefficients ranging from .751 to .919. According to Field (2013), overall, these alpha values suggest very good reliabilities.

Table 3.2
Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Alpha Coefficient
Organisational Commitment	.751 (4 items)
Role Clarity	.872 (4 items)
Task Mastery	.831 (4 items)
Organisational Knowledge	.821 (3 items)
Proactive Personality	.776 (4 items)
Intention to Quit	.919 (3 items)
Social Integration	.874 (3 items)

The results of the item-total statistics also indicated that individual items for each of the seven constructs correlated very well and no increases in alpha for any of the constructs would have occurred if any items were deleted. The sets of composite measures identified from the factor analysis for each of the seven constructs were retained and used to conduct the subsequent correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation analysis (see Chapter Five).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to commencing each phase of the study (i.e. qualitative phase and quantitative phase), the University's 'Code of Ethical Conduct for Research' was read and the researcher assessed and discussed ethical issues related to the study with supervisors. After this a 'Screening Questionnaire' was completed to determine the risk of the research and the appropriate procedure to follow. Based on the University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, discussions with supervisors and completion of the Screening Questionnaire, a 'Low Risk Notification' was prepared and submitted to the University Human Ethics Committee prior to commencement of data collection for each phase of the study. This resulted in the University's Human Ethics Committee informing the researcher that the research for each phase of the study had been recorded on the University's Low Risk Database (Appendix M and Appendix N respectively).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS DURING THE PRE-ENCOUNTER AND ENCOUNTER PHASES OF THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS

As previously discussed in Chapter Three (Research Design and Methodology), the first phase of this study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach. In-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, employing the CIT as the method to collect data, were used. This chapter presents the findings of the content analysis of interview transcripts available from the data collected from interviews conducted with 20 newcomers and 17 socialisation agents in small manufacturing firms employing 10-49 employees, who participated in this phase of the study. These findings are discussed in the context of the research literature (refer to Chapter Two) and the research questions guiding this phase of the study. The purpose of this qualitative phase of the study was to explore the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. The following specific research questions guided this phase of the study:

- How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?
- How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?

The two broad categories included in the organising framework that was used to commence analysis of the data were based on the specific research questions and the OS literature guiding this phase of the study. The major themes identified within each category are illustrated through quotations. To maintain confidentiality, actual names of participants in the study and organisations are not used. Pseudonyms are used in instances where names are mentioned in quotations to identify individuals or organisations. Appendix O provides brief details relevant to the interview participants that include position title of the interviewee, whether the interviewee is a newcomer (N) or socialisation agent (SA), type of firm and number of firm employees.

4.1 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS DURING PRE-ENCOUNTER SOCIALISATION

During the pre-encounter phase of socialisation newcomers acquire information from informal and formal sources about their new jobs, the organisation and work group that influence their adjustment and resultant outcomes. These sources of information that influence newcomer socialisation include pre-encounter contact and interactions with organisational insiders and additional informational sources. The contacts, communications and interactions that take place between newcomers and information sources form part of the social network ties that are not only valuable sources of information, but are also a primary vehicle through which socialisation occurs prior to organisational entry (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 2002).

The role of social networks during the pre-encounter phase of socialisation as valuable sources of information and resources in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process was represented by two key themes identified from the content analysis from the interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms studied. These were: (1) initiating socialisation; and (2) establishing newcomer-organisation fit via the selection process.

4.1.1 Initiating Socialisation

Social networks consisting of family and friends from newcomers' social circle were widely used and regarded by both newcomers and socialisation agents as an important factor in facilitating pre-employment socialisation in the small firms studied. This was reflected in the role of social networks in *initiating socialisation (Theme 1)* during the pre-encounter phase emerging as a consistent theme. The approach that was used to initiate pre-encounter socialisation during recruitment via social and familial network ties can be characterised as primarily informal, with the nature of contacts, interactions, communication and pre-existing relationships characterised as personal and flexible, using techniques such as 'word-of-mouth'. Although these types of networks can be primarily characterised as personal/friendship networks, at the same time they can also be regarded as important informational networks for both the newcomer and organisation.

Responses from participants indicate that small firms in this study not only have a preference for making use of these types of social network ties made up of newcomers and family/friends from their social milieu, who are also organisational insiders, to initiate the process of newcomer socialisation, but also support the use of these pre-existing networks to onboard newcomers. In

addition, small firms that support and actively encourage these types of personal and friendship network ties found that they tend to be reliable and valuable sources of information exchange through the knowledge that these personal networks have of prospective newcomers and the information newcomers are able to access via these types of networks about their new work environment. More specifically, these social network ties enable the firm to assess the newcomers' ability to master the technical aspects of the job, integration into the work group and assimilation into the organisation, as well as the future level of newcomer learning and adjustment required. In addition, these types of personal and friendship social networks are also important sources of information for newcomers that assist them in gauging what the organisation might be like, creating realistic expectations and reducing uncertainty.

The manufacturer of pet food products that employs approximately 25 employees was one of those small firms studied that displayed a preference for the use of pre-existing social network ties made up of newcomers and organisational insiders from the same social milieu to facilitate the pre-employment socialisation of newcomers during the recruitment process. This approach to onboarding newcomers is not that dissimilar to that used by many of the small firms in this study. At the same time this is perhaps not that unusual, given the relatively large number of friends and/or family members found working together, for example, in a work group on a production line or on projects in these firms. Most of the employees in this particular firm work on the same production line and were second, and even third generation, family members. The use and the importance attached to social networks consisting of individuals from the same social milieu as the preferred approach to initiating the onboarding of newcomers is illustrated by the following quote from a socialisation agent:

We do networking and that's how most of us probably got employed. It still is. There's nothing like word-of-mouth that gets people in here. And if they've got the skills and if you know someone well it's less training for us to do. There's a flow on effect. They know what the expectations are and they know the outcomes if they do not do what is required.
(SA12)

Small firms that use these network ties consisting of newcomers and organisational insiders known to each other from the same social milieu regard them as 'tried and trusted' and they are viewed as beneficial to both newcomers and organisations. Newcomer anxiety and uncertainty are likely to be reduced through the information provided via social network ties in instances where the parties know each other well. In addition, from an organisational perspective, these social network ties

should be able to assist newcomers in getting up to speed quicker. The success of this approach to onboarding newcomers who are ‘known quantities’ is reflected in the degree of latitude and discretion small firms in the study allow to those who form part of these types of network ties in initiating pre-employment socialisation. In addition to socialisation agents, those newcomers who had access to and are able to mobilise social networks consisting of family and friends, regard these network ties as key sources of pre-employment information about the job, work group and organisation that facilitates pre-encounter socialisation and impacts on their future learning and adjustment on commencing employment.

Another small firm in this study is not that dissimilar to the pet food manufacturer, in that family members and friends are found to be working closely together on the production line. In addition, this firm also relies on pre-existing network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders to initiate newcomers’ pre-encounter socialisation. The firm is a supplier of high quality vegetable products and processes vegetables from the raw product stage to final packaging of recipe foods and sauces for local consumption and the export market. Most of the 20 plus staff in the firm are employed in the processing factory, involved in tasks that include the peeling, dicing, cooking and packaging of vegetables, and are also family members or friends. Many of these employees pre-encounter onboarding as newcomers was likely to have been initiated via social network ties that existed prior to employment. The following quote from a newcomer emphasises the use of social and familial network ties to initiate pre-encounter socialisation in this firm:

My sister-in-law works here so we discussed my joining the company. She just recommended that I give it a try and see how I go and I’m still here. I found out through word-of-mouth. She gave me information about the company and said it’s a good company and you’re well looked after. Everybody’s family and very, very friendly. (N19)

A small engineering firm in the study that also employs approximately 20 staff manufactures, customises and installs rotary dairy platforms that move cows as they are milked. The rotatory platforms are manufactured in the local workshop by close knit technical teams, after which the platforms are then shipped and installed by the same team at offshore sites in countries such as America. The work is of a highly technical nature, can be quite physically demanding and requires a team that works very closely together. In addition, the nature of the manufacturing process is also unlike that found in most other engineering workshops in that, for example, they manufacture round rather than square pieces of work for a niche market. Also, employees must be willing and able to travel overseas to install the platforms. This firm also has a strong focus

on initiating the onboarding newcomers via family and friendship network ties. In the case of the newcomer quoted below, pre-encounter socialisation was initiated via the social network ties that existed with his brother who is an organisational insider. This included being involved in technical work together and using fabrication machinery and equipment on work such as building stock cars as a hobby prior to the newcomer being employed by the firm. The brother of the newcomer was also able to provide the newcomer with all the necessary information about the job and the firm, which would have included the key aspect of working offshore:

My brother's been here seven or eight years. He gave me all the information on what they do. He (brother) just said basically nice guys and just be honest and straight forward. He said the type of work involves floating around and doing all sorts of cutting, welding, polishing and brushing. I've done welding before with my brother who does a lot of work on speedway cars. So it's not that from the time I came here I did not know how to weld and do other engineering work. (N20)

When the interview excerpts are viewed from the joint perspective of both newcomers and socialisation agents in the small firms studied, it is interesting to note that there is general agreement and mutual recognition of the valuable role and contribution of social network ties made up of individuals from newcomers' social milieu in initiating the onboarding of newcomers. This approach to pre-encounter socialisation facilitates newcomer learning and adjustment and is likely to contribute to speeding up and shortening the duration of the socialisation process. These types of social networks consisting of family and friends known to newcomers that are viewed as valuable information sources and resources are regarded by Moerbeek and Need (2003) as "sweet social capital".

The preference for the use of these informal and personal network ties also appears to strongly reflect the operational needs and pragmatic requirements of small firms aimed at reducing the risks, costs and time associated with onboarding newcomers from unfamiliar sources. Given the human, material and financial resource constraints many small firms face (Stevens, 2007), this is perhaps not surprising. This was particularly noticeable during the period of the global financial crisis (GFC) that impacted on many of these firms and stretched their financial and other resources to the limit. In addition, given that certain small firms favour the employment of friends or relatives of existing employees, the use of these types of personal/friendship networks to initiate pre-encounter socialisation is likely to occur spontaneously.

As this study was conducted in small firms operating in a specific rural region in New Zealand, it is worth noting that this, in all likelihood, influenced the dynamics and approaches used to access and mobilise these types of social networks. This is consistent with the view of Gilbert and Jones (2000) that rural and urban small firms that are of a similar industry and size differ in their approaches to human resource practices. A specific feature of the small firms in this rural region is that they form an integral part of the existing business environment and many of these small firms are embedded in the local community. This is largely due to these small firms providing important services and support to the local horticulture and viticulture industries that form a large and integral part of the region's business and economy. Based on responses from newcomers and socialisation agents, it appears that the reliance and use by small firms of these networks of contacts and relationship from the local social milieu to initiate socialisation in the regional rural location where this study was conducted is quite pronounced and prevalent.

The geographic and physical proximity between prospective newcomers and organisational insiders drawn from the local social milieu, together with the informal, direct and personal nature of these contacts and relationships, tend to support the establishment of network ties that can be characterised as strong and close, with frequent interactions. This influenced the flow and sharing of pre-encounter information that facilitated socialisation. In addition, because prospective newcomers drawn from the local community are more widely known to those organisational insiders who form part of the social networks, they are able to function as 'gatekeepers' in determining the degree and quality of fit between the newcomer and the organisation.

Another engineering firm in the study that designs and manufactures quality food and drink display cabinets for clients such as service stations, food outlets and supermarkets employs approximately 50 staff. The majority of employees are tradespeople such as joiners with a high level of technical skills who are required to work in a strong team environment on projects. This firm sources most of its labour from local organisations via social network ties consisting of tradespeople who in most instances are known to each other. As the following quote from a socialisation agent illustrates, the firm is aware of the role of these pre-existing social networks as a type of 'filtering' mechanism. This assists in assessing the degree to which prospective newcomers are likely to fit into the work environment and are able to 'pull their weight', while at the same time screening out those individuals who might be unsuitable:

What I do is the prior screening; all the guys have worked pretty much in Hawke's Bay. When I get a name of someone who wants to join, I get four people working here who I know that have worked in the organisation with the person, and I say "right, give me two words to describe this character". And I had two incidents last week. One of them, I read out the first name and they said "don't touch him", and so not suitable him. The second guy they said "brilliant worker, low maintenance, take him on". So we employed him.
(SA1)

Determining the degree of fit between the newcomer and the job, work group and organisation via the flow and sharing of information by those who are part of the same social network ties prior to employment is likely to influence the initial onboarding of newcomers. In addition, the newcomer is likely to require less learning and adjustment on commencing employment due to the pre-encounter fit that has been established.

Although newcomers' family and social contacts, interactions and relationships form an integral part of the social networks used by small firms that assist in successfully initiating pre-encounter socialisation that holds certain advantages for newcomers and the organisation, in certain instances these types of social network ties and associated relationships can result in the unsuccessful onboarding of newcomers. This is especially so when it is suspected or known that the current suitability of the fit between the newcomer and their new environment, as well as the future ability of the newcomer to learn and adjust, could be problematic. Most small firms appear to be conscious of the potential pitfalls that can arise from initiating the onboarding of newcomers from networks consisting of family/friends. These include the risks of newcomers not being able to perform tasks to the minimum standard required, having problems assimilating into the work group and a mismatch with the organisation's values and norms. These problems may, in turn, have an adverse effect on outcomes such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and intention to remain with the organisation. Thus, favouring newcomers who are part of organisational insiders' existing network of family and friends needs to be treated with caution and small firms need to carefully consider the potential problems that can arise and the decisions that need to be made when initiating the onboarding of a newcomer who is part of an existing social network.

In summary, both newcomers and socialisation agents highlighted the importance of understanding how the role of social networks influence the initiation of pre-encounter socialisation via social and familial network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders. The preference, widespread use and importance small firms attach to accessing and mobilising these types of social network

needs to be examined in relation to how it will contribute to the newcomer's learning and adjustment and result in positive outcomes for the individual and the organisation.

4.1.2 Establishing Newcomer-Organisation Fit via the Selection Process

There was evidence amongst the data collected from newcomers and socialisation agents that the important role of social networks in the small firms studied during the pre-encounter phase in facilitating newcomer socialisation extends to the selection process when newcomers and organisational insiders came into contact, interacted and communicated with each other. This is reflected in the role of social networks as a mechanism for *establishing newcomer-organisation fit via the selection process (Theme 2)*. Social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders underpinning the selection process that provide opportunities for information exchange contribute towards not only assessing newcomers current levels of job and organisational readiness to adjust to their new environment, but also assist in determining newcomers future learning required and establishing the newcomer and organisation's expectations.

More specifically, small firms use a range of selection methods as part of the selection process that include employment interviews and work samples, where the contact and interactions established via the social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders, provide opportunities for the exchange of information that facilitate newcomer socialisation. In most of the small firms studied there are clear indications that employment interviews are widely used and regarded as a valuable informational source for those parties involved. In addition, interviews are used by small firms in conjunction with at least one other selection method as a useful mechanism to access and exchange information that contributes to the onboarding of newcomers.

One of the firms studied was an engineering firm that utilises modern machinery and equipment to design and manufacture what it terms "engineering solutions" primarily for the local food, wine and processing industries. The firm was established approximately 20 years ago by the owner with a workshop in a shipping container and currently employs close to 50 employees. At the time the study was undertaken plans were in place to expand the business further. The firm prides itself on "success (that) stems entirely from a team of dedicated people". Ensuring the appropriate fit between the newcomer and the job, team and organisation is important for the firm. To this end, the selection process provides opportunities for prospective newcomers and organisational to interact and exchange sufficient and accurate information that facilitates socialisation. This assists in assessing the newcomer's current ability and future potential to adjust to their new environment, as

well as creating realistic newcomer expectations prior to commencing employment. The importance of providing the newcomer with comprehensive information about the job and the organisation during the selection process that supports newcomer adjustment is supported by the following quote from a socialisation agent:

As part of the interview process we not only talk about the specifics of the role we talk a lot about the company history, the company culture, also things like pay rates and terms and conditions of employment. We have shut downs and shift work and all that type of things, so we go through all the nuts and bolts of things before someone actually is offered the position. We also like to do a site tour, so we really like to let people have a good look around and let them take a look at what they'll potentially be getting themselves into. (SA5)

The views of those socialisation agents in the small firms studied who regard interviews as a means for providing social network opportunities that enables newcomers and organisational insiders to exchange information that facilitates pre-encounter socialisation was also supported by various newcomers in the study. The newcomer quoted below was employed by a small firm that is a fourth generation family owner/operated firm and the importance of the newcomer in understanding and 'fitting in' with not only the job, but also the culture of the organisation is regarded as a key part of their onboarding. This is reflected in the role of the marketing manager mentioned by the newcomer in the interview excerpt who is a family member of the firm. His involvement in the selection process allowed for contact and interactions to take place with the newcomer that contributed to determining newcomer fit into the firm culture and providing information to the newcomer that assisted in creating realistic expectations about the job and the organisation:

The marketing manager, he did the interview and they really outlined everything that the job and the organisation were about. They gave you clear expectations of what they were expecting of you and information that would help you settle in, which was good. (N10)

An interesting feature of the information exchange opportunities provided during interviews is the importance many small firms studied attach to specific organisational related information such as the organisations history, culture and values that is regarded as key pre-employment knowledge required by newcomers as part of pre-encounter socialisation. This organisational knowledge is regarded as particularly relevant in determining and emphasising the importance of the suitability of

the fit between the newcomer and the organisation that is crucial to their onboarding. At the same time the relevance and comprehensiveness of the information exchanged during these interview encounters is likely to reduce the uncertainty newcomers' face when confronted with an unfamiliar environment and assist in the establishment of clear expectations about job, role and organisational requirements.

Besides the importance small firms studied attach to newcomer-organisational fit, it is clear that information that enables small firms to determine current and future newcomer-job fit is also a key aspect of newcomer learning and adjustment. To this end, work sample assessments that provide opportunities for newcomers and organisational insiders to interact and communicate directly in a 'hands-on' way, while assessing a newcomers ability to perform job tasks, is viewed as an important mechanism for yielding valuable information. The primary focus is on determining newcomers' current level of job fit and task ability, as well as future aptitude to learn and master job related requirements. As the following incidents described by a newcomer and socialisation agent respectively illustrate, work samples are often used by small firms in conjunction with selection interviews during the selection process as a valuable information gathering method related to job fit. The first incident describes a situation where a newcomer employed by the previously mentioned manufacturer of processed vegetable products as a quality controller was required to demonstrate current levels of learning in relation to task mastery:

During the interview I was asked to do some things on Excel such as make some calculations and calculate formulas. And I was able to do the calculations as these are some of the things I usually do every day. I was also shown a micro-testing lab result and asked if I could read it and understand what it was saying. I was able to show that I could do this satisfactorily. (N17)

Another small firm studied that has been in the business of processing natural sheepskin products for over 40 years and employs approximately 30 staff prides itself on the workmanship of its manufacturing process and the high quality of its products, primarily targeting the export and tourism markets. In this type of environment where the contribution of each member of the team to the final product is critical, the importance of interacting and exchanging information while assessing a newcomer's current ability and future potential to adjust to a job where the minimum quality performance standards need to be met are a key part of the onboarding process. The following incident described by a socialisation agent demonstrates this:

At the time we were looking for a worker in our manufacturing area which involved matching skins, trimming skins and the final finishing and grading of the skins and we interviewed him. He came across very good at the interview and we gave him a couple of skins to trim just to monitor the dexterity because the trimming can be quite hard to pick up at the initial stage and he managed that well. In the interview stage we discussed his previous employment at 'The Daily Dispatch' and what he did there and it involved similar quality checks and a bit of work with colour inks and colour matching, which we thought carried some similarities with matching up the skins. (SA10)

Responses from newcomers and socialisation agents in many of the small firms studied suggest that the interactions and communication that occurs with organisational insiders when newcomers are assessed via interviews and work samples are an important mechanism for assessing newcomer's ability and aptitude to learn and adjust to their new environment. This appears to be especially important for those small firms studied where newcomers are required to work in a team environment, in order to manufacture high quality products that require a certain level of technical expertise. In addition, although the social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders as part of the selection process in small firms are, for the most part, characterised as informal and personal, they are not necessary without purpose, ad hoc or ineffective. The findings suggest that small firms studied are conscious of ensuring, as best possible, that newcomer and job, group and organisation fit is right before newcomers commence employment. The interactions and experiences shared between newcomers and organisational insiders as part of the selection process provide opportunities to exchange information that support the establishment of fit that facilitates newcomer socialisation.

The role of social networks in facilitating information exchange during selection process is a two-way process between newcomers and organisational insiders. This is reflected in the opportunities afforded to proactive newcomers during the selection process in many of the small firms studied to initiate contact and communication with organisational insiders and actively seek out information about their new environment that facilitates their socialisation. This is illustrated by the following quote from a socialisation agent that describes an incident where a newcomer engaged in proactive behaviour during the selection process by initiating contact with employees and asking questions in order to elicit information related to the newcomer's new environment:

Through the interview and her interactions with others she sort of got on and intermingled or related to me and David. And when I introduced her to staff she came in

and related to them and with the questions she was asking she was trying to find out as much herself about what the position was about. This was rather than me having to feed her with all the information. (SA7)

Interestingly, during an interview with the newcomer mentioned in the above incident by the socialisation agent, the newcomer described proactive behaviours that included initiative and information seeking prior to commencing employment that tended to confirm the socialisation agent's observations of the newcomer's proactivity. This included the newcomer actually visiting the worksite on her own initiative prior to the job interview and obtaining additional information about the firm via the organisation's website.

In the small firms studied, it is evident that processes such as selection provide opportunities for newcomers and organisational insiders to make contact, interact and exchange information that leads to the establishment of network ties. These network ties assist organisational insiders in accessing information about newcomers, while at the same time newcomers are able to actively seek out and obtain information required to support their learning and adjustment. Small firms that recognise the value of social networks that support the onboarding of newcomers during pre-encounter socialisation can contribute to speeding up and shortening the duration of the learning and adjustment required by newcomers during the socialisation process. The specific selection methods that included interviews and work samples, together with newcomer proactivity, provide opportunities for both newcomers and small firms to determine newcomer job, work group and organisational fit, as well as future learning and adjustment required.

In summary, the important role of social networks during pre-encounter socialisation in small firms is characterised for the most part as a social process. The pre-employment contact, interactions and communication that takes place between newcomers and organisational insiders via social networks consisting of social and familial network ties plays a key role in initiating pre-encounter socialisation during the recruitment process. This pre-encounter socialisation extends to the selection process during which information exchange between newcomers and organisational insiders via social network ties jointly contributes towards shaping the early socialisation experiences of newcomers and determining current and future learning and adjustment required.

The importance of job, work group and organisational related information provided to newcomers via social network ties during the pre-encounter phase of socialisation is consistent with the view that the amount and accuracy of pre-employment information that newcomers have access to is

likely to result in newcomers requiring less information when commencing employment, which in turn leads to better adjustment outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Wilson, 2011; Ioannides & Loury, 2004; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). In addition, those social network ties formed through the pre-employment contacts and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders during the pre-encounter phase are likely to continue on commencing employment, when further information is exchanged that further facilitates newcomer learning and adjustment (Reichers, 1987; Saks, 1994).

4.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS DURING ENCOUNTER SOCIALISATION

The role of social networks in facilitating pre-encounter newcomer socialisation continues during the encounter phase when newcomers cross the organisational boundary and commence employment. The organisational entry process and the early period thereafter were regarded as a particularly important phase for newcomers and organisations in many of the small firms studied. During this period newcomers face work situations not previously experienced, they encounter values and norms they are unfamiliar with, are expected to fit in with new work colleagues and learn the ropes (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In addition, the expectations, uncertainty and stress that exist when an employee joins an organisation and the reality encountered when adjusting to new employment (Allen, 2006; Louis, 1980), makes the successful transition of the newcomer from outsider to insider crucial during this period (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Comments from numerous participants highlighted the important role of social networks during the encounter phase of socialisation when newcomers are faced with unfamiliarity and uncertainty and certain pre-employment expectations have been created. During this phase the social network ties in small firms result in newcomers and organisational insiders interacting with increasing frequency, relationships are further developed and newcomers became more closely involved with increasing frequency in interactions with colleagues in job and organisational related activities. These social networks serve as valuable relationship and informational sources that support newcomer acceptance into their new environment, reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that many newcomers experience during the entry process and contribute towards newcomer learning and adjustment. The important role of social networks during the encounter phase in small firms studied was reflected in two major themes that emerged from analysis of the data. These were: (1) *establishing and developing effective workplace relationships*; and (2) *providing access to informational sources* that facilitate newcomer socialisation.

4.2.1 Establishing and Developing Effective Workplace Relationships

From the analysis of the data collected from newcomers and socialisation agents, the role of social networks in *establishing and developing effective workplace relationships (Theme 1)* that facilitate socialisation emerged as a central theme of the encounter phase of the socialisation process in the small firms studied. The importance small firms attach to newcomers being able to integrate into existing social network structures that are characterised through the establishing of positive relationships with organisational insiders from the time a newcomer commences employment is a critical factor in determining successful socialisation.

In the previously mentioned firm that has been in the business of creating display cabinets for clients for over 30 years and is still managed and operated by the original owners, employees tend to frequently work together in small groups and teams on projects. In this type of team based environment the nature of the social network ties and the ability of the newcomer to integrate into the work group from the time they commence employment are of crucial importance in achieving desired outcomes. This is emphasised by the following quote from a socialisation agent employed by the firm in a management position:

One thing I really drum in, we've got really good team dynamics. People have to be able to get on and often the team will be working together on a project. So we've got a real functional team and I don't want to introduce a well poisoner that can put that whole team at risk. (SA1)

As this interview excerpt illustrates, in the small firms studied where employees tend to work closely together, interact frequently and are dependent on each other to complete tasks, organisations can ill afford the risks associated with introducing a newcomer into a work group who is unable to assimilate. The importance of social network ties that support positive interactions and the formation of quality relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders were recognised in these small firms. To this end, they are conscious of the need to ensure that the social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders support the establishment of effective relationships and are willing to invest the necessary resources such as time and effort required to further develop and maintain these relationships as newcomers became embedded into their work group.

From a newcomer perspective, the significance of social networks that enable them to get along with work colleagues and develop effective workplace relationships is an important expectation for most newcomers and a key factor influencing their learning and adjustment. The following comment from a newcomer employed by the same firm that employs the socialisation agent quoted above confirms this:

I just really had hopes that it was going to be a good place to work at and nice people that I can just get along and do my job and good bosses, that's the most important thing. Everything has exceeded my expectations, all the people are great to work with and it's the best place I've ever worked. (N2)

There were strong indications that the establishment of effective relationships via the social network ties that exist between newcomers and organisational insiders is a joint process and requires the willingness of both parties to the relationship being prepared to work together in ensuring this happened. In instances where this did occur the existing social network ties support and lead to the establishment and further development of quality relationships.

Welcome and Camaraderie

Recognition of the key role of social networks that support the establishment of effective relationships during the early encounter phase is evidenced by the focus on ensuring newcomers are made to feel welcome by co-workers and the creation of a sense of camaraderie. Social network ties that support the establishment and building of relationships through activities that make newcomers feel comfortable in their new environment as soon as possible are likely to play a key role in facilitating socialisation. Perhaps not surprisingly the importance of ensuring the newcomer is properly welcomed and introduced into their new work group is emphasised by the same socialisation agent quoted above who stressed the importance of the newcomer becoming part of the team being a key part of their socialisation:

Basically if someone starts, as soon as they walk in the door 7 o'clock on the Monday morning I meet and greet them and they are introduced and put with the team leader, they have someone to see and they are made to feel comfortable. From there they get introduced to the team. (SA1)

The positive first impressions created via the social network ties that are established in many of the small firms studied from the time initial contact occurs and during the early period of interactions

between newcomers and organisational insiders on commencing employment creates a climate of support that facilitates early newcomer adjustment. This sets an important tone for being accepted into the existing social order and furthers the establishing and developing of effective relationships that is likely to advance newcomer socialisation. This is emphasised by the following quotes from two newcomers who recounted the positive experiences related to the welcoming they received and friendliness displayed towards them by organisational insiders on joining the firm that processes vegetable product, which they had seldom experienced during previous employment:

Everybody was welcoming from the time when I first started. They give you a kiss on the cheek; they shake your hand; they always ask you if you're OK. I'm able to open up and every (previous) job I've had, you sort of just stick to yourself. If you've got problems you've always got management to talk to or your team leaders. It's been a real eye opener for me. I've found it a real cool experience for me. (N18)

The people here are so warm and make you feel really welcome; they make you feel like you fit in. There are a lot of workplaces out there where you as a newcomer, you've got to try and fit in yourself. Usually at workplaces the old hands are in their area and newcomers in their own area. Here, you are made to feel like one of the team. (N19)

The welcoming the above two newcomers received is probably not surprising, given that the firm was one of those previously mentioned that had a strong preference for employing family and friends that worked together. There was also likely to be a strong sense of camaraderie due to the social network ties that already existed. In addition, both these newcomers had previously worked in larger firms where they had seldom experienced the close, personal and friendly nature of the social network ties they found in this small firm.

Social network ties in small firms that support and encourage the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders from the time newcomers commence employment and during the early period thereafter contribute towards reducing the initial uncertainty and apprehension that newcomers typically face when confronted by a new environment. These positive relationship experiences that are further developed and maintained facilitate newcomer integration and contribute towards embedding newcomers into their work group. This, in turn, provides newcomers with access to information and resources that speeds up the learning and adjustment process and results in more extensive socialisation. The establishment of these early relationships that endure after the early period of employment has a

positive effect on socialisation outcomes that include newcomer job satisfaction and increased job performance (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Morrison, 1993a; Saks & Ashforth, 1996). On the other hand, newcomers faced with situations where the nature of the social network ties results in negative workplace interactions from their first day of employment are unlikely to integrate into their work group, they are likely to be more uncertain and apprehensive, and this will probably have an adverse effect on their future learning and adjustment.

Social Activities

In addition to the welcoming received and camaraderie displayed towards newcomers by organisational insiders that is a key feature influencing the establishment of social network ties in small firms studied, additional activities that contribute to the establishment and development of social network ties that strengthen interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders is the involvement of newcomers in social activities and events with colleagues. These social activities in small firms that newcomers participate in are predominantly characterised as informal and tend not to represent specific formal work related activities or events. This is reflected in newcomer involvement in these social activities for the most part being voluntary, outside of normal working hours and not directly job related. However, in certain instances there was an unwritten expectation that newcomers would, if at all possible, participate in these social activities. Examples of the types of social activities arranged by many of the small firms studied ranged from informal weekly social get-togethers on-site after work to team-building type activities that included 'fun' events such as playing mini-golf together or attending a local sports event with work colleagues at off-site venues.

These social activities that contribute to the establishment of social network ties also result in the building and development of stronger and better quality interactions and relationships. This holds advantages such as newcomers becoming more readily included in the social milieu of the work group and the organisation back on the job that is likely to further facilitate their adjustment. The following comments from two newcomers describe incidents where the social activities underpinning social networks provide opportunities to establish and develop relationships with colleagues that results in positive outcomes. The first incident refers to a regular, informal, social get together of work colleagues at the end of the work week and the second incident describes a social activity that was an informal, after working hours, team building type of event at an off-site venue. In quite a few of the small firms studied it was standard practice to find that work teams tend to work off-site on projects where they undertake contract work for larger firms. During this period they sometimes have little or no contact with the majority of other colleagues. Arranging social

activities in these types of situations can be especially beneficial for newcomers to maintain contact and establish relationships not only with their immediate work team, but also with colleagues across the organisation. A newcomer highlights the benefits of a weekly, informal get together with work colleagues:

To celebrate the week the boss will buy us a few drinks after work on Friday and we can talk to all the blokes in the firm. It is good to turn up because you catch up with people who you have not seen for a while, especially when you've been out on site on a job for a week. (N7)

The incident described below is from a newcomer who was keen to move away from a large urban region where he had previously worked for larger firms. The newcomer obtained employment as a supervisor in charge of a team of about 10 staff at the previously mentioned sheepskin manufacturer that employed approximately 30 employees. The incident illustrates the positive effects of being able to attend a team-building type social event held at an off-site venue approximately a month into his employment. The social network ties that were established contributed to the strengthening of workplace relationships back on the job that further facilitated the newcomer's adjustment to his new environment:

I think socially you know it's very good. For example, last Friday (night) we were all invited to a fun activity at a corn field maze. So the team went on the bus to the activity and we spent four hours together. There were a lot of people that I'd previously just greet, but from that night we got to know each other very, very well and of course we started working on Monday morning. That one activity made me feel part of the team and the organisation. (N13)

Most small firms in the study appear to recognise the important part that newcomer involvement in social activities, as a mechanism underpinning social networks, can play in enhancing the establishment and development of effective relationships that support newcomer assimilation into the group and increase group cohesion. This is likely to strengthen and extend the range of newcomers ties back at the workplace, assist in 'fast-tracking' newcomer integration and have positive effects on newcomer learning and adjustment. In addition, the development of interpersonal relationships during the time newcomers are able to spend with colleagues while involved in social activities also provides opportunities for promoting and reinforcing the acceptable social practices

that are an integral part of many small firms. This enables newcomers to learn and internalise the culture and values that are important to these firms.

Network Size

In small firms, the number of network links tends to be small and newcomers are less isolated from colleagues. This is probably not surprising, given the number of employees, flat structures and the prevalence of informal processes that characterise small firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Mayson & Barrett, 2006). These characteristics that tend to represent small firms further supports the establishment of more inclusive, closer and stronger relationships that, together with more frequent interactions between newcomers and organisation insiders, enhance the development of relationships between newcomers and the work group. The following quotes from three newcomers employed by three different small firms studied who had all previously worked in larger firms highlight the differences experienced between the size of the social network ties between large and small firms, while the smaller number of social network ties found in small firms tended to be viewed in a positive light:

My expectations were met when I met face-to-face with colleagues for the first time. I had heard that they are friendly and sure enough that's what I got. When you come from a large firm and a huge factory and then you drop down to the size of this firm you get to know each other better, which absolutely suits me perfectly. (N13)

I just like the three guys I work with most of the time and got on well with them. When you are in a smaller group of people, you get to know them better. I actually also like the job and the firm. (N12)

Everyone just gets on well and work together. From the time when you first start everyone says "you're doing fine, how is it going". This makes you feel welcome and because it's so small you get to know everyone soon. (N9)

As these interview excerpts suggest, in instances where newcomers' are part of social networks that are characterised as small, with close and inclusive ties, where frequent interactions occur and work colleagues are supportive and accommodating, this speeds up and facilitates the building of quality relationships. It is probably not surprising to find that newcomers' ability to leverage off social networks that facilitate their adjustment is closely linked to a small network size, together with the close and frequent contacts and interactions that are likely to be found in many small firms.

However, it is worth noting that small and close network ties do not always result in positive effects, due to factors such as ‘clashes of personality’ and differentiation between attitudes and behaviour between network members (Jokissari & Nurmi, 2012). In addition, the “strength of weak ties” argument presented by Granovetter (1973) suggests that networks characterised by weak ties offer more new information than networks with strong ties and can also serve as a bridge between different social groups.

Family Context

Many of the small firms studied were family owner/managed businesses. The involvement and influence of family in small firms, especially from the time of inception, often results in the creation of a strong culture with associated values and norms. According to Hamilton (2011), those small family firms with strong cultural values and norms have learning embedded within the social and relationship networks of the daily practices of the family and business. Of those small family firms studied with a strong culture there were indications that the family culture plays a key role in determining the nature and types of social structures that are formed and the social dynamics in the workplace that influence the way in which people interact and the relationships that are established. The resultant social network ties that are established via the social structures and social dynamics that are particular to certain small family firms’ impact on the approaches these firms take to ensuring newcomers learn and adjust to their new environment. This highlights the importance of recognising that small family firms do not operate in a social vacuum and that the ‘ideology of family’ and the culture this represents is interwoven into the social fabric of these small family firms and is likely to influence how they approach newcomer socialisation.

The inextricable link between family and many small firms and the influence this has on the nature and type of social network ties that exist, together with the role of social networks in ensuring newcomers recognise the strong influence of family on ‘the way things are done’ in these types of firms as they adjust to the small family firm environment, is corroborated by socialisation agents and newcomers. Those socialisation agents who are part of social networks in small family firms and involved in the onboarding of newcomers appear to be particularly conscious of the importance of newcomers being aware of the unique culture and social systems that characterise small family firms. To this end, social network ties are regarded as a useful mechanism that can facilitate the assimilation of newcomers into their new environment.

The socialisation of newcomers in a small family beekeeping enterprise that processes honey products and that was established more than 50 years ago illustrates the impact of being a small

family run firm on social network ties that influence the onboarding newcomers. The firm employs approximately 40 staff and is still owned and managed by members of the original family. People and bees are regarded as the “heart” of their business and their commitment “to promoting good bee health and workplace enjoyment-for the bees and their human workmates” is emphasised. The firm is characterised by a very strong family culture and social system that has been shaped over many decades and the type of social network ties that exist is indicative of this. This, in turn, influences the approaches used to socialising newcomers in ensuring newcomers adjust to the small family firm environment and become ‘one of the family’.

The following quote from a socialisation agent illustrates the role of social networks shaped by the family history and culture of the small firm, and the importance of newcomers in recognising and understanding the social systems and social norms that govern the interactions and relationships in the workplace that are a key part of their adjustment from the time they commence employment:

We do tell them that it is a family run company and we have staff that has been here for quite a while. See how they relate to that. We introduce them to staff and provide informal information for them to gauge the culture of the place, because we have some staff members have been here for 25-30 years. For example, they might pass on a few informal facts like “don’t sit in that person’s chair” type of thing. It’s really important for them to feel comfortable when they go into the staff room. (SA7)

The nature of the social network ties in small family firms lend themselves to informal approaches to socialisation that are supported by the cultural mechanisms underpinning the small firm family culture. This is especially so when the social network ties in these small family firms have been developed and established over a fairly long period of time. In this instance the initial contacts between newcomers and organisational insiders is crucial for newcomers becoming acculturated into the family culture of these firms, being accepted into the social milieu of the organisation and learning the technical aspects of the job. The importance of a newcomer in understanding the unique nature of the social network ties in small family firms where the culture is firmly entrenched is a key factor influencing their ability to learn and adjust to the family environment. A newcomer who was previously employed in large corporate environments (including banking), which are characterised as having an institutionalised approach to socialising newcomers, experienced their onboarding at the small beekeeping family business, with its social network ties shaped by the distinct familial nature of the small firm, as quite an “eye opener”. This is illustrated by the following quote from the newcomer:

It is family run, they have siblings and husbands and wives working together and is unlike any other business I've worked in. It's taken a bit of getting used to. I think the family's very friendly. They're wonderful, brilliant. They've just got their set ways and you don't want to overstep the mark cause they get upset very easily. They sit at their own tables and where I just go and sit anywhere. (N10)

The above quote suggests that although the family in the business might be supportive of the building of friendship ties that facilitate newcomer assimilation into the work group and the new environment, there are certain conditions and norms that govern workplace interactions and relationships. A newcomer entering this type of small family firm environment for the first time can experience a degree of 'culture shock' and it can take time to learn and adjust to the unique social systems and structures that exist in this type of firm.

The influence of family social networks in small firms that facilitate newcomer integration into the new environment extends to the frequency of interaction and closeness of the contacts with organisational insiders, including those in more senior positions ('network status'). Those insiders in more senior positions, in particular, can make newcomers feel part of the 'family' and provide valuable insights that support adjustment to their new environment. The following quote from a newcomer who also had previous experience of being socialised in large firms illustrates the positive experience of interactions with organisational insiders in a small family firm that included those in more senior positions from the first day on commencing employment:

I picked up on that it was quite a family-orientated sort of place. Quite small as well, which is quite good. The bosses come and just talk to you. Ask you how your day's going, where other places your bosses are like do this, do that. Experienced that on my first day here with the head director, just asking "how we going" and that kind of thing. (N9)

In a small family firm environment where a strong culture dictates the accepted social order and influences the nature of the social network ties that exist, the ability of newcomers to be able to 'fit in' and develop positive relationships is likely to result in them being able to learn and adjust to their new environment more effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, instances where the type of social network ties that exist are strongly influenced and shaped by the family history and culture of the small firm and newcomers display an unwillingness or inability to interact and develop positive relationships within the existing social order, this invariably creates problems. These include difficulties with the newcomer's ability to integrate into their new environment that

includes problems in learning and adjusting to the job, work group and organisation and resultant negative socialisation outcomes. The following further comments from the socialisation agent employed by the small family beekeeping firm who is acutely aware of the strong influence of the family culture on the existing social network ties and the importance of newcomers being able to assimilate are interesting in that they illustrate the problems that arose with a newcomer who attempted to disrupt the existing social order in the small family firm. In this instance, the inability of the newcomer to understand the way in which the social structures and social systems operated, as well as the unwillingness of the newcomer to integrate into the work group and new environment, resulted in colleagues isolating the newcomer, who eventually ended up exiting the organisation:

She wouldn't accept the culture here and tried to change things and this company, we've been here for 44 years, and we've got staff that has been here for 30 years. She just really rubbed people up the wrong way. Tried to spread malicious gossip about other people and really, really upset staff members here. They basically ended up ostracising her. Not talking to her. (SA7)

As the above quotes illustrates, in those small firms where family members are the owner/managers and this results in the establishing of a strong cultural context that impacts on the type of social networks that are formed, the ability of newcomers to understand and adjust to the social structures and social dynamics embedded in the cultural context is a critical factor influencing the ability of newcomers to learn and adjust to this type of environment. Socialisation agents in these small family firms appear to be acutely aware of the implications of onboarding newcomers via the social networks in these firms, while newcomers that have not previously been exposed to the small family firm environment might experience difficulties adjusting. In instances where the small family firm culture has a strong influence on the social network structures and relationships, small firms should attempt to reduce the risks attached to the inability of a newcomer to assimilate into the existing social network structures that, in turn, has adverse effects on their ability to adjust to their new environment. The use of existing social network ties to ensure pre-employment that there is as little mismatch between newcomers and the culture of the new environment as possible, and that newcomers will be able to establish quality relationships with organisational insiders can contribute to reducing these risks.

Personal Network Ties

An interesting feature of the social network ties and the resultant relationships that are developed between newcomers and organisational insiders, in family owner/operated small firms in particular, is that the nature of these relationships also extends to a concern for people on a personal level and in providing support in relation to newcomers' non-work related circumstances. Newcomers in some of the small firms studied reported instances where social network ties support the establishment of strong and close personal relationships with colleagues. The nature of these network ties make newcomers feel more comfortable discussing personal issues that have work related implications with organisational insiders, including those in more senior positions.

The owners and managers of the family run sheepskin factory formed close, personal social network ties with employees, including newcomers, and were keenly aware of the importance of ensuring the general well-being of employees. The owners/managers also displayed a genuine strong interest in the personal circumstances of newcomers that might impact on their ability to settle in to their new environment. At the same time the owners/managers were conscious of respecting employees' privacy and confidentiality when it came to personal matters. For example, certain owners in senior positions made a point of ensuring that newcomers were aware that they could contact them, in confidence, at any time to discuss any work or non-work related issues of concern. This is reflected in the following quote from a newcomer:

They had said that they care about people more and if you are having personal problems you can go and talk to them. My wife was having a bit of a breakdown because we took over a couple of young children a few years ago and it was getting her down. I'd only been here a couple of months, and I said I needed to take her away on a holiday. Well it was important because unless I sorted out the problem, the company would probably get a demotivated worker and my marriage could be affected. It had a positive outcome. If they didn't care you would obviously look around. If (you) want to get anything out of the staff, you've got to show that you're 100% committed in how your staff are and how their life is basically. (N14)

In the case of the newcomer quoted below who was employed by the processor of vegetable products, the relationships established through the social network ties was reflected in a strong focus on concern for employees. These social network ties were, in turn, such that newcomers felt at ease approaching those in more senior positions to discuss issues related to work/life

balance that were important to them. In addition, as illustrated by the quote, many of the small firms studied were willing to support and accommodate these types of personal requests:

And the bosses are real flexible. I asked Mike if I was able to still work around my kids and he said I could start at half eight after I drop my children off and said I'm able to pick the children up when I need to. I think if I wasn't able to do that I wouldn't be here, so I'm able to be out in the workforce plus still do my children. And there are not many workplaces that can give you that opportunity. (N19)

It would appear that the personal, informal, close and inclusive nature of the social network ties in small firms, where newcomers interact with organisational insiders across a range of levels on a frequent basis, contributes to the development of personal relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and empathy. This not only results in newcomers in small firms developing positive, quality interpersonal relationships with colleagues who are peers, but also with those at more senior levels in the organisation who are decision makers. This is further evidence of newcomers in small firms feeling comfortable with their relationships and at ease approaching insiders in higher network 'status' positions with personal or work related requests. These personal relationships, especially with those in key decision-making positions, enable newcomers to access the necessary support and assistance when required to deal with critical, personal events that are non-work related that have implications back at the workplace. As the incidents described by the two newcomers above suggest, this includes positive effects on newcomers learning and adjustment that contributes to achieving successful socialisation outcomes that include staff retention, organisational commitment and better work performance.

Negative Network Ties

The importance that many of the small firms studied attach to establishing and developing effective personal relationships through positive social network ties is reflected in the priority attached to these types of network ties. Thus, even though a newcomer might possess the necessary technical competencies to perform the requirements of the job or have the potential to be trained in this area; this is of secondary importance. Of primary importance for many of these small firms is the willingness and ability of a newcomer to assimilate into the existing social network structures that result in the establishing of positive workplace relationships.

The importance small firms attach to social network ties that support the establishment and development of effective workplace relationships is illustrated by a situation involving a newcomer

described by a socialisation agent who was employed by the firm that manufactures display cabinets. As previously noted, the manufacture of these products requires a high level of workmanship and the firm also prides itself on its team based culture. It is normally standard practice for this firm to employ a rigorous process to support the successful onboarding of newcomers. This includes a strong focus, from the outset, on attempting to ensure that the newcomer will be able to establish social network ties with organisational insiders that result in the development of sound relationships that support newcomers' assimilation into their new environment, especially the immediate work group. In the case of the situation described below, the organisation was short staffed at the time the newcomer was employed and the firm needed an experienced joiner with the technical competencies who could 'hit the ground running' immediately. Unfortunately, despite the newcomer having the technical competencies that enabled him to perform the task requirements of the job, the firm did not follow their standard processes when onboarding newcomers. This led to the newcomer experiencing difficulties in successfully assimilating into the existing social network structure and developing positive relationships with his colleagues that resulted in negative outcomes:

He was a very angry person. He was always looking at what other people were up to and he was very intimidating to some of the guys on the floor. He was probably the closest you'd get for naming a school kid bully. He had a lot of arguments with people and he was known to have a temper. He actually dragged a person on top of a saw bench by the scruff of the neck and was going to punch his lights out. He'd throw power tools and he'd lose the plot. He created an unwelcoming workplace. One person mentioned that they'd drive to work and they wouldn't see his car in his car park and they thought great, he's away today. He was actually a very clean, tidy joiner and his work was fine. His quality was fine. But people didn't really want to work with him (SA1).

The inability of this newcomer to get along with work colleagues not only prevented him from establishing relationships that would facilitate his learning and adjustment, but also had an adverse effect on others in the workplace and eventually resulted in colleagues refusing to work with the newcomer and the individual eventually exiting the organisation.

The experiences recounted by newcomers and socialisation agents indicate that when viewing the socialisation process through the prism of social networks the priority and importance small firms attach to building effective relationships from the time employment commences is probably not surprising. This is a key factor determining the success of newcomer learning and adjustment and

impacts on resultant individual and organisation socialisation outcomes. On the other hand, the inability of newcomers to build successful relationships with co-workers, results in difficulties assimilating into the work group. This, in turn, leads to an uncooperative working environment that affects the quality of learning, an inability to adjust and negative socialisation outcomes.

4.2.2 Providing Access to Informational Sources

In addition to the important role of social networks in establishing and developing effective workplace relationships during the encounter phase of the socialisation process, respondents in the small firms studied revealed the key role that social networks play in *providing access to informational sources (Theme 2)* that newcomers are able to mobilise in order to facilitate learning and adjustment to their new environment.

Role Models

In many of the small firms studied there was evidence of the important part that social networks play in providing newcomers with access to experienced organisational insiders that they can interact with and who serve as role models. These role models are regarded as valuable sources of information about the job, work group and organisation for newcomers and are actively supported and encouraged in many small firms. Recognition of the importance attached to these types of social network ties as informational sources is illustrated by the following quote from a socialisation agent from the small firm that manufactures dairy platforms. In this firm a newcomer would typically spend at least three months in the local workshop working alongside an experienced colleague ‘learning the ropes’ before being considered to join the team for the overseas posting to install the dairy platforms. The informational social network ties that facilitate on-the-job learning via role models are thus crucial in providing newcomers with the necessary knowledge, skills and information that enable newcomers to get up to speed as quickly as possible from the time they commence employment. In addition to the newcomer being paired up with an experienced work colleague, the Production Manager was also available to ensure the newcomer was on track in terms of adjusting to their new environment:

Normally I pair them up with someone that’s had more experience in doing the jobs. If I notice that they can’t work when I’ve buddied them up and that they can’t seem to grip with what their buddy is trying to show them what to do, I’ll step in and I’ll take them aside and I’ll explain to them, “here’s this, try it this way, or that way but eventually you will get to find a way that will suit you how to do your job”. (SA16)

The opportunities that the contact and interactions with experienced organisational insiders who serve as role models provide via social network ties for newcomers to access relevant work related information that assist them in coping with the demands of their new work environment is also recognised by newcomers. As previously noted, many of the small manufacturing firms studied perform contracting work on projects at larger organisations and it is not unusual for newcomers to be expected to accompany more experienced workers off-site as part of a team. Certain small firms are particularly conscious of the potential adverse effects of not providing newcomers with the necessary support networks that experienced insiders can offer as valuable sources of information that facilitate their adjustment. This is especially so when newcomers are required to perform contracting work at work sites that are unfamiliar to them.

The following quote from a newcomer illustrates the approach used by an engineering firm that manufactures, repairs and maintains equipment and machinery for larger firms in the local food, wine and process industries, when partnering a newcomer up with an experienced colleague on an off-site project in order to ‘learn the ropes’. In this instance the newcomer felt that the work he was required to do was beyond his current ability. However, because he had been partnered up with an experienced insider who was a key part of his network structure he was able to request support and access the necessary information in order to complete the job:

You get paired up with someone else who's been here for a while, so they don't just throw you out on your own. If needed, they'll even be working alongside you. On the canneries job, some of the stuff was out of my depth so all I did was pretty much ask, find out exactly what they want from you. (N5)

The approach used to facilitate much of the learning that occurs via these role models as informational sources can be characterised as informal and ‘on-the-job’. This also reflects the practical realities and operational requirements of many small firms. Experienced employees in small firms are likely to have the necessary skills and knowledge of newcomers’ job and role requirements, as well as information of the workings of the organisation. The social network ties that are established with newcomers enable experienced organisational insiders to transfer this knowledge and information to newcomers when they are paired up. In these situations, much of the information and advice provided to newcomers is focused on learning new roles, mastering the requirements of tasks and understanding the organisational context of work.

Given the familial and social nature of many small firms studied, it is not unusual to find that the experienced work colleague who partners up with a newcomer extended to the social network tie being a friend or family member that is able to serve as a valuable source of information and advice. Furthermore, perhaps not surprisingly, in certain instances where the family and friendship ties are quite prevalent and strong in the organisation, not only is the newcomer paired up with a colleague who is a family member or friend when commencing employment, but any pre-existing friendship social network ties might have also played a role in the pre-encounter socialisation of the newcomer. The quote below illustrates a situation where a newcomer partnered up with his brother, who, as previously noted, was also involved in initiating pre-encounter socialisation during the recruitment process. The newcomer was able to extend the pre-existing network ties with his brother, which had been used to good effect pre-employment, when commencing employment to informally partner up with his brother who had the necessary work experience and was able to provide him with work related assistance and advise:

So they do buddy up sometimes. I'd worked a lot with my brother. Since I started I'd go out the back with him and we sort of do our own little thing, doing U-bends, dry rails and outside doing stainless steel bending. (N20)

In contrast to the positive influence that access to role models via social networks can have in providing newcomers with access to informational sources required in order to learn and adjust, in certain instances the desired results are not always achieved. This is especially so when the suitability of the role model is not carefully considered and is not up to the required standard. This can have an adverse effect on newcomer onboarding and resultant outcomes.

The quote below from a socialisation agent describes an incident that illustrates the negative consequences of an 'ad hoc' approach to partnering a newcomer with an organisational insider where the fit between the parties was inappropriate. Interestingly, this small firm was the only one with a dedicated HR 'professional' and normally required potential newcomers to undergo a fairly rigorous pre-employment process that included spending quite a bit of time determining whether the newcomer would get along with colleagues and fit into the team environment. Prior to commencing employment the newcomer described in the incident below had visited the worksite, was provided with the opportunity to familiarise himself with his work environment and had been provided with information about his role in the organisation. In this instance the firm was very satisfied to have employed the newcomer and although the firm would have preferred the newcomer to commence employment as soon as possible, the firm was willing to wait a couple of months for the newcomer

to take up the employment opportunity. However, it transpired that the newcomer was so dissatisfied with the lack of initial support and guidance provided by the organisational insider that he left the work site within two hours of commencing employment, and despite the best intentions of the HR person decided not to return:

The day that he turned up we were really busy; we had a really big order on. Unfortunately the person who he was buddied up with was a team member who was not very happy about being buddied up with someone he had no idea was arriving. The guy (newcomer) was so upset and this was the first day, in the first two hours, because he was buddied up with someone who didn't want to know him that he left. It was incredible. I said "OK that's fine, I'll give you a call later and maybe you can come in tomorrow and have a talk to me", but that was enough. It affected him so badly that he refused to come back to site. (SA3)

As this incident illustrates, small firms need to be conscious of the potential problems that can arise when establishing social network ties between newcomers and organisational insider that result in negative onboarding experiences and they end up quitting the organisation soon after commencing employment. The quality of the social network ties and the resultant informational sources newcomers have access to and are able to utilise from the moment a newcomer commences employment and during the early entry period seem to be especially important. Informational network ties appear to be a key factor in determining the success or otherwise of newcomer learning and adjustment. This is not surprising, given that the 'gap' between newcomers' pre-entry expectations and the reality experienced on entering the organisation is probably at its widest (Fisher, 1986; Nicholson & Arnold, 1991). Small firms need to ensure that the fit between newcomers and experienced organisational insiders who are important informational sources is appropriate. In addition, these organisational insiders need to possess the necessary personal attributes and experience that enables them to provide and transfer sufficient and relevant information that supports newcomer learning and adjustment to their new environment.

The following interview excerpt from a newcomer further illustrates the potential negative effects on newcomer learning and adjustment resulting from a newcomer receiving inadequate assistance and support from an experienced organisational insider, in a situation where the person was required to assist the newcomer in 'learning the ropes'. Part of the problem was that this was quite a specialised position that included ordering and ensuring adequate levels of stocks required for the engineering workshop were available. The previous incumbent who had resigned was supposed to

partner up with the newcomer and ease him into his new role during their notice period. Unfortunately, the person the newcomer was replacing showed little interest in teaming up with the newcomer and showing him the ropes. The problem in this instance was exacerbated by the newcomer's inability to get up to speed having an adverse knock-on effect, as colleagues' performance was reliant on the performance of the newcomer in his role of stock controller:

The handover from that person was zero. There was no warning of the sensitivities of the change which would have helped. If I had difficulty with raising an order or didn't understand the full process she wouldn't be around. I would say that my performance was probably at 30%. (N11)

Factors such as the nature of the tasks, availability of resources and the importance of the newcomer being able to perform at an acceptable level from the time when commencing employment are key considerations when deciding on a suitable organisational insider to guide a newcomer through the complexities of a new role. Adopting a 'sink or swim' approach that is akin to throwing newcomers in at the deep end with insufficient or unsatisfactory support carries inherent risks that small firms can ill afford. When the quality of information provided by network sources leads to newcomers having negative experiences due to a lack of information and feedback, as well as insufficient support and guidance from the organisation initiated sources, this can have an adverse effect on newcomer learning and adjustment to the job, work group and organisation. This in turn may result in negative socialisation outcomes such as dissatisfaction with the job, a decrease in performance and a lack of commitment.

In addition to organisation initiated social network ties that provide newcomers with access to organisational insiders who serve as informational sources that sometimes results in negative outcomes, in certain instances when a newcomer and an organisational insider informally initiate a network tie that is not sanctioned by the organisation, this can also lead to problems arising. The following incident described by a socialisation agent employed by the small firm that manufactures dairy platforms, which tends to take a fairly informal and ad hoc approach to onboarding newcomers, illustrates the type of problems that can arise. In this situation an informal network tie, based on a friendship between a newcomer and an organisational insider that existed prior to employment and continued when the newcomer commenced employment, resulted in negative outcomes. These included unsatisfactory performance, the newcomer's employment being terminated and the organisational insider being warned to improve performance:

Unbeknown to us he was a friend of the one we already had here. And it only took a matter of a couple of days, one of the workers came in and said “can you go and sort this fella out cause he’s just been hit in the head with a bolt?” And I said to the one who was only here a week, “well what are you doing? What’s this about?” And he said “this is about having fun.” And I says “well, you’re not here to have fun, you’re here to work.” And he could see nothing wrong. I says, “well you’ve only been here a week, that’s a danger and basically you’ve got two weeks in lieu” So he preferred to leave. The other one I said “Ryan you’ve teamed up with your mate, your mate’s gone but you’ve got a week to prove your hand”, and he did come up to scratch. (SA16)

The above incident highlights the potential risks involved in instances where social network ties that exist pre-encounter and continue when the newcomer commences employment result in negative experiences that have adverse consequences. Small firms need to ensure that newcomers are ‘not left to their own devices’, while at the same time being conscious of the potential risks attached to social network ties between newcomers and organisational insiders that may have negative effects on newcomer onboarding and resultant outcomes. The nature of the social network ties that are established between newcomers and organisational insiders in small firms should be such that newcomers have the necessary support, information and resources required to facilitate their socialisation.

Formal Approaches

Participants in the study reported the use of a range of informal to formal approaches to socialising newcomers via social networks in small firms. For example, as previously noted, in small firms socialisation approaches to facilitating newcomer assimilation into the culture of the organisation tend to favour an informal approach. On the other hand, socialisation approaches to certain task related learning (e.g. where following standard operating procedures was required) and complying with policy and regulatory requirements (e.g. health and safety) lends itself to a formal approach. This is particularly so in a manufacturing environment where manufacturing products according to customer specifications and processing food products, as well as ensuring minimum health and safety compliance standards are met, requires newcomers to understand and adopt appropriate practices. This is illustrated by the following quotes from a socialisation agent and newcomer respectively:

The health and safety stuff is quite formal, so we'll point out fire exits, we point out emergency exits, we will walk them through the whole building, through the whole factory. (SA7)

All the health and safety stuff that you have to know before you are, actually allowed to go on to a site you've got to know all the safety precautions. All the stuff you have to do if an emergency happened. (N6)

Although the social networks used by small firms in this study to provide newcomers with access to information sources can be predominantly described as 'informal', as the incidents described illustrate, formal approaches are appropriate in certain cases and even borne out of necessity. This suggests that these small firms are conscious of the role and importance of formal informational networks in providing newcomers with access to sufficient and appropriate information where the risks and costs of not following minimum legal requirements and due process are evident.

An interesting additional feature of the interactions and relationships in at least two of the small firms studied is the willingness on the part of certain newcomers and employers to enter into a formal pre-employment agreement regarding their relationship that includes a voluntary 'trial period' of up to 90 days. Although the introduction of trial periods only commenced in 2009, responses from newcomers and socialisation agents indicate that in small firms an agreement between the two parties to enter into trial periods appears to be on the increase since the New Zealand government introduced this legislation with effect from 1 March 2009 (Department of Labour, 2009).

As previously noted, there are also clear indications that the characteristics of the social network ties in most of the small firms studied are such that from the time newcomers commence employment they are in close contact with organisational insiders, they frequently interact, are often required to work together and information is regularly exchanged. These social network characteristics of small firms, together with the duration of the three month trial period, are likely to provide sufficient time and opportunity for the two parties to the agreement (i.e. the newcomer and the employer) to interact, establish relationships and exchange sufficient information. This further enables them to determine the degree and suitability of fit between the newcomer and the job, work group and organisation, as well as any learning and adjustment that occurs and is still required.

The value of the trial period is illustrated by the following experience outlined by a newcomer in the small firm where employees work very closely together in work groups creating and engineering high quality products according to customer specifications. The firm employs close to 50 employees, was planning on expanding the business and, as previously noted, was the only firm of those studied that employed a dedicated HR person and, perhaps not surprisingly, tended to implement more formal HRM practices in instances where they felt it was necessary. The following quote from a newcomer highlights the opportunity the three month period afforded him to work alongside colleagues and learn the tasks he was required to perform, assist his integration with work colleagues and support adjustment to organisational requirements, which led to him being offered full time employment:

I was on three months trial. Everything that I did was quite exciting work. Working together with colleagues and using real timber that I really enjoy doing and that I only got to do very rarely at my old job. During this period I found just how friendly everyone was. It was quite mind blowing. I just tried my best and I was hoping that that was good enough and they obviously saw what I was doing and were happy so they kept me on.
(N2)

As the following quote from a socialisation agent in the small firm manufacturing dairy platforms illustrates, based on the experiences the newcomer and the organisation are exposed to during the three month period, should either party in the relationship feel that the fit is not as expected; either one party or both can elect not to proceed with the relationship. As previously noted, the first three months of a newcomer's employment is especially important in this small firm, as this is typically the period during which they are required to work in the workshop manufacturing the platforms before heading off overseas to install the platforms. During this period the newcomer is partnered with an experienced organisational insider and both parties have an opportunity to assess the suitability of fit:

The way we work here is there is a three month trial period that is set up as a trial for us as well as them. It's fully explained to them. Any time within that three months if they're not happy with the job they can leave, no questions asked and if we are not happy with them in that three months we advise them that it's not working out too well and give them the opportunity to come up to scratch. (SA16)

In contrast to the positive effects of informal and formal social network ties on newcomer socialisation, the absence of social network ties as sources of information that facilitate newcomer learning and adjustment can have negative consequences. This was reflected in comments made by certain participants in the study indicating that certain small firms adopt a ‘sink or swim’ approach to onboarding newcomers that is akin to newcomers being ‘thrown in at the deep end’. The following quote is from the same socialisation agent quoted above. The incident described illustrates the dangers for the firm of not following their standard processes of partnering a newcomer up with an experienced organisational insider for the standard period of approximately three months in order to familiarise the newcomer with the requirements of the job, the work group and the way things are done in the organisation prior to embarking on an overseas project. Because the firm was short staffed at the time, the newcomer was not provided with opportunities to interact and access information from work colleagues in the workshop in order to ‘learn the ropes’ before commencing work on the overseas project. As the incident illustrates, the resultant outcome was an inability of the newcomer to adjust to the situation and that ended up in him quitting the job while overseas:

I followed the team about a month later and by the time I got there he was very, very agitated. He should have spent more time in the workshop before going overseas getting to know what we are doing instead of being put in a situation halfway around the world. There was just no talking to this man and he quit on the spot. (SA16)

Network Range

In most of the small firms studied there is little or no segregation between newcomers and organisational insiders and newcomers are required to work closely and interact frequently across a range of different work units on a regular basis in order to access information that enables them to perform tasks, clarify roles and access organisational knowledge that facilitates their learning and adjustment. The following quotes from a socialisation agent and newcomer respectively reflect this. In the first instance, employees in the small firm are required to rotate through a range of positions in different departments in the pet food manufacturer as and when required. This requires newcomers to form network ties with experienced colleagues in each department in order to learn a range of different activities:

We teach them through three processing departments here on site, and it is actually wonderful because if there is anything that we learnt over the years is that these people learn more skills because of that ability to work from department to department. (SA 13)

The following quote is from a newcomer who was employed as the quality controller for a food processor where employees are required to work closely together in a fairly confined work area. A key component of the newcomer's position entailed interacting with colleagues on the production line while assessing the quality of the food being processed. Although the actual food processing was not a requirement of the newcomer's position, the firm felt that as part of the initial socialisation process, interacting and working together with others on the production line was important for the newcomer's learning:

From the first day I was here I worked with everyone else in the factory so I could learn how to do the things and how they should be doing it. In the peeling room, quality control, in the line and in the cook room. It was good because now I know if I see someone doing anything wrong, they know I've been through it. (N17)

Small firm size appears to hold certain network advantages in that the type and characteristics of the network ties in these firms are likely to reduce any structural barriers that exist between different work groups within an organisation. This enables newcomers to more readily access a wider range of information and resources needed from organisational insiders in different network positions that facilitates their socialisation. The greater the range of the social network, the more likely someone in the network will have the required information the individual needs (Anderson, 2008). In addition, social network ties that are established across a range of positions assist newcomers in learning how their positions relate to other positions in the social structure of the organisation. As previously noted, this is especially important to newcomers in small firms where network ties are close, interactions between employees are more frequent and information needs to be shared and exchanged on a regular basis.

Newcomer Proactivity

In small firms where the role of social networks during the socialisation process was explored, comments made by various newcomers and socialisation agents indicate that the opportunities afforded by the social network ties to interact with organisational insiders also provide proactive newcomers with the conditions to display initiative in actively seeking out and accessing information and advice via social network ties. Doing so appears to reduce the uncertainty newcomers' face and smoothens their transition through the encounter phase of socialisation. The importance of proactive newcomers being able to build social network ties that facilitate their socialisation was illustrative of the 'can-do' culture that was apparent in many of the small firms

studied. This ‘can-do’ culture is characterised by proactive behaviours that include displaying initiative, independent decision-making and the willingness to take responsibility for actions.

The first two quotes below are from newcomers employed by an engineering firm employing in excess of 40 employees where a socialisation agent described characteristics of the firm as having a “can do culture and attitude”. This means that when newcomers are taken on board they are informed that no tasks are out of their depth, employees are required to be innovative and meet customer needs as they might arise. Newcomers typically work together with experienced colleagues on contract assignments for large firm clients and there is an expectation that they display proactive behaviours by initiating interactions with work colleagues that facilitate their learning and adjustment while ‘on-the-job’. As the quotes from the two newcomers illustrate, newcomer proactivity is characterised by behaviours that include asking questions, observing, listening and taking on board feedback when interacting with colleagues:

Since the time when I first started working with other people I like asking questions “what’s this for, what’s that used for, how does this work”. For example, our maintenance man here used to change a lot of our machinery blades and stuff like that and it got to the stage where I got a little bit curious about it, so I used to stand here and watch him do things and from that day onwards it’s just been continuous. I learnt how to change the blades on the machines, how to operate different machinery in our department. I like my challenges, to see if I can do different things. (N7)

Observing is the main thing. And asking questions like “why did you wire it that way instead of that way, why do you have it on this much amps instead of this much amps?”. (N5)

The following quote from a socialisation agent employed by another engineering firm that encourages newcomer proactivity confirms the importance of newcomers displaying proactive behaviours that support their adjustment:

He’s always asking questions. He wants to know what’s going on. Every job there is he always wants to learn something different. (SA16)

As the findings of the pre-encounter phase indicate, the social networks ties established between newcomers and organisational insiders during the encounter phase in small firms also provide

opportunities for proactive newcomers to actively seek out and obtain information that smoothens their transition through the socialisation process. Although recent socialisation literature argues that social networks underpin the relationship between newcomer proactivity and newcomer learning and adjustment, little research has examined the relationships between these variables (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011). Social networks as a mechanism underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes is further examined during the quantitative phase of the study.

The findings suggest that during the encounter phase of socialisation social network ties enable newcomers to establish and develop effective workplace relationships with organisational insiders who are then able to provide support and guidance that contributes towards embedding newcomers into their new environment. In addition, social networks in small firms that are able to provide newcomers with access to the necessary informational sources and resources that they can mobilise from the time when employment commences plays a key role in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment. During this phase the ‘quality’ and the ‘quantity’ of the social network ties are key factors in determining the success, or otherwise, of newcomer learning and adjustment.

4.3 SUMMARY

This qualitative phase of this study explored how newcomers and socialisation agents in small firms perceived the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process. The findings suggest that social networks play a key role during the socialisation process through different approaches used by both newcomers and organisational insiders from the period prior to employment and once employment commences. The categories and themes that emerged are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Summary of Findings of Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
Role of social networks during pre-encounter socialisation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate socialisation. 2. Establish newcomer-organisation fit via the selection process.
Role of social networks during encounter socialisation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and develop effective workplace relationships. 2. Provide access to informational sources.

The role of social networks in small firms in ensuring newcomers are able to effectively and efficiently progress through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the OS process, when most newcomer learning and adjustment occurs, are critical. Successful onboarding of newcomers during these phases contribute to establishing the long lasting relationship between employee and employer, facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment and in achieving positive OS outcomes.

The findings also reveal that pre-encounter social networks ties that include family and friends from the same social milieu known to newcomers are important sources of information and initiators of newcomer socialisation in small firms. Besides the role of ‘friendship networks’ during the pre-encounter phase, the selection process is also a valuable informational network that can assist in determining newcomers’ levels of ability and readiness to adjust to their new environment, establishing realistic expectations, identifying current and future learning needs and determining the degree of ‘match’ between the newcomer and the organisation.

The establishing and developing of effective relationships was found to be a key outcome of the role of social networks during the encounter phase of socialisation. In the small firms studied there is little or no segregation between newcomers and organisational insiders, employees tend to work close together, there is frequent interaction and relationships are likely to be formed quickly and fairly easily. In addition to building effective relationships, from the period when newcomers commence employment, social networks also provide opportunities for newcomers to strengthen ties and access informational sources, which influence learning and adjustment.

As noted in Chapter Three, the research design and methodology employed in this study is a mixed methods approach. This chapter (Chapter Four) reports the qualitative findings of how newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms. The next chapter (Chapter Five) reports on the results of the quantitative phase of the study that examined the role of social networks and newcomer proactivity for organisational socialisation in the small firm context.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A MECHANISM UNDERPINNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEWCOMER PROACTIVITY AND SOCIALISATION OUTCOMES

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the survey data collected from newcomers during the quantitative second phase of the study that addressed research question 3. The aim was to examine the role of social networks and employee proactivity for organisational socialisation in small firms from a newcomer perspective. As previously illustrated by Figure 2.1 and explained in Chapter Two, the relationships between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes, as well as the effect of social networks as a mediator on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes, are examined. The hypotheses formulated for this phase of the study (see Chapter Two) examines these proposed relationships. Correlation, regression and mediation analyses were the principal analytical strategies employed to address the research question and test the hypotheses.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 5.1 reports the descriptive statistics that include the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents and the means and standard deviations for each of the study variables. Second, the results of the correlation analysis are reported (Section 5.2). This is followed by Section 5.3 where the results of the regression and mediation analyses for each of the two hypotheses are presented. The final section (5.4) summarises the results.

5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Information about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (e.g. gender, ethnicity, employment status, tenure, previous work experience and age) was collected in Section F of the survey questionnaire (Appendix H). A profile of the demographic characteristics of the sample of 191 newcomers who responded to the mail survey is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Number of Cases in Each Category (N=191)
Gender	
Female	77
Male	114
Missing Cases	0
Ethnicity	
European/NZ European	161
NZ Māori	16
Pacific Peoples	1
Chinese	2
Other Asian	1
Indian	2
Other	8
Missing Cases	0
Employment Status	
Full Time	146
Part Time	43
Missing Cases	2
Tenure	
Up to 3 months	24
4-6 months	43
7-9 months	38
10-12 months	86
Missing Cases	0
Previous Work Experience	
Less than 1 year	11
1-Less than 2 years	15
2-5 years	41
6-10 years	32
More than 10 years	87
Missing Cases	5
Age	
16-24	51
25-34	55
35-44	39
45-54	24
55-64	16
Over 65	2
Missing Cases	4

Sixty percent of the respondents indicated their gender as male and 40% as female. The vast majority (84%) identified as European, 8% as Maori, with the remaining respondents (8%) being individuals from other ethnic groupings. Approximately 77% of respondents were employed full-time and almost 23% in part-time employment. Of the newcomers who responded to the survey, 13% indicated that they had been working up to 3 months, approximately 22% between 4-6 months, 20% for 7-9 months and the majority (45%) between 10-12 months. At the time the survey was completed, most respondents fell into the 25-34 year age group (29%). This was followed by 16-24 years (27%), 35-44 years (21%), 55-64 years (9%) and then 45-54 years (8%). Only 1% of respondents were over 65 years of age. The majority of respondents (47%) had more than 10 years previous work experience in other firms, 22% had 2-5 years of experience and 17% had 6-10 years of work experience. Newcomers with the least amount of previous work experience were 1-2 years (8%) and up to one year (6%).

Prior to conducting the correlation, regression and mediation analyses, the means and standard deviations for the study variables of socialisation outcomes (organisational knowledge, task mastery, role clarity, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit), the individual factor of newcomer proactivity and the social network characteristics (size, range, status, strength and frequency) for each of the friendship and informational networks were calculated. A summary of means and standard deviations for each of the study variables are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD
1. Organisational Knowledge	3.93	0.64
2. Task Mastery	3.95	0.53
3. Role Clarity	3.99	0.56
4. Social Integration	3.94	0.62
5. Organisational Commitment	3.50	0.65
6. Intention to Quit	2.03	0.95
7. Proactivity	3.73	0.55
8. Friendship Network Size	4.08	2.27
9. Friendship Network Range	1.96	1.00
10. Friendship Network Status	2.37	0.71
11. Friendship Network Strength	1.97	0.55
12. Friendship Network Frequency	1.58	0.82
13. Informational Network Size	4.31	2.04
14. Informational Network Range	2.27	1.14
15. Informational Network Status	2.78	0.61
16. Informational Network Strength	1.82	0.52
17. Informational Network Frequency	1.56	0.73

Results of note for the descriptive statistics for the study variables show that the means for the socialisation outcomes of organisational knowledge ($M = 3.93$), task mastery ($M = 3.95$), role clarity ($M = 3.99$), social integration ($M = 3.94$), organisational commitment ($M = 3.50$), and newcomer proactivity ($M = 3.73$) were all above the mid-point (3) of the 5 point scale and close to 4. The mean for the intention to quit variable was below 3 ($M = 2.03$). Standard deviations for these variables are also relatively small (< 1.0). These statistics indicate that, collectively, newcomers in small firms are in general agreement that they: are knowledgeable about the organisation (organisational knowledge); feel confident in their ability to perform tasks (task mastery); have assimilated into the work group (social integration); have a sense of attachment to the organisation (organisational commitment); have low turnover intentions (intention to quit); and have a disposition to engage in proactive behaviours (proactivity).

As previously noted in Chapter Three, although the individuals listed by newcomers for the two different types of networks (friendship and informational) differed by more than two thirds (72%) and were quite distinct, the mean differences between the two types of networks in terms of the specific network characteristics of size, range, status, strength and frequency were not that dissimilar. The average size of the friendship and informational networks were 4.08 and 4.31 respectively. For network range, the average for both networks was close to 2 (1.96 and 2.27 respectively), network status means between 2 and 3 (2.37 for the friendship network and 2.78 for the informational network), network strength very similar (1.97 and 1.82 respectively) and frequency of information exchange almost identical (1.58 for friendship networks and 1.56 for informational networks).

5.2 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The results of the correlation analysis examining the relationships between the study variables of socialisation outcomes, proactivity and social network types and characteristics, as well as the reliabilities are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3
Correlations and Reliabilities of Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Organisational Knowledge	(.82)																
2. Task Mastery	.30**	(.83)															
3. Role Clarity	.53**	.44**	(.87)														
4. Social Integration	.36**	.29**	.51**	(.87)													
5. Organisational Commitment	.33**	.01	.20**	.47**	(.75)												
6. Intention to Quit	-.30**	-.06	-.26**	-.42**	-.68**	(.92)											
7. Proactivity	.05	.12	.09	.15*	.06	-.03	(.78)										
8. Friendship Network Size	.13	.01	.13	.21**	.25**	.08	.07										
9. Friendship Network Range	.13	.05	.10	.16*	.15*	.07	-.01	.64**									
10. Friendship Network Status	.10	.12	-.02	.02	.21**	.09	.19*	.05	.11								
11. Friendship Network Strength	.14	-.03	-.01	.02	.19*	.14	-.03	-.04	-.04	.06							
12. Friendship Network Frequency	.04	-.01	.01	.04	.01	-.01	.15*	.13	.10	.07	-.09						
13. Informational Network Size	.09	-.11	.09	-.03	.14	.06	-.06	.33**	.33**	.06	.01	.04					
14. Informational Network Range	.06	.05	.07	.02	.01	-.02	.02	.21**	.50**	.11*	-.07	.06	.60**				
15. Informational Network Status	-.02	.19*	-.07	-.03	-.04	-.06	.15*	.03	.10	.37**	-.07	-.01	-.01	.13			
16. Informational Network Strength	.09	.12	.08	.07	.27**	.01	-.07	.11	.03	.06	.46**	-.05	-.02	-.01	.09		
17. Informational Network Frequency	-.12	.04	-.08	-.15*	-.13	-.18*	.10	-.01	-.11	-.09	-.10	.45**	-.06	-.12	.09	.46	

Note:

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Reliabilities are in parenthesis.

The results for the social network characteristics for the two types of networks show that there were strong positive correlations between friendship network size and friendship network range ($r = .64, p < .01$), as well as between informational network size and informational network range ($r = .60, p < .01$). The results also indicate moderate positive correlations between: friendship network size and informational network size ($r = .33, p < .01$) and informational network range ($r = .21, p < .01$); friendship network status and informational network status ($r = .37, p < .01$); friendship network range and informational network range ($r = .50, p < .01$); friendship network strength and informational network strength ($r = .46, p < .01$); and friendship network frequency and informational network frequency ($r = .45, p < .01$). For each of the specific social network characteristics (i.e. size, range, status, strength and frequency) that are common to the two types of networks (friendship and informational) the results show statistically significant positive correlations.

The correlations among the six socialisation outcomes (organisational knowledge, task mastery, role clarity, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit) show that the relationships between organisational knowledge and the other five socialisation outcomes of task mastery ($r = .30, p < .01$), role clarity ($r = .53, p < .01$), social integration ($r = .36, p < .01$), organisational commitment ($r = .33, p < .01$) and intention to quit ($r = -.30, p < .01$) are all statistically significant. The results also show a significant positive relationship between task mastery and the two socialisation outcomes of role clarity ($r = .44, p < .01$) and social integration ($r = .29, p < .01$). The role clarity construct shows significant correlations with social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit that are statistically significant ($r = .51, p < .01, r = .20, p < .01$ and $r = -.26, p < .01$ respectively). There were moderate correlations between social integration and the two socialisation outcomes of organisational commitment ($r = .47, p < .01$) and intention to quit ($r = -.42, p < .01$). The strongest correlation amongst the socialisation outcomes was the negative relationship between organisational commitment and intention to quit ($r = -.68, p < .01$). Overall, the results of the correlation analysis for the socialisation outcomes indicate positive, statistically significant correlations between almost all of the socialisation outcome variables.

The results also show a small, but positive relationship between informational network status and task mastery ($r = .19, p < .05$), while informational network frequency was negatively related to social integration ($r = -.15, p < .05$). Correlations between each of friendship network size ($r = .25, p < .01$), range ($r = .15, p < .05$), status ($r = .21, p < .01$) and strength ($r = .19, p < .05$), as well as informational network strength ($r = .27, p < .01$), all show a statistically

significant relationship with organisational commitment. The correlation analysis results also indicate that there were no statistically significant correlations between the two socialisation outcomes of organisational knowledge and role clarity with any of the social network characteristics of friendship and informational networks. As a consequence of this, a decision was made to exclude the organisational knowledge and role clarity variables from the subsequent analysis. Table 5.3 also indicates that there were positive, but weak correlations between newcomer proactivity and the status characteristic for both the friendship and informational networks ($r = .19, p < .001$ and $r = .15, p < .05$ respectively). The proactivity construct also shows a positive correlation with the frequency characteristic of the friendship network. This correlation was also weak ($r = .15, p < .05$).

The results of the reliability analysis for the constructs of organisational knowledge (.82), task mastery (.83), role clarity (.87), social integration (.87), organisational commitment (.75), intention to quit (.92) and proactive personality (.78) (see Chapter Three for the reliability analysis) included in Table 5.3 are all well above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2013), indicating good reliability for each construct.

Based on overall results of the correlation analysis and the reliability analysis, as well as the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for this study (refer literature review), sound reasons existed for including and further exploring the relationship between the remaining variables in the subsequent regression and mediation analysis.

5.3 REGRESSION ANALYSIS AND MEDIATION ANALYSIS

As presented in Chapter Two and depicted by Figure 2.1, two hypotheses were proposed for this phase of the study. This section presents the results of the hypotheses testing that lent themselves to regression analysis (hypothesis 1) and mediation analysis (hypothesis 2).

Newcomer Proactivity and Socialisation Outcomes

Hypothesis 1 stated that newcomer proactivity would predict socialisation outcomes. To test this hypothesis the socialisation outcomes of task mastery, social integration, intention to quit and organisational commitment were regressed on newcomer proactivity. The results of the regression analysis are reported in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4

Results of Regression Analysis: Socialisation Outcomes on Newcomer Proactivity Outcomes

Variables	Task Mastery	Social Integration	Intention to Quit	Organisational Commitment
Newcomer Proactivity	.12	.15*	.06	.07
R^2	.02	.02	.01	.01
F	2.83	4.34	.61	1.03

Note. N=191. Entries are standardised regression coefficients (β).

* $p < .05$

As Table 5.4 shows the positive relationships between newcomer proactivity and social integration is statistically significant ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$). However, newcomer proactivity was not a significant predictor of: task mastery ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$); intention to quit ($\beta = .06$, $p < .05$); and organisational commitment ($\beta = .07$, $p < .05$). These results provide partial support for hypothesis 1.

According to Preacher and Hayes (2004) and Preacher and Hayes (2008), in the assessment of indirect effects (mediation), it is quite possible to find that an indirect effect is significant even when there is no evidence for a significant direct effect. Thus, in the absence of any significant direct effect of newcomer proactivity on the socialisation outcomes of task mastery, intention to quit and organisational commitment; it was still worthwhile testing for the significant indirect effects of newcomer proactivity on socialisation outcomes through social networks.

Social Networks as a Mediator of Newcomer Proactivity and Socialisation Outcomes

Hypothesis 2 proposed that social networks mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. To test hypothesis 2, mediation analysis was conducted to investigate whether the five social network characteristics (size, range, status, strength and frequency) for each of the two types of social networks, namely, friendship and informational networks, mediated the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (task mastery, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit).

Traditionally, mediation has been tested using Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach for mediation analysis through a series of regression analysis. Although Baron and Kenny (1986) provide a conceptually appealing framework that is useful for illustrating the principles of mediation and for understanding what mediation means, this method of regression has certain limitations and there is

a need for a formal test for estimating the indirect effects in mediation models (Field, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). According to Field (2013) and Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping as a mediation procedure provides the most powerful and useful method of obtaining confidence limits for specific indirect effects under most conditions. To examine whether mediation has occurred the coefficient of the indirect effect was estimated and its confidence interval computed using bootstrap methods (Field, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Values between the upper and lower confidence limit that do not include 'zero' indicate a statistically significant mediation effect (Field, 2013). Results for each of the analysis that examined the mediating role of social network characteristics on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes are presented in Tables 5.5–5.8.

Table 5.5
Mediation of the Effect of Newcomer Proactivity on Task Mastery through Social Network Characteristics

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependant Variable	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping	
					BCa 95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Proactivity	Social Network Characteristics	Task Mastery				
	Friendship Network					
	Size		-0.003	0.010	-0.047	0.007
	Range		-0.005	0.016	-0.074	0.010
	Status		0.025	0.020	0.001	0.081
	Strength		-0.001	0.008	-0.023	0.012
	Frequency		-0.001	0.011	-0.022	0.022
	Total		0.016	0.030	-0.040	0.078
	Informational Network					
	Size		0.017	0.017	-0.003	0.067
	Range		0.001	0.012	-0.022	0.028
	Status		0.021	0.016	0.001	0.071
	Strength		-0.007	0.012	-0.049	0.005
	Frequency		0.003	0.009	-0.010	0.030
	Total		0.034	0.026	-0.147	0.100

Note: BCa, Bias corrected and accelerated.

As Table 5.5 shows, although the total effect of social network characteristics for both friendship and informational networks do not mediate the effect of newcomer proactivity on task mastery ($b = 0.016$, BCa CI (-0.040, 0.078) and $b = 0.034$, BCa CI (-0.147, 0.100) respectively), there is a significant indirect effect of newcomer proactivity on task mastery through social network status for both the friendship network ($b = 0.025$, BCa CI (0.001, 0.081)) and informational network ($b = 0.021$, BCa CI (0.001, 0.071)). This suggests that the specific social network characteristic of status for both types of networks mediates the relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery. The remaining social network characteristics (i.e. size, range, strength and frequency) for both types of networks do not appear to mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery.

Table 5.6

Mediation of the Effect of Newcomer Proactivity on Social Integration through Social Network Characteristics

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependant Variable	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping BCa 95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Proactivity	Social Network Characteristics	Social Integration				
	Friendship Network					
	Size		0.007	0.018	-0.019	0.060
	Range		-0.003	0.013	-0.052	0.013
	Status		-0.006	0.021	-0.052	0.032
	Strength		-0.005	0.011	-0.044	0.007
	Frequency		0.001	0.012	-0.031	0.023
	Total		-0.007	0.038	-0.076	0.075
	Informational Network					
	Size		0.005	0.014	-0.013	0.052
	Range		0.001	0.010	-0.017	0.025
	Status		-0.011	0.017	-0.060	0.014
	Strength		-0.006	0.013	-0.060	0.007
	Frequency		-0.015	0.015	-0.058	0.005
	Total		-0.027	0.028	-0.092	0.023

Note: BCa, Bias corrected and accelerated.

The confidence levels in Table 5.6 show that there is no significant indirect effect of newcomer proactivity on social integration through any of the social network characteristics of friendship and informational networks. This includes the total indirect effect through the five social network characteristics for each of friendship and informational networks ($b = -0.007$, BCa CI (-0.076, 0.075) and $b = -0.027$, BCa CI (-0.092, 0.023) respectively), as well as specific social network characteristics as individual mediating variables.

Table 5.7

Mediation of the Effect of Newcomer Proactivity on Organisational Commitment through Social Network Characteristics

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependant Variable	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping BCa 95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Proactivity	Social Network Characteristics	Organisational Commitment				
	Friendship Network					
	Size		0.010	0.027	-0.043	0.068
	Range		0.002	0.012	-0.012	0.041
	Status		0.036	0.027	0.001	0.110
	Strength		-0.014	0.014	-0.058	0.005
	Frequency		-0.007	0.016	-0.060	0.012
	Total		0.028	0.042	-0.048	0.120
	Informational Network					
	Size		-0.030	0.023	-0.100	0.004
	Range		0.003	0.014	-0.027	0.033
	Status		-0.006	0.017	-0.052	0.020
	Strength		-0.019	0.021	-0.076	0.010
	Frequency		0.012	0.015	-0.059	0.005
	Total		-0.066	0.035	-0.148	-0.010

Note - BCa, Bias corrected and accelerated.

As Table 5.7 shows there was a significant indirect effect of newcomer proactivity on organisational commitment through the social network characteristic of status for the friendship network ($b = 0.036$, BCa CI (0.001, 0.110)). The remaining individual social network characteristics of the friendship and informational networks indicate no significant indirect effects that mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment. Taken together, the five total social network characteristics also did not mediate the effect of newcomer proactivity on organisational commitment. This applied to both friendship networks ($b = 0.028$, BCa CI (-0.048, 0.120)) and informational networks ($b = -0.066$, BCa CI (-0.148, -0.010)).

Table 5.8

Mediation of the Effect of Newcomer Proactivity on Intention to Quit through Social Network Characteristics

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependant Variable	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping BCa 95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Proactivity	Social Network Characteristics	Intention to Quit				
	Friendship Network					
	Size		0.013	0.023	-0.012	0.094
	Range		0.001	0.019	-0.031	0.053
	Status		0.016	0.032	-0.033	0.102
	Strength		-0.007	0.013	-0.051	0.008
	Frequency		-0.009	0.025	-0.088	0.023
	Total		0.140	0.048	-0.079	0.312
	Informational Network					
	Size		-0.011	0.020	-0.084	0.012
	Range		-0.003	0.020	-0.059	0.026
	Status		-0.005	0.023	-0.070	0.032
	Strength		0.001	0.014	-0.024	0.037
	Frequency		-0.034	0.029	-0.124	0.003
Total	-0.052	0.043	-0.157	0.019		

Note - BCa, Bias corrected and accelerated.

The results presented in Table 5.8 show that there was no significant indirect effect of newcomer proactivity on intention to quit through any of the five specific social network characteristics as mediators for either the friendship or informational networks when investigating. The total indirect effect for friendship and informational networks were non-significant ($b = 0.014$, BCa CI (-0.079, 0.312) and $b = -0.052$, BCa CI (-0.157, 0.019) respectively).

5.4 SUMMARY

The results presented for this quantitative phase of the study provide a description of the study variables and an analysis of how newcomers perceive the role of social networks and proactivity for socialisation outcomes in small firms.

Collectively, the means for all of the socialisation outcomes indicate that newcomers are in general agreement that learning and adjustment has occurred and socialisation outcomes have for the most part been achieved. Overall, most of the correlations between socialisation outcomes are statistically significant. Although the two types of social networks are quite distinct in terms of individuals

listed by newcomers as making up the specific network, it is interesting to note that the average differences in specific network characteristics for the two networks are quite similar. The correlations between the specific social network characteristics for the two types of networks are also statistically significant.

Overall, the results of the mediation analysis indicate that certain individual social network characteristics mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and certain socialisation outcomes. These social network characteristics and socialisation outcomes are as follows:

- Friendship network status and task mastery;
- Informational network status and task mastery; and
- Friendship network status and organisational commitment.

The results indicate that the remaining social network characteristics do not mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Results of the analysis of the survey data for the quantitative phase of the study that examined the role of social networks as a mechanism underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes were presented in Chapter Five. This chapter presents a discussion of the survey results of the quantitative component of the study. The first section (Section 6.1) discusses the aggregate results. This is followed by Section 6.2 that includes a discussion of the correlation analysis. Finally, the results of the regression analysis and mediation analysis are discussed (Section 6.3).

6.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

This section presents a discussion of the results at the aggregate level for the data collected from newcomers related to social network types and characteristics, newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (see Table 5.2). This provides an overall perspective of how newcomers in small firms view the relative importance of these key variables that were used to examine social networks as a mechanism through which the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity affects newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes.

Although newcomers were informed in the survey questionnaire that individuals who formed part of their social networks could be listed as belonging to both a friendship network and informational network, an interesting finding was that newcomers were able to differentiate and drew a fairly clear distinction between the organisational insiders who make up the two different types of networks. The organisational insiders listed by newcomers as making up the two networks differ by more than 70%. Given the relatively small number of employees employed by small firms (i.e. 10 to 49 employees) this is an interesting finding, as there was an expectation that most organisational insiders who formed part of a newcomer's social network would be part of both friendship and informational networks and there would be far more similarities than differences between the individuals listed in the two types of networks. This suggests that even though there was some

overlap of individuals listed in the two different types of networks (approximately 38%), informational and friendship networks in small firms tend to be structured differently and newcomers are able to distinguish differences in terms of the nature of the two distinct types of networks. In addition, organisational insiders in small firms who are part of a newcomer's friendship network are not necessarily regarded as part of an informational network and vice versa. This is consistent with the view that social networks are comprised of a resource dimension that focuses on work related informational content and a relational dimension indicative of the building of interpersonal relationships (Yang, Gong & Huo, 2011). This is likely to influence the nature of the interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders who make up the network and resultant learning and adjustment outcomes (Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002).

In large firms informational networks are better configured to assist newcomers in acquiring information that facilitates job, role and organisational related learning, while friendship networks are best suited to facilitate newcomers' social integration into their work group (Morrison, 2002). In small firms, the close nature of the relationships and the frequency of interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders suggest that despite the distinction newcomers draw between the two types of networks, both informational and friendship networks are likely to facilitate a range of different types of learning (e.g. job, work, organisational and social) newcomers require in order to adjust to their new environment. This view is supported by the findings of the qualitative phase of the study that suggests that both friendship and informational networks provide newcomers with access to information that facilitates work related job and organisational learning, as well as newcomer assimilation into the work group.

Although the individuals listed in the two types of networks are quite distinct, it is also interesting to note that the averages for the two types of networks in terms of each of the specific network characteristics of size, range, status, strength and frequency were quite similar. However, being small in size, it is perhaps not unexpected to find that newcomers in small firms interact, form relationships and exchange information with organisational insiders on an almost equal basis in terms of these different network characteristics, irrespective of whether it is a friendship or informational network. In keeping with the small number of employees in the small firms studied the average size of the two networks was not that large ($M = 4.08$ for friendship networks and $M = 4.31$ for informational networks). The results indicate that newcomer's network ties are, on average, with a relatively small, tight knit grouping of colleagues. In addition, this suggests that relative to

the size of small firms, the size of newcomer's networks might be comparative and proportional. The average size of these networks is also reflected in comments from respondents during the qualitative phase of the study. The average number of work units/departments/sections (network range) representing each type of network is also relatively small (i.e. averaging approximately two). Again, this is perhaps not surprising, given the size of small firms and the probability that these firms are not likely to have flatter structures and not many different work units. This suggests that newcomers are able to access most of the necessary information required to learn and adjust to their new environment across a narrow range of a small number of different work sections.

Newcomers also indicated that in terms of network status their primary relationships and sources of information are experienced workers and supervisors/managers ($M = 2.37$ for friendship networks and $M = 2.78$ for informational networks). This finding is consistent with the findings from the qualitative phase of the study that suggest experienced workers, including those in more senior positions, are accessible, approachable and regarded as valuable sources of information for newcomers in small firms. In addition, results show that relationships with organisational insiders for friendship and informational networks are reasonably close (network strength averaging a mean score of approximately 2). The mean scores of approximately 1.6 for both types of networks for the network characteristic of 'frequency' also indicate that newcomers tend to exchange information and socialisation occurs on an almost daily basis to a few times per week with those organisational insiders who form part of these networks. These findings reflect the close proximity that employees in small firms work in and the frequent interactions that take place in the course of their employment.

The standard deviations for both types of networks for the characteristic of network size were approximately 2, which indicate a slight variation from the means of 4.08 for friendship network size and 4.31 for informational network size. These results are not surprising given that newcomers listed between zero and eight organisational insiders they considered to be friends and sources of information in the small firms studied that employed 10-49 employees. The standard deviations for friendship and informational networks for the network characteristics of status, strength and frequency were all less than 1, while the standard deviations for friendship network range was 1.00 and for informational network range it was 1.14. This indicates that the sample data is clustered fairly closely around the means for these characteristics and there is little variability in relation to these social network characteristics for friendship networks and informational networks.

Overall, the descriptive results for the social network characteristics suggest that in small firms' newcomers are members of relatively small networks, with reasonably tight ties, where frequent contacts occur on an almost daily basis between newcomers and socialisation agents. This enables newcomers to access a range and variety of information via both types of networks. The structure and patterns of these social network ties are likely to support job, work, organisational and social learning and relate in systematic ways to socialisation outcomes.

The relatively high mean for proactivity ($M = 3.73$) suggests that overall newcomers in small firms regard their disposition in terms of the approaches that they take to interacting with organisational insiders and accessing information when learning and adjusting to situations in their new environment as proactive. These findings further suggest that newcomers feel confident displaying proactive tendencies such as taking initiative and action in learning and adjusting to their new environment. This finding is also supported by the findings for the qualitative phase of the study where both newcomers and socialisation agents cited examples of newcomer proactivity as an individual factor that had a positive influence on learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process. The findings also suggest that newcomer proactivity is not only viewed as a positive newcomer characteristic, but is also supported and, in certain instances, actively encouraged in small firms.

The mean results for all the socialisation outcomes of organisational knowledge ($M = 3.93$), task mastery ($M = 3.95$), role clarity ($M = 3.99$), social integration ($M = 3.94$) and organisational commitment ($M = 3.50$) and intention to quit ($M = 3.98$) are all above the mid-point of the scale, which suggests that collectively newcomers in small firms are in general agreement that based on their socialisation experiences these socialisation outcomes are for the most part achieved. In addition, the mean of 2.03 for the socialisation outcome of intention to quit suggests that, overall; newcomers did not have a strong intention to leave the organisation within at least three years.

Overall, the socialisation outcome results indicate that small firms tend to be able to successfully onboard newcomers from the time they enter the organisation and the early period thereafter that results in the achieving of positive socialisation outcomes. This is consistent with findings of the qualitative phase of the study that found that small firms appear to be conscious of the importance of ensuring newcomers learn to adjust to their new job and the organisation as quickly as possible.

In addition, newcomers who commence the process of successfully assimilating into their work group from the period of early entry are likely to be reflected in outcomes that include commitment to the organisation and wanting to remain with the organisation. The standard deviations for the socialisation outcomes were all less than 1, which indicates that there is very little variability in the sample and the means are likely to be reliable.

6.2 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The correlation coefficients between the proximal outcomes of organisational knowledge, role clarity and social integration with the distal outcomes of organisational commitment and intention to quit are all positive and statistically significant. The relationships and importance of these types of proximal and distal outcomes of the socialisation process are emphasised in the socialisation literature (Allen, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Morrison, 2002; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Although the proximal outcome of task mastery shows a significant, positive correlation with the other proximal outcomes of organisational knowledge, role clarity and social integration, the correlation with the distal outcomes of organisational commitment and intention to quit is not significant. This finding suggests that the ability for newcomers to master the requirements of their jobs is not related to their feelings of attachment to the organisation or their intention to quit the organisation. Although organisational knowledge and role clarity are regarded as important socialisation outcomes in the socialisation literature and are related to other socialisation outcomes, results of the correlation analysis indicate that there is no significant correlation with any of the other study variables included in this phase of the research. Thus, it was decided to exclude the outcomes of organisational knowledge and role clarity from the subsequent regression and mediation analyses.

Results for all the social network characteristics of size, range, status, frequency and strength show statistically significant correlations between each of the characteristics that are common to both friendship networks and informational networks (e.g. friendship network range and informational network range: $r = .50$). This indicates that there are positive relationships between the specific social network characteristics shared by both types of networks. The results also show significant correlations between certain social network characteristics (e.g. friendship network size, range, status and strength) and socialisation outcomes (e.g. organisational commitment), while other

results indicate no significant correlations (e.g. between the social network characteristics and the socialisation outcomes of organisational knowledge and role clarity). This influenced the decision to exclude organisational knowledge and role clarity from the regression and mediation analyses that followed.

6.3 REGRESSION ANALYSIS AND MEDIATION ANALYSIS

This section presents a discussion of the results of the regression analysis and mediation analysis. The regression analysis examined the relationships between newcomer proactivity and the socialisation outcomes of task mastery, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit. Results show that there is a statistically significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery, while newcomer proactivity was unrelated to the socialisation outcomes of social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit (see Table 5.4). The mediation analysis investigated whether the social network characteristics for each of friendship and informational networks mediated the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (see Tables 5.5 – 5.8). Each of the mediation analyses is discussed in relation to the specific socialisation outcomes (i.e. task mastery, social integration, intention to quit/remain and organisational commitment respectively). All the socialisation outcomes share the same independent variable (proactivity) and mediator variables (friendship and informational network characteristics). Findings suggest that certain social network characteristics mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes, while most do not.

6.3.1 Relationships between Newcomer Proactivity and Socialisation Outcomes

Hypothesis 1 proposed that newcomer proactivity would predict socialisation outcomes that include task mastery, social integration, intention to quit and organisational commitment. While the majority of socialisation literature and previous research conducted in large firms tends to strongly support the link between newcomer proactivity and important socialisation outcomes (e.g. Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Gruman et al., 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Saks et al., 2011; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), which

suggests that this hypothesis was plausible, the results of the regression analysis found that the hypothesis was not fully supported (see Table 5.4).

Of the socialisation outcomes examined, only task mastery was found to have a significant, albeit weak, relationship with newcomer proactivity. There was a lack of a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and the socialisation outcomes of social integration, intention to quit and organisational commitment. This suggests that in the small firms studied, although newcomer proactivity relates to newcomers' ability to master job tasks, newcomer proactivity operates differently in relation to social integration, intention to quit and organisational commitment. Interestingly, although the mean scores for the socialisation outcomes are indicators of successful socialisation in the small firms studied (see Table 5.2), newcomer proactivity was found to be not directly related to the socialisation outcomes investigated. However, it should be noted that research examining the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes have resulted in mixed findings, with results suggesting that the relationships between newcomer proactive behaviours and socialisation outcomes may be complex (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

The findings suggest that the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firm is more complex than expected and various additional variables are likely to impact on this relationship. The view that a combination of additional individual newcomer and organisational environmental factors are likely to influence the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes is supported by Cooper-Thomas and Burke (2012). Thus, a more comprehensive understanding of the newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes relationship is likely to benefit from the inclusion of additional individual and organisational factors that may impact on this relationship. Examples of additional individual newcomer characteristics include previous work experience (Beyer & Hannah, 2002), job skill level (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), the 'Big Five' personality factors, namely: openness; conscientiousness; extraversion; agreeableness; and neuroticism (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011) and self-efficacy (Gruman et al., 2006). Organisational factors such as firm size that influences approaches to socialisation, the type of job the newcomer is required to perform, relationships with insiders and the role of networks as sources of adjustment are also likely to impact on newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcome (Fang et al., 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

According to Gruman et al. (2006) and Kim et al. (2005) situational factors related to the organisation's work environment is a key variable that can either strengthen or weaken the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes. For example, whether a work environment is characterised as taking an institutionalised or individualised approach to socialisation can impact on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). According to Cooper-Thomas and Burke (2012) the possibility exists that individualised approaches, favoured by small firms, to onboard newcomers neutralises or reduces the need for and effects of proactive behaviours in achieving successful outcomes.

Further research would probably benefit from including an examination of the impact of additional individual newcomer and organisational environmental factors on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Fang et al., 2011). As is the case for this phase of the study, an investigation of the role of social networks as a mediator of the relationship between newcomer proactivity and the socialisation outcomes of task mastery, social integration, intention to quit and organisational commitment, is a step in this direction. As previously noted, although there might be an absence of significant direct effects between newcomer proactivity and certain socialisation outcomes, it is still worthwhile assessing for significant indirect effects when testing for mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

6.3.2 Effects of Mediation on Task Mastery

Results of the mediation analysis suggest that social network status for both types of networks mediates the relationship between newcomer proactivity and the socialisation outcome of task mastery. Newcomers who display proactive behaviours are likely to take the initiative in forming informational ties and establishing social relationships with experienced organisational insiders who form part of status networks. These experienced organisational insiders include not only peers, but also those in more senior positions in the hierarchy (e.g. supervisors and managers), who have the necessary job related knowledge that newcomers are able to access that facilitates their task mastery. This is consistent with the socialisation literature that supports the view that experienced organisational insiders are able to provide newcomers with the necessary information and resources

that facilitates their task mastery (Anakwe & Greenhaus; 1999; Morrison, 2002; Zagenczyk et al., 2010). Interestingly, findings from Morrison's (2002) study examining the relationship between social networks and socialisation outcomes found a significant, positive relationship between informational network status and task mastery, but not friendship network status and task mastery. A possible reason for friendship network status in this study also mediating the relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery is that in small firms newcomers are able to access job related information from friends who are experienced co-workers or at a more senior staff level that contributes towards their mastery of job requirements. This suggests that in small firms' social networks that enable proactive newcomers to 'buddy up' with experienced organisational insiders has a positive effect on task learning. This is consistent with the view of Anakwe and Greenhaus (1999) that a newcomer who has access to experienced colleagues from their work group facilitates their task mastery. The role of experienced organisational insiders as important sources of information that facilitate newcomer learning of job tasks is also reflected in the findings of the qualitative phase of the study.

The lack of a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery through network range could be due to organisational insiders from different work units not having the specific task related information newcomers require or they might provide conflicting information to newcomers (Morrison, 2002). Thus, despite proactive newcomers displaying initiative in attempting to access network information and resources from organisational insiders across a range of work units, the possibility exists that these insiders are unable to provide the necessary task related support. In instances when insiders are able to provide advice and assistance, the information provided may be redundant or contradictory and could even hinder newcomers' ability to master new job tasks.

According to Morrison (2002), small networks, with close and frequent contacts between newcomers and organisational insiders are likely to provide newcomers with the necessary specific and detailed information required to master job tasks. Consistent with this, it was expected that proactive newcomers who were part of small networks and who also initiated and took action to build close network ties with frequent interactions with organisational insiders would facilitate task learning. Possible reasons for this not being reflected in the results could be the nature of the tasks and the type of information required to master tasks in small firms. Proactive newcomers might benefit from closer contact and more frequent access to organisational insiders who are able to

provide quality information when required to master complex tasks, while more routine tasks might require less proactivity and interaction and support from organisational insiders to learn job requirements. This is consistent with the view that the degree of autonomy, accountability and ambiguity attached to a job influences the need for proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008). The skills level required to master tasks plays a role in determining the proactive behaviours of newcomers, with proactive newcomers likely to display higher levels of proactivity in jobs requiring higher levels of skill (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). This could be particularly relevant to proactive newcomers in certain small firms who might not require much information and support from organisational insiders to learn the job requirements of their new position.

The findings from the qualitative phase of the study suggests that proactive newcomers are also likely to display initiative and seek out and obtain job related information during the pre-encounter phase of socialisation and soon after commencing employment. This indicates that they may be able to master tasks fairly quickly and are less reliant on others in their social network after the early period of entry into the organisation to learn job tasks. In addition, at the risk of being perceived as ignorant, proactive newcomers are also likely to rely on sources of information other than organisational insiders for support and advice to learn tasks (Rollag et al., 2005). Network insiders might also be of the opinion that proactive newcomers are more able to fend for themselves and will take the initiative in approaching them should they require information and advice.

6.3.3 Effects of Mediation on Social Integration

Instances where newcomers are able to form relationships, obtain information and access support from organisational insiders enables these newcomers to fit in with their work group and become part of the social fabric of the organisation (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). However, contrary to what was expected, an interesting finding was that social networks did not mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and social integration. The possibility exists that additional processes and factors over and above social network factors influence the relationship between newcomer proactivity and social integration (Fang et al., 2011).

As the findings of the qualitative phase of the study indicate, in many small firms the nature of the contacts and interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders, which are initiated by small firms and that commence during the pre-encounter phase, contributes to newcomers' social integration. This continues from the time a newcomer enters the organisation and during the early encounter phase when newcomers are introduced into the organisation, made to feel welcome and part of the work group. According to Rollag et al. (2005), these introductions and welcome that newcomers receive in certain small firms represent an organisations "permission slip" for social integration. As also highlighted in the findings of the qualitative phase of the study, social activities and events are a salient feature of the small firms studied in providing opportunities that support newcomers' assimilation into the social milieu of their new environment. The relative informal nature of the interactions between employees, together with the close contacts and frequent interactions across a range of work units that is characteristic of small firms suggests that opportunities exist for newcomers to socially integrate, irrespective of newcomers displaying proactive behaviours that enable them to access social networks that facilitate their social integration. As the qualitative findings illustrate, involving newcomers in small firms in informal work and social activities that include group discussions with colleagues, informal meetings and social gatherings such as lunch send newcomers' messages of being accepted by the work group and contributes to newcomers' social integration (Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

In small firms, where fewer newcomers are likely to commence employment over a similar period, newcomers are likely to interact and socially integrate with a range of organisational insiders, whereas in larger firms that tend to employ more newcomers at the same time, these newcomers are likely to assimilate and integrate amongst themselves. During this process of learning to master job related tasks, when interactions and exchange of information occurs between newcomers and organisational insiders, social assimilation of newcomers into the work group might occur that reduces the role of proactivity and social network ties specifically aimed at social integration. In addition, despite newcomers displaying proactive behaviours and establishing network ties with a range of newcomers and quality relationships being established, a single low quality relationship can have an adverse effect on social integration into the work group (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

6.3.4 Effects of Mediation on Intention to Quit

Another unexpected result was the lack of a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and intention to quit that is mediated through social network ties. It was expected that proactive newcomers who were able to access network information and resources via informational and friendship ties would have higher levels of learning and adjustment to their new environment and decrease the likelihood of them intending to leave the organisation. However, the mean results suggest that newcomers intend remaining with the organisation irrespective of displaying proactive behaviours that provided them with access to social networks during the socialisation process.

Despite research proposing significant associations between socialisation variables and attitudinal outcomes that include intention to quit, evidence is mixed and there is a lack of empirical support indicating that changes to attitudinal outcomes such as intention to quit occur during the socialisation process (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005). For example, research by Yang et al. (2011) shows a weak relationship between proactive personality and intention to quit. This suggests that the relationship between newcomer proactivity and the socialisation outcome of intention to leave the organisation needs to be viewed against the background of situational and contextual factors (Mitchell et al., 2001). A key contextual factor that is a feature of this study was the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that commenced during the latter half of 2007 and continued beyond 2010. This was characterised by growing unemployment and underemployment that probably restricted the number of perceived alternative organisation and job opportunities employees felt were available in the job market (Foster & McChesney, 2012; Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012). This was likely to be particularly relevant to newcomers who, although they might have been seeking alternative employment due to being dissatisfied with their onboarding, probably had second thoughts if they had considered quitting the organisation during the period of the GFC. This is consistent with research that shows that given the absence of employment alternatives, dissatisfied employees that are not committed to the organisation are more likely to remain with the organisation rather than quit (Kang et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001).

In addition, prior to accepting and commencing employment, proactive individuals are likely to explore pre-employment options and have more employment prospects available to them before making an informed employment decision (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy & Shalhoop, 2006). These

proactive newcomers may also access information about the characteristics of the organisation as part of their job search that can assist them in making a decision about their perceived fit with the organisation, work group and job. Should the fit be appropriate, this, in turn, is likely to make them less reliant on social network ties to facilitate their onboarding, while at the same time reducing the likelihood of them intending to leave the organisation.

6.3.5 Effects of Mediation on Organisational Commitment

Another statistically significant result was that friendship network status mediated the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment. This finding is not surprising, as it was expected that proactive newcomers who established friendship ties with organisational insiders that included experienced colleagues and those in more senior positions would form an attachment to the overall organisation. Interestingly, informational network status did not mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment. The findings suggest that the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment operates differently in the case of friendship network status as opposed to informational network status. A possible explanation is that proactive newcomers who establish friendship network ties with organisational insiders across different hierarchical levels are able to form personal relationships and access valuable information, support and advice that impart a sense of identity, belonging, support and acceptance, which results in instilling a sense of attachment to the overall organisation (organisational commitment). The findings are consistent with Morrison's (2002) research that found organisational commitment is strongest in situations where newcomers are able to establish a set of friendship ties with organisational insiders across a range of different levels, as opposed to only peers on the same level. Newcomer friendship ties with peers is likely to result in newcomers forming an attachment with that specific group of peers, whereas friendship networks across levels, including those in senior positions, will result in a stronger commitment to the overall organisation.

The positive effects of friendship network ties made up of individuals from different levels and organisational commitment is also consistent with the findings for the qualitative phase of the study. For example, newcomers described incidents where the welcoming and camaraderie they experienced from insiders, including those in more senior positions, from the time of commencing employment made them feel a sense of attachment and belonging to the organisation. Newcomers'

also highlighted incidents where the friendship ties formed with insiders at different levels made them feel comfortable approaching these insiders to discuss work and non-work related issues that were satisfactorily addressed, which, in turn, increased the commitment of these newcomers to the organisation.

It was also expected that the commitment of proactive newcomers would be facilitated by small sized networks that consisted of strong ties, with frequent interactions with organisational insiders across a range of different work groups (Morrison, 2002). However, the mediation analysis suggests that the social network characteristics of size, range, closeness and frequency do not mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment. As previously noted, it is possible that proactive newcomers are likely to pre-select organisations in terms of newcomer-organisational fit and their experiences during the pre-encounter phase reinforce their expectations. The role of newcomers in determining organisational fit during the pre-encounter phase was supported by the findings from the qualitative phase of the study. When newcomers' expectations of the organisation are confirmed on commencing employment this creates a sense of belongingness and attachment to the organisation. This might, in turn, reduce the reliance of proactive newcomers on certain social network characteristics in ensuring commitment to the organisation.

6.3.6 Overall Effects of Mediation on Socialisation Outcomes

Overall, the results for this quantitative phase of the study show that social network characteristics do not fully mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. These results raise the likelihood that there are additional factors that play a role in influencing the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes that include social networks as a mediator. According to Crant (2000) proactivity is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes and outcomes. Thus, the inclusion of additional individual and organisational factors is likely to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables under investigation (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

As previously noted and as the results from this study suggest, small firms and large firms differ in terms of their approaches to socialisation and variables that include newcomer proactivity and social network factors are likely to also operate differently during the socialisation process in these

firms. This is supported by the small body of research undertaken into comparing the socialisation processes between small and large firms that indicates that important differences exist between small and large firms (e.g. Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag & Cardon, 2004). The possibility exists that the situational conditions in the small firms studied are such that the role of newcomer proactivity in accessing social networks in order to achieve socialisation outcomes are reduced, negated or not fully understood. Simply equating proactivity and the existence of social network characteristics with resultant benefits does not account for the dynamics of the process (Anderson, 2008; Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001). As the results of the qualitative phase of the study suggest, this is especially so in small firms that tend to have unique social systems, structures, cultures, processes and practices that impact on the underlying dynamic of the socialisation process. This, in turn, impacts on the way in which socialisation factors influence newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes in these firms. According to results of Rollag et al.'s (2005) small firm study that highlight interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders as important sources of information that contribute to getting newcomers up to speed, various "myths" exist about what makes this process effective in small firms. These include the expectation that proactive newcomers require little or no support, massive amounts of information contribute to newcomer learning, brief and superficial introductions are adequate and the assigning of a mentor rather than a "buddy" to a newcomer is best for newcomers.

Additional situational and contextual factors such as the type of environment are key determinants influencing newcomer proactivity (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). According to Grant and Ashford (2008) situational conditions that include a lack of accountability, low levels of ambiguity and little autonomy reduce the need for proactivity. The possibility exists that these conditions might exist in small firms, to a lesser or greater degree, and reduce or negate the effects of newcomers with a proactive personality on learning and adjustment. In addition, the existing social systems and processes in small firms might be such that, irrespective of proactive newcomers being able to access social networks to learn and adjust to their new environment, these firms are able to provide opportunities for all employees to interact and establish relationships that support the achievement of successful socialisation outcomes. This is consistent with the view that newcomer proactivity is likely to have less of an effect on newcomer learning and adjustment in organisations that make an effort to onboard newcomers, and vice versa (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). As the qualitative phase of this study suggest, small firms appear to be conscious of the need to onboard newcomers as quickly and effectively as possibly through the establishing of relationships

and exchange of information. This is likely to lessen the need for newcomer proactivity in order to learn and adjust to a new environment.

Proactive newcomers also tend to require less socialisation and be less reliant on sources of information such as social networks to learn and adjust to their new environments. Prior to commencing employment proactive newcomers are likely to take the initiative and more responsibility themselves in understanding their new work environment and determining how they will fit into the organisation, work group and perform their tasks. This, in turn, requires less information and support to learn and adjust to their new environment (Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011). This is supported by the findings of the qualitative phase of the study that found that proactive newcomers tend to utilise the opportunities provided during the pre-encounter phase to initiate socialisation by seeking out as much pre-employment information as possible. This suggests that proactive newcomers might not regard themselves as overly reliant on social network ties, as they are likely to take the initiative themselves in accessing alternative information sources that facilitate learning and adjusting to their new environment. The qualitative findings also show that proactive newcomers continue their information gathering approaches on entering the organisation and this might make them less dependent on social networks as sources of information in order to achieve successful outcomes.

A further possible reason for the findings is that the advantages proactive newcomers might obtain from a certain type of network structure are counterbalanced by potential disadvantages inherent in that specific network structure. This might require trade-offs in terms of the specific type of social network structure that best meets the needs of the different type of newcomer learning and adjustment required (Morrison, 2002). For example, mastery of tasks might be best suited to informational networks that consist of a small number of ties, with strong connections and frequent interactions. On the other hand, acquiring knowledge of the organisation might require a larger network size, comprised of weaker connections and less frequent interactions.

It is also worth noting that although socialisation literature identifies interaction and relationship building as key dimensions of newcomer proactivity (Ashford & Black, 1996; Fang et al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2000; Morrison, 2002), in certain instances work colleagues might intentionally or unintentionally prevent newcomers from accessing information and resources required to learn and

adjust to their new environments (Major & Kozlowski, 1997; Morrison, 1993a; Morrison, 1993b). This suggests that notwithstanding the attempts of proactive newcomers to access social networks in order to initiate learning and adjustment and achieve successful outcomes, this might not always result in the desired outcomes due to a lack of the necessary support received from organisational insiders. As the results of the qualitative phase of the study found, the likelihood exists that the quality of interactions and relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders can vary and negative relationships can have an adverse effect on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes. Thus, although proactive newcomers might take action to initiate interactions with organisational insiders and small firms are conscious of the importance of newcomers forming social network ties with co-workers that facilitate newcomer onboarding, various factors might hinder this process.

Furthermore, although it is argued that newcomer proactivity relates to better work related outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007; Klein & Heuser, 2008; Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006), research results are mixed and at times fails to find a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2007; Bateman & Crant, 1993; Chan, 2006). Further insights into the psychology and behaviour that newcomers with proactive personalities display in constructing social networks, the positions they occupy in these networks and the resultant underlying dynamics of these social network relationships is required (Fuller & Marler, 2009). It has also been argued that many personality effects are in fact social network effects (e.g. Burt, 1992; Burt, 2000). Interestingly, research by Mehra, Kilduff and Brass (2001) that examined social network variables as a mediator of the relationship between the personality variable of self-monitoring (that bears some similarities to proactivity) on work outcomes found no evidence of mediation and support for their mediation model. The results of this study suggested that the advantages that self-monitors might obtain from the structure of certain types of social network ties are counterbalanced by the disadvantages attached to these types of ties.

In summary, the results of the mediation analysis suggest that despite researchers highlighting the lack of previous research exploring the role of individual differences, in particular newcomer proactivity, and the likelihood that these individual differences might affect access to and mobilisation of social networks and the achievement of socialisation outcomes (e.g. Anderson, 2008; Fang et al., 2012; Mehra et al., 2001; Morrison, 2002), the results for this quantitative phase of the study suggest that, overall, social networks do not fully mediate the relationship between

newcomer proactivity in small firms. As suggested, various possible reasons that include situational and contingency factors particular to small firms might be responsible for the lack of evidence showing significant results for mediation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter first presents the main findings of the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study that address the individual research questions (Section 7.1). This is followed by a section on the contributions of this study (Section 7.2). Thereafter, implications of this study are discussed in Section 7.3. Finally, sections identifying various limitations and recommendations for future research (Section 7.4), and an overall conclusion (Section 7.5) are presented.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore and examine how social networks underpin the socialisation factors influencing learning and adjustment during the socialisation process in small firms. A main contribution of this study is to integrate the socialisation literature with the social network literature and, in doing so, extend existing socialisation research and understanding. This is done by exploring and examining the socialisation process through the ‘fine-grained theoretical lens’ of social networks as an important mechanism underpinning newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process. An additional key contribution of this study is to understanding the link between socialisation and social networks in the small firm context.

The importance of the efficient and effective socialisation of newcomers for both individuals and organisations is borne out by studies into the OS process that demonstrate the positive relationship that exists between successful OS processes and outcomes that are beneficial to both employee and employer (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012; Gruman et al., 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2011; Taris et al., 2006). Socialisation researchers have argued for some time that underpinning the socialisation process is an implicit understanding that the social networks that are formed through the interactions and the relationships that are established between newcomers and organisational insiders, play a significant role in influencing learning and adjustment (e.g. Brass, 1995; Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Ibarra, 1995; Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002; Rollag et al., 2005). This is especially so in small firms where organisational size is a key contextual factor influencing the socialisation process (Johns, 1993; Johns, 2006). In small firms, these social networks that facilitate interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders are also likely to operate differently to large organisations and play a key role during the socialisation process in these firms (Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

Despite the importance of social networks during the socialisation process being recognised in the socialisation literature, there remains a distinct lack of research into the role of social networks as a key mechanism influencing newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the socialisation process (Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Fang et al., 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2009). This is especially so in small firms that face challenges attracting and retaining talented staff and where the importance of socialisation in ensuring newcomers learn and adjust to their new environment is likely to result in positive employee and organisational outcomes. This is likely to contribute to the success and growth of these firms that are crucial to employment and the economy.

The role of social networks during the socialisation process in small firms also included an examination of:

- the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process;
- socialisation factors influencing learning and adjustment;
- the role of newcomer proactivity; and
- proximal and distal outcomes of the socialisation process.

This study employed a mixed methods research design that used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first phase of the study adopted a qualitative approach and made use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with newcomers and socialisation agents. The objective was to explore the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation in small firms from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. The second phase of this study adopted a quantitative approach, using a survey questionnaire as the data collection method to examine the impact of social networks on the relationship between the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms from a newcomer perspective.

7.1 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overall, the findings of the qualitative phase provide evidence of the important role of social networks underpinning the socialisation process in small firms. More specifically, the different types of social networks and network structures are significant socialisation factors impacting on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms.

7.1.1 Social Networks during Pre-encounter Socialisation

Research Objective 1: To explore the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation in small firms from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective.

Research Question 1: How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the pre-encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?

Findings for the qualitative phase of the study (see Chapter Four) emphasise the importance newcomers and socialisation agents attach to the role of social networks during pre-encounter socialisation in initiating newcomer socialisation via social networks consisting of newcomers and family and friends employed by small firms. These types of social network ties made up of individuals from the same social milieu are regarded by both newcomers and small firms as primary and important sources of pre-employment information and resources that initiate pre-encounter socialisation. As the newcomers and family/friends from their social milieu are known to each other prior to employment and individuals in this type of network relationship are likely to share information between each other about the new work environment, these social network ties are of particular benefit in determining the degree of ‘match’ between newcomers and the organisation and establishing realistic expectations. This approach to initiating newcomer socialisation via newcomers’ social milieu also reflects the informal methods, personalised style and flexible approach small firms tend to favour when managing employee and employer matters (e.g. Barrett & Mayson, 2007; Cameron et al., 2006; Kotey & Slade, 2005).

In addition, the human, material and financial resource constraints faced by small firms (Stevens, 2007) and the need for the speedy and effective learning and adjustment in achieving socialisation outcomes (McAdam, 2000; McAdam, 2002) is likely to support the use of these types of network ties to facilitate socialisation in small firms. Small firms that recognise the value of initiating socialisation via these social network ties appear to rely on and actively encourage these network sources consisting of family/friends known to newcomers to commence the process of onboarding newcomers.

The findings further suggest that small firms that operate in and employ newcomers from rural regions such as the one where this study was conducted regard the use of these types of networks to

initiate socialisation as a particularly valuable socialisation resource. This is perhaps not surprising, given that small firms in regional rural environments are usually an integral part of and more likely to be embedded in their immediate local community, from where these firms tend to primarily source their labour (Gilbert & Jones, 2000; Hartney & Dundon, 2006). The geographic and physical proximity between newcomers and friends/family from the same social milieu in these types of environments also facilitates the flow and sharing of information that facilitates the onboarding of newcomers.

Although newcomers' familial and social contacts, interactions and relationships form an integral part of social networks used by small firms to initiate pre-encounter socialisation that results in the successful onboarding of newcomers, the findings also suggest that in certain instances these types of social network ties do not always achieve the desired results. Altruistic relationships between newcomers and family/friends can result in unsuccessful onboarding and negative outcomes, especially when it is previously known that the suitability of the newcomer to learn and adjust to their new environment could be problematic (Magruder, 2010). This emphasises the importance for small firms of being conscious and to carefully consider the potential problems that can arise and the decisions that need to be made when onboarding a newcomer who is known to an existing social network of organisational insiders (Beaman & Magruder, 2012).

The role of social networks in initiating pre-encounter socialisation extends to the selection process and the specific selection methods used by small firms that not only assist in predicting future job performance. Selection processes provide opportunities for newcomers and organisational insiders to interact, communicate, exchange information and further the process of relationship building. The selection methods used by small firms such as interviews and work samples were found to yield valuable information regarding newcomers' current and future levels of learning and adjustment required. At the same time, the selection process also offers opportunities for proactive newcomers to actively seek out information that enables them to assess the suitability of job, work group and organisational fit and to commence the process of socialisation. The findings suggest that small firms' selection process are perhaps more rigorous and valid than expected, with a strong focus on exchanging information in determining the degree of match between the newcomer and the new environment. Anderson (2001) argues that during application of a selection method the longer the duration of the interaction between prospective newcomers and organisational insiders, the more reliable the selection method is in determining newcomer 'fit' with the job and organisation, together with the amount of information exchanged and provided by the method, the higher the impact of the selection method is likely to be on socialisation.

According to Coetzer (2006) and Coetzer and Perry (2008), small firms employee practices (e.g. selection) that establish the degree to which newcomers are able to “fit in” make a valuable contribution toward pre-employment socialisation and reduce the amount of learning and adjustment required post-employment. These expectations of fit can be created during relatively brief pre-employment encounters between newcomers and organisational insiders (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). At the same time, the amount and accuracy of information exchanged between newcomers and organisational insiders during the pre-encounter phase of socialisation plays a significant role in shaping the early socialisation experiences of newcomers, creating expectations and is a key factor in determining the success or otherwise of pre-encounter socialisation (Carr et al., 2006; Klein et al., 2006). This pre-encounter socialisation facilitated via social network ties is likely to minimise the information newcomers require on entering the organisation and contribute to speeding up and shortening the duration of the socialisation process.

7.1.2 Social Networks during Encounter Socialisation

Research Objective 1: To explore the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of socialisation in small firms from a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective.

Research Question 2: How do newcomers and socialisation agents perceive the role of social networks in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment during the encounter phase of the socialisation process in small firms?

This study’s findings suggest that from the period when newcomers enter the organisation social networks play a significant role in ensuring newcomers establish and develop ties that focus on building relationships on the one hand, and on the other are important sources of information that facilitate job and organisational related learning. The experiences recounted by newcomers and socialisation agents suggest that when viewing the socialisation process through the prism of social networks, small firms that create a climate and take actions that support the establishing and developing of relationships from the time employment commences and during the early entry period after entering the organisation are more successful in onboarding newcomers. Given the uncertainty faced by newcomers during this entry period of the socialisation process (Kim et al., 2005; Saks et al., 2007), the building of relationships is likely to be critical for newcomer adjustment to their new environment. This finding is consistent with other research highlighting the importance of the quality of relationships between newcomers and organisational insiders as a key

factor likely to affect future newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes (Korte, 2009; Korte, 2010; Korte and Lin, 2012).

The findings also suggest that in small firms newcomers are in close contact with work colleagues and the social network ties that are established tend to be close and strong, with frequent interactions between newcomers and organisational insiders that supports the development of effective relationships in these firms. Morrison's (2002) research suggests that small networks with close and strong ties are likely to result in newcomer assimilation and integration into the work group. In addition, as responses from newcomers illustrate, the nature of these social network ties in small firms (close, strong and frequent interactions) enables newcomers to establish and develop relationships not only with peers, but also with those individuals in more senior decision-making positions across a range of work units that further facilitates socialisation.

A further feature of the social networks in small firms was the involvement of newcomers in non-work related, informal social activities and events that provide opportunities for newcomers to interact with co-workers that supports relationship building. This also assists in 'fast tracking' newcomer integration and assimilation into their new work group and the organisation. Involvement in social activities that allows newcomers to spend social time with insiders also enables newcomers to internalise the values of the organisation (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chatman, 1991). This is particularly pertinent to the small firms studied where it was found that the ability of newcomers to assimilate into the culture of their new work environment is a key determinant of developing relationships with colleagues that influences their learning and adjustment. According to Hamilton (2011), in those small firms with strong cultural values and norms, learning is embedded within the social and relationships networks of the daily practices of these firms.

A key role of social networks during the encounter phase was in providing access to informational sources that, when mobilised, facilitate newcomer learning and adjustment. Opportunities that are provided via social network ties in small firms for newcomers to partner up and interact with experienced co-workers who are able to provide relevant job, work and organisational related information and resources are regarded as a particularly valuable sources of socialisation. This is consistent with the views of Anakwe and Greenhaus (1999) that newcomers who have access to experienced organisational insiders who are part of their work group supports their learning and adjustment. In addition, Hamilton (2011) contends that most learning in small firms is through interactions and relationships between work colleagues, rather than individually acquired. These findings suggest that in small firms experienced co-workers who are partnered up with newcomers

are likely to have knowledge of newcomers' task and role requirements, as well as knowledge of the workings of the organisation. This enables newcomers to 'learn the ropes' required to adjust to their new environment and speeds up the socialisation process. These findings are supported by the view that competent organisational insiders who serve as learning guides in small firms have a marked influence on employee learning (Coetzer, 2006).

The results also suggest that the size of the networks in small firms are by their nature 'small' and 'tight' and even though small firms might have different work units/departments/sections, newcomers are able to access information and resources from organisational insiders across a diverse range of different positions (i.e. co-workers from different work units within an organisation) and at different levels. This holds advantages, in that it facilitates socialisation (Morrison, 2002). According to Anderson (2008), the greater the range of the social network, the more likely someone in the network will have the required information that the individual needs. In addition, social network ties that are established across a range of positions assists newcomers in learning how their positions relate to other positions in the social structure of the organisation (Saks et al., 2007).

The access to these informational sources provided via social networks also provides opportunities for newcomers to ask questions, observe and apply 'the way things work' in their new environment. This assists in the transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge that facilitates their socialisation. The findings suggest that proactive newcomers, in particular, utilise the opportunities that these social networks provide to actively seek out and obtain information that can smooth their transition through the encounter phase of socialisation. This link between newcomer proactivity and newcomer learning and adjustment is supported by socialisation studies (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

In contrast to the more informal approaches favoured by small firms when utilising social networks as a mechanism to support newcomer socialisation, in certain instances small firms are aware of the need for informational networks that take a more formal and structured approach in ensuring newcomers have access to the necessary information and resources required to learn and adjust. This is especially so in instances where there is a need to comply with certain policy, procedural or regulatory requirements (e.g. health and safety) and the risks and costs of not adhering to minimum legal requirements and due process can have serious negative consequences.

7.1.3 Social Networks underpinning Newcomer Proactivity and Socialisation Outcomes

Research Objective 2: To examine the role of social networks and newcomer proactivity for organisational socialisation in the small firm context.

Research Question 3: What is the effect of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms?

The increasing importance of the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes during the socialisation process has been recognised in the socialisation literature (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Gruman et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Klein & Heuser, 2008). Despite this, certain fundamental questions remain unanswered in relation to the role of newcomer proactivity during the socialisation process (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Kim et al., 2009). A particular need has been identified to investigate and better understand the intervening mechanisms involved in the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Fang et al., 2011; Klein & Heuser, 2008).

Social networks have been recognised as a key mechanism that is likely to play a far bigger role in influencing the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes than is currently understood (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Korte, 2010). However, very little research has paid attention to social networks as an intervening mechanisms linking newcomer proactivity to socialisation outcomes. This is especially so in the context of the small firm sector. Thus, the purpose of research question 3 was to examine and better understand the mediating role of social networks on the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. In order to test these relationships, as part of the quantitative study, mediation analysis was conducted to investigate whether the five social network characteristics (size, range, status, strength and frequency) for each of the two types of social networks (friendship and informational networks), mediated the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (task mastery, social integration, organisational commitment and intention to quit).

The findings suggest that only certain characteristics of the different types of social networks (i.e. friendship and informational networks) partially mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and the specific socialisation outcomes of task mastery, social integration, intention to

quit and organisational commitment. However, even in those instances where mediation has occurred, the effect sizes are modest. For the socialisation outcome of task mastery, the findings of the effect of mediation suggest that proactive newcomers who are able to establish both friendship and informational network ties with experienced co-workers, including those in more senior positions (network status), enables them to access job related information that speeds up and facilitates their ability to master tasks. These findings are consistent with the views of Coetzer (2006) and Rollag et al. (2005) who found that newcomers in small firms who are able to access resources and tap into the knowledge of experienced colleagues across the organisational hierarchy contributes to them learning their tasks more quickly.

The findings also show the lack of a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and task mastery through network size, range, strength and frequency for both types of networks in small firms. This indicates that even though newcomers may display proactive behaviours, this does not necessarily translate into newcomers establishing network ties consisting of certain characteristics that enables them to master tasks. More specifically, these findings suggest that there are likely to be additional factors influencing these relationships. Proactive newcomers may also be reluctant to approach and interact with organisational insiders across different work units if they suspect that they are unable to provide them with the task information they require. This, in turn, is likely to result in proactive newcomers seeking out alternative sources of information in order to learn new tasks (Rollag et al., 2005).

Contrary to expectations, the findings suggest that neither of the social network types and associated characteristics mediated the relationship between newcomer proactivity and social integration. As the qualitative results suggest, many small firms use various approaches and methods to ensure newcomers are assimilated into the work group. The likelihood exists that this may reduce or negate the effects of proactive newcomers efforts to establish social network ties and the resultant effects on their social integration. Small firms also attempt to ensure that individual-group fit is right pre-employment and on commencing employment are conscious of the importance of making newcomers feel welcome and involving them in social and work related activities (e.g. meetings) with colleagues. These factors may also lessen the potential effects of newcomer proactivity on social network ties and social integration.

As with the social integration outcome, the results also show a lack of a significant relationship between newcomer proactivity and intention to quit that is mediated through social network ties. Intention to quit as a socialisation outcome has many potential antecedents (Bauer et al., 2007) and

is likely to be strongly influenced by situational and contextual factors internal and external to the organisation (Mitchell et al., 2001). This includes general satisfaction with the organisation and the status of the job market (e.g. restricted employment options) that has been shown to reduce intentions to quit (Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, although newcomers may display proactive behaviours that facilitate the establishing of social network ties, this does not necessarily influence intention to quit and other factors might play a role in this relationship. This is borne out by previous socialisation research investigating the links between newcomer proactivity and intentions to quit that have found that a range of factors is likely to influence this relationship (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2011).

As previously noted, the qualitative study found that many small firms tend to make use of informal network ties consisting of family and friends to initiate newcomer socialisation and ensure the appropriate newcomer-environment fit. Initiating socialisation via these informal channels made up of individuals from the same social milieu during the employment process reduces the likelihood of newcomers quitting the organisation in the immediate future (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012). In addition, ensuring the appropriate newcomer-environment fit when appointing newcomers' results in less likelihood of newcomers' intending to quit the organisation, irrespective of them displaying proactive behaviours (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

Findings show that friendship network status partially mediates the effect of newcomer proactivity on organisational commitment. This suggests that proactive newcomers are likely to establish friendship network ties with insiders that include those in more senior positions and this, in turn, is associated with higher levels of organisational commitment. However, the results indicate that this was not the case in relation to informational network status. This suggests that newcomer proactivity operates differently with friendship network status and informational network status when it comes to influencing organisational commitment. Possible reasons for this are that in small firms, where proactive newcomers are able to establish personal, friendship relationship ties with organisational insiders at different levels in the organisation, this results in a sense of belonging and attachment to the organisation that increases organisational commitment. As the qualitative study suggests, in small firms these feelings of attachment through friendship network ties with organisational insiders that contribute to organisational commitment are likely to be influenced by factors such as being included in social events, having informal conversations with colleagues and being entrusted with information related to aspects such as the organisations 'way of doing things' (Rollag & Cardon, 2004). On the other hand, informational network ties that newcomers have with experienced peers and those in more senior positions may be related more specifically to job related

aspects (see mediation findings for task mastery) and do not translate to newcomers feelings of attachment to the overall organisation (i.e. organisational commitment).

The remaining social network characteristics (i.e. size, range, strength and frequency) for both types of networks also did not mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and organisational commitment. This also suggests that additional factors may play a role in determining newcomers' feelings of attachment to the organisation. As previously noted, the qualitative study found that many small firms in this study tend to make use of informal network ties consisting of family and friends to initiate pre-employment socialisation and ensure the appropriate newcomer-environment fit. Research suggests that these informal contacts consisting of individuals from the same social milieu as the newcomer are likely to result in newcomers who are not only likely to remain with the organisation longer, but are also more committed to the organisation (Greenidge, Alleyne, Parris & Grant, 2012). This may substitute for the effect of proactive newcomers' ability to establish certain types of network ties and also result in an increase in newcomers' organisational commitment.

Overall, the findings for the quantitative study suggest that contrary to expectations social networks do not fully mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes in small firms. These results do not discount the importance of individual socialisation factors such as newcomer proactivity in facilitating newcomer learning and adjustment and the effects on resultant socialisation outcomes. However, the findings suggests that the mere presence of social networks does not necessarily mean that individual socialisation factors (e.g. newcomer proactivity) result in newcomers being able to access and mobilise network resources that lead to socialisation outcomes. These findings raise the likelihood that additional individual, situational and contextual factors internal and external to the organisation play a role in determining the role of social networks as a mediator of the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes.

According to Wanberg and Choi (2012) psychological phenomena such as organisational socialisation are complex and the socialisation literature emphasises the need to "dig deeper" into the how and under what conditions various factors play a role in the socialisation process and facilitate or hinder the achievement of socialisation outcomes. These factors include different characteristics of the newcomer such as proactivity, the various organisational approaches to socialisation and the role of organisational insiders. Meta-analytic reviews of the socialisation literature (e.g. Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007) confirm the view that a range of different individual characteristics and behaviours, organisational related variables and environmental factors contribute to newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes (Ashford &

Nurmohamed, 2012; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). More specifically, the relationship between proactive behaviour and socialisation outcomes is likely to be affected by various additional newcomer variables (e.g. work experience), the organisational 'setting' (e.g. organisational size and culture) and external environmental changes (e.g. the nature of the economy and the shift from production economies to knowledge economies) (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Saks et al., 2011).

An important organisational factor likely to affect the socialisation process is firm size (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). As the qualitative phase of the study indicates, small firms have unique structures, cultures, processes and social dynamics that influence approaches to socialisation and the role and function of different socialisation factors, which in turn influence newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes. As previously noted, small firms are characterised as having an individualised work environment, while large firms tend to be regarded as representing an institutionalised work environment, and this is likely to influence the approaches used by the organisation to socialisation (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

As small firms are likely to have a preference for an individualised approach to socialisation (e.g. informal and unstructured) (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Rollag & Cardon, 2004), it is argued that the lack of formality and structure may encourage proactive behaviours, as proactive newcomers are likely to fill this void by taking a more active role in their own socialisation (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Griffin et al., 2000). However, Cooper-Thomas and Burke (2012) caution against the potential risks in assuming that informality and neglecting to provide a structured socialisation experience will result in newcomers who engage in proactive behaviours achieving positive outcomes. The specific type of work context for certain organisations and the environment they operate in is likely to be a key factor in determining the appropriate mix of structure and formality, together with newcomer proactivity, required to achieve positive socialisation outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

Overall, it is contended that the findings of this study make a number of important contributions to the socialisation and social network literatures. The first, and main contribution of this study, is to integrate the socialisation literature with the social network literature that extends existing socialisation research and understanding. The second key contribution is to improving understanding of the link between socialisation and social networks as it relates to the small firm

context. Third, the importance of social networks during newcomer progression through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process is established. Fourth, this study also examines the effects of the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity, together with the social networks underpinning these factors, on socialisation outcomes resulting from newcomer learning and adjustment. Fifth, from a methodological perspective this study contributes to research in the socialisation domain by using a mixed methods approach that combined a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase. Finally, the findings of this study make a contribution to the organisational behaviour literature.

This study makes a fundamental contribution to integrating the socialisation literature and social network literature by examining the socialisation process through the ‘fine-grained theoretical lens’ of a social network perspective. Although additional insights have been obtained from investigating organisational socialisation from different theoretical perspectives, such as uncertainty reduction theory and social identity theory, these perspectives have tended to offer a “limited” view of the socialisation process (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). Drawing on other literatures assists researchers in developing the socialisation literature more fully and provides further insights in relation to socialisation (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). Thus, adopting a social network approach to investigating organisational socialisation provides an additional important theoretical perspective and extends researchers’ understanding of how social relations and interactions in the workplace relate to organisational socialisation (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Korte, 2010; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2009; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). This approach also recognises the ‘synergies’ that exist between the socialisation literature and social network literature (Fang et al., 2011; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012).

Although the quantitative phase found that social networks did not fully mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes, the qualitative phase found that social networks do play an important role during the socialisation process. More specifically, the integration of the socialisation literature and the social network literature in this study has unified and advanced understanding of how the different types of social networks and specific network structures and patterns of interactions and relationships impact on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes during the socialisation process. These findings also provide evidence of the importance of understanding *how* social networks influence the way in which newcomers are socialised (process), over and above *what* newcomers learn (content). At the same

time, this contributes to the social network literature by furthering understanding of the important role of social networks in organisations.

The socialisation literature has a decidedly ‘large organisation’ focus (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012) and the very few studies that have examined the role of social networks during the socialisation process have primarily focused on large organisations (e.g. Korte, 2010; Morrison, 2002). Opening up socialisation research to different organisational forms (e.g. small firms) and fields of study (e.g. social networks) expands the socialisation literature into important areas of research that advances theory and practice (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Wanberg & Choi, 2012). By exploring the link between socialisation and the role of social networks in small firms, the findings add to the body of knowledge in the fields of organisational socialisation and social networks as they apply to the small firm context. This is especially important when viewed against the background of the challenges small firms face in the current environment they operate in and the importance of newcomer socialisation for these firms (Cardon & Stevens, 2004; Rollag & Cardon, 2004).

The findings also demonstrate that the socialisation process and the role of different types of social networks and their network characteristics operate in a way that is unique to small firms. This is especially so when compared to large firms. The findings provide evidence of the preference small firms have for an individualised approach to socialisation, rather than the institutionalised approach favoured by large firms (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). These findings extend Rollag and Cardon’s (2004) research that found that newcomer socialisation in small firms is primarily characterised as informal and unstructured, while at the same time this approach is regarded as appropriate and suitable for the small firm context. In addition, the findings show that the social network ties that contribute to socialisation are primarily characterised by informal and personal interactions and relationships, which reinforces the individualised work environment that is characteristic of small firms.

Findings from the qualitative study confirm the familial nature of many small firms, including those in New Zealand (Battisti et al., 2012; Nicholson et al., 2009), and emphasise the role of the social structures and social dynamics found in these small family firms and how this impacts on approaches to socialisation. The findings also substantiate the work of other researchers that show that small firms, especially family businesses, place a strong emphasis on ensuring alignment between the individual and the culture (i.e. values, beliefs and norms) of the organisation (De Kok et al., 2006; Greenidge et al., 2012). More specifically, findings reinforce the importance of

socialisation in determining newcomer-organisational fit and ensuring newcomers assimilate into the culture of the organisation (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012; Van Vianen & De Pater, 2012), as well as the role of social networks in supporting this (Van Vianen & De Pater, 2012).

A further contribution is to provide an understanding of how specific types of social network ties influence newcomer learning and adjustment during each of the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in small firms. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no previous research has explored the role of social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process in the small firm context. The qualitative findings highlight the importance of social networks during the pre-encounter phase in initiating socialisation and establishing newcomer-organisational fit that facilitate newcomer onboarding in small firms. In addition, the findings show that the successful onboarding of newcomers in small firms extends to the encounter phase where the establishing of workplace relationships and the exchange of information are key contributors to newcomer learning and adjustment during the socialisation process.

As a further contribution, the quantitative study examined the effects of the individual socialisation factor of newcomer proactivity, together with the social networks underpinning this factor, on socialisation outcomes. This addresses calls in the socialisation literature to examine how social networks are related to newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Fang et al., 2011; Morrison, 2002). Although the findings show that, contrary to expectations, social networks did not fully mediate the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes, the relationships between these variables should not be discounted. These findings confirm that the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes is complex and various individual, organisational and situational factors (including social networks) are likely to impact on this relationship (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Saks et al., 2011). In addition, although the socialisation literature has recently highlighted the need to differentiate more between proximal and distal outcomes, the primary focus of most socialisation research continues to be on the distal outcomes to the neglect of the proximal outcomes. By focusing on the proximal and distal outcomes, this research contributes to calls in the socialisation literature to examine both types of outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2007).

From a methodological perspective this study contributes to the research in the socialisation domain by using a mixed methods approach that combined a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase. In addition, the qualitative phase of this study explored and obtained an understanding of the link between socialisation and social networks during the pre-encounter and encounter phases of

socialisation from both a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective. This was followed by a quantitative phase that examined social networks underpinning the relationship between newcomer proactivity and socialisation outcomes from a newcomer perspective. Socialisation has typically been studied via quantitative survey methodology and the majority of recent socialisation research continues to adopt this approach (e.g. Gruman & Saks, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Saks et al., 2010). Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions addressed (Azorin & Cameron, 2010; Cameron, 2011) and strengthens the findings methodologically (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Vancouver & Warren, 2012). In addition, adopting a mixed methods design also added both depth and breadth in understanding the complex phenomena of organisational socialisation and social networks (Vancouver & Warren, 2012).

Finally, this study also contributes to the organisational behaviour literature by drawing on the socialisation and social network literatures to better understand the effects of individual level variables (e.g. newcomer proactivity), group level variables (e.g. work group dynamics) and systems level variables (e.g. organisational culture) on individual and organisational outcomes.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS

Overall, this study provides evidence that the impact of social networks during the socialisation process has implications for both organisations and individuals. Owner/managers of small firms need to understand how the two distinct types of social networks (informational and friendship) and the associated network characteristics (size, range, status, strength and frequency) are likely to influence newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant outcomes in order to implement appropriate actions that facilitate the effective onboarding of newcomers. When comparing the results of this study in small firms with those of Morrison's (2002) large firm research, findings suggest that the role of social networks during the socialisation process in large firms need to be viewed with caution when attempting to overlay them onto the small firm context.

Small firms, by their nature, are ideally suited and placed to actively onboard and assimilate newcomers into their new environment and should use their advantage of size. The formation of social networks that facilitate newcomer socialisation should be encouraged and supported in small firms where the small numbers of employees, flat organisational structures, the prevalence of informal processes and the tendency for employees to work closer together are likely to support the establishment of social networks. According to Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2005), informal

sources of learning that are more personal and individualised are more influential in achieving successful socialisation than formal organisational sources of socialisation. Although the human, material and financial resource constraints faced by small firms (Stevens, 2007) support informal approaches to socialisation favoured by small firms, the risks and costs associated with the unsuccessful onboarding of newcomers (Kotey & Slade, 2005) means that small firms do not have the luxury of a 'misfit' between the newcomer and the new environment that results in negative outcomes such as decreasing performance and increasing turnover.

Small firms should consider adopting a contingency approach and tailor socialisation methods and social network structures based on individual and organisational circumstances and requirements. This is consistent with the view of Ahuja (2000) that the most effective social network structure is likely to be dependent on the situation and what is to be achieved. The challenge for small firms is to determine which socialisation approaches and network structures are the most suitable for specific situations that meet newcomer and organisational needs, and then to successfully implement those which deliver the required results. For example, a combination of both informal and formal approaches can be used to socialise newcomers, rather than having to select and trade off one approach against the other. Small firms could consider informal approaches to socialisation that contribute to developing relationships and are effective in aligning newcomers' norms and values to the culture of the organisation. At the same time, formal, structured approaches to newcomer socialisation are likely to be more suitable in cases where the risks and costs of not following minimum legal requirements and due process (e.g. during selection and health and safety compliance) are evident.

The selection and training of competent socialisation agents who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in facilitating newcomer socialisation and when networking with newcomers' can assist in the speedy and effective progression of newcomers through the pre-encounter and encounter phases of the socialisation process. Specific activities such as recruitment, selection, induction and training can be used by small firms to support the establishment and building of social networks that contribute to newcomer socialisation. A key factor in determining the effectiveness of these HRM practices aimed at facilitating newcomer socialisation is the degree to which these practices assist newcomers in mastering socialisation content required to learn and adjust to their new environment (Chao et al., 1994; Klein et al. 2006).

In addition, approaches such as the establishment of "buddy systems" where newcomers' partner up with experienced organisational insiders, together with the involvement of newcomers in social

events provides opportunities for newcomers to interact and form relationships with insiders and access information during the socialisation process that facilitate learning and adjustment. According to Coetzer (2006) the skills, knowledge and personal attributes of organisational insiders who are learning guides (e.g. socialisation agents) have a marked influence on employee learning.

7.4 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the exploratory nature of this study, the use of a mixed method approach and obtaining a newcomer and socialisation agent perspective for the qualitative phase of the study are regarded as strengths, this study is not without its limitations. This section highlights certain limitations and provides suggestions for future research that can contribute to further understanding of the socialisation process and the role of social networks.

Data collection for this study was cross-sectional, which is consistent with most socialisation studies (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007) and network studies (Oh, Chung & Labianca, 2004; Zagenczyk et al., 2010). However, the cross-sectional nature of this study does not account for socialisation being a dynamic process that unfolds over time and that newcomers and organisational needs could also change during this process. In addition, the type and structure of social networks influencing learning and adjustment are likely to vary in relation to newcomers' progression through the socialisation process (Morrison, 2002). Longitudinal studies that investigate socialisation and the impact of social networks at various periods during the socialisation process will allow for an understanding of how the dynamics of this process unfold and evolve over time.

Although the CIT used during the qualitative phase of this study has certain strengths and is regarded as a reliable research method to collect data of the type required for the exploratory, qualitative research for this study (refer to Chapter Three), there are also potential limitations attached to the use of the technique. The retrospective nature of the technique required participants in the study to recall and provide accounts of previous socialisation experiences that they might not be able to accurately or fully remember. To assist in overcoming this limitation, participants were provided with an information sheet that informed them of the study and the nature of the types of questions to be asked during the interviews. A further limitation is that respondents might provide the interviewer with responses that they feel are socially desirable or portrays them in a positive light. In this instance, the skill of the interview and knowledge of the subject matter was a key factor in attempting to address these limitations.

For the quantitative phase of this study data was collected from newcomers using a survey questionnaire. The use of self-reports is consistent with most socialisation research (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). Also, most of the scales used were existing scales that displayed adequate reliability and consisted of multiple-items. In addition, obtaining data from newcomers was the best source for assessing the socialisation constructs of interest (Klein et al., 2006). However, this does not exclude the potential problems that can arise when using self-report data such as response bias. Supplementing self-report data obtained from newcomers with those from organisational insiders (e.g. peers and supervisors) can assist in reducing potential problems with self-reports.

A key focus of this research was on the role of social networks, together with specific socialisation factors, during the socialisation process. Future research is likely to benefit from examining the influence of additional individual, environmental and situational factors on the link between socialisation and social networks. For example, technology as an informational source in the workplace and as a social network tool used for communication and interactions between employees is playing an increasingly important role. The increasing uncertainty of the environment organisations operate in, as reflected in the GFC, is a key factor affecting the nature of work and workplace relationships. Small firms are not immune to these challenges that affect social relationships and impact on the socialisation process.

The little research into the relationship between social networks and the socialisation process has focussed on the effects of social networks on socialisation outcomes (e.g. Korte, 2010; Morrison, 2002). Jokisaari and Nurmi (2012) propose that organisational socialisation contributes to newcomers' network development, which may be an outcome of socialisation. However, no research to date has examined the effects of socialisation on social network development, and social networks as a proximal or distal outcome of socialisation. This is viewed as an area requiring further investigation.

As this study was limited to small firms in the Hawke's Bay region of New Zealand, it would be inappropriate to extrapolate these findings to different types of small firms across New Zealand and further abroad. Research suggests that contextual factors, such as geographic location, influence the nature of HRM practices in small firms (Gilbert & Jones 2000). Further studies of newcomer socialisation in small firms extended to different types of industries and locations would be useful to researchers, practitioners, policy makers and planners who have an interest in the small firm sector.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The significance of socialisation and the role of social networks in ensuring newcomers' transition from outsiders to fully functioning insiders are critically important for achieving successful individual and organisational outcomes. This is especially so for small firms when considering the changes, uncertainty and challenges these firms face in attracting and retaining high performing employees in the current environment.

Although the role of social networks during the socialisation process has been highlighted in the socialisation literature there has been a distinct lack of research integrating the socialisation and social network literatures. This study that explored the role of social networks during the socialisation process in small firms is one of the first to integrate the socialisation and social network literatures and fills important research gaps. In doing so, this makes an important contribution to understanding how socialisation variables and social network factors are linked, and what the effects of this are on newcomer learning and adjustment and resultant socialisation outcomes. The study is also fairly unique in that, in contrast with most socialisation research that is undertaken in large firms, the context of the study was the small firm sector. The benefits of successful socialisation for individuals and organisations have been established, and these advantages are especially important in small firms that make a key contribution to the economy, employment and society. Opportunities for future research have been identified and further investigation of these issues will assist in increasing understanding of the role of social networks during socialisation that can be of benefit to researchers, organisations and society.

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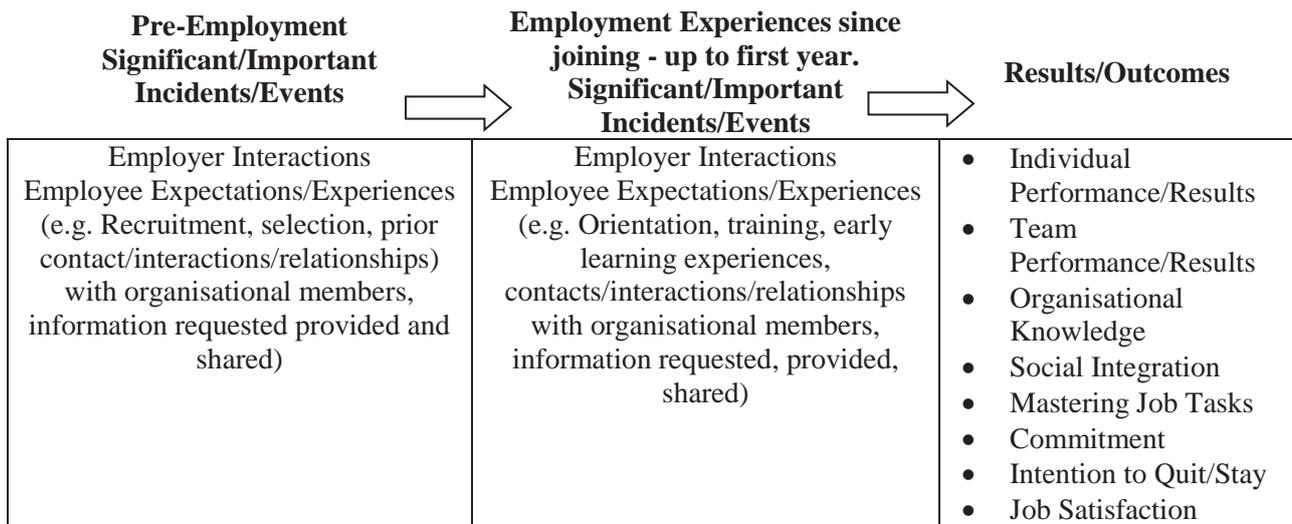
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Model of the Socialisation Process



APPENDIX B

Interview Agenda

Start

- Thank participant for participating in interview process.
- Purpose of meeting: to obtain an employer/employee perspective of their expectations and experiences during the important period prior to employment and soon after joining the organisation.
- Who am I: Robbie Field, Lecturer in HRM at EIT, currently undertaking research (mention contribution of research).

Pre-Interview Formalities

- How organisation/participants were selected.
- Consent Form Signed: review Information Sheet details – rights, confidentiality, recording, note-taking, etc.
- Any questions?

Interview

- Tell me a bit about your job and the type of work you do?
- When did you join the organisation/how long have you been working for the organisation?
- Lead In (support with model when explaining):
 - Mention new employment represents challenges for both the new employee and the organisation. The newcomer is faced with unfamiliar circumstances, new situations, uncertainty. For the organisation getting new employee to adjust as soon as possible and become fully effective and integrated members of the organisation is important.
 - The expectations and experiences of both the employer and employee play a key role in the newcomer's learning and adjustment to their new environment.
 - These expectations are sometimes created before the newcomer joins the organisation and the reality upon joining the organisation can be different to the expectations formed.
- Review definitions of Critical Incidents (sheet).
- **Questions: commence Critical Incident Interview.**

Concluding:

- Any questions or comments?
- Verbal summary.
- Discuss how info provided contributes to research.
- Discuss transcription of interviews and that copy will be sent to interviewee for review.

Thank You!

APPENDIX C

Sample Questions for the Newcomer

- Describe a critical/significant/important **incident(s)** or **event(s)** that are example(s) of your **expectation(s)/experience(s)** of learning and adjusting to the job/organisation/work role **before/after** joining the organisation?
 - What led to these **expectation(s)/experience(s)** being formed?
 - Did **somebody** do or not do something that had an effect on your expectation(s) or experience(s)?
 - Was the **expectation/experience effective/positive** or **ineffective/negative**?
 - What was the **outcome or result** of this expectation/experience? For you?
 - For the organisation?
 - What could have made the action **more effective**?

APPENDIX D

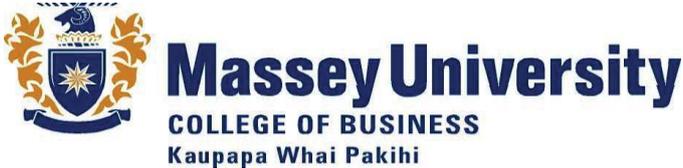
Sample Questions for the Socialisation Agent

- How do you view (perceive) the **process** of newcomer learning and adjustment **before/after** newcomers join the organisation?
- What are the key types of **information communicated** to newcomers **before/after** they join the organisation?
- Describe a critical/significant/important **incident(s)** or **event(s)** that are example(s) of your **expectation(s)/ experience(s)** of newcomer learning and adjustment **before/after** they join the organisation?
- Describe a critical/significant/important **incident(s)** or **event(s)** that are example(s) of what you **do** to facilitate the learning and adjustment of newcomers **before/after** they join the organisation?
 - Is it **effective or ineffective**?
 - Why is it effective or ineffective?
 - What was the **outcome** or result of this action?
 - For the **organisation**?
 - For the **newcomer**?
 - What could have made the action **more effective**?
- How do you view (perceive) the **process** of newcomer learning and adjustment **before/after** newcomers join the organisation?
- What are the key types of **information communicated** to newcomers **before/after** they join the organisation?
- Describe a critical/significant/important **incident(s)** or **event(s)** that are example(s) of your **expectation(s)/ experience(s)** of newcomer learning and adjustment **before/after** they join the organisation?

- Describe a critical/significant/important **incident(s)** or **event(s)** that are example(s) of what you **do** to facilitate the learning and adjustment of newcomers **before/after** they join the organisation?
 - Is it effective or ineffective?
 - Why is it effective or ineffective?
 - What was the outcome or result of this action?
 - For the organisation?
 - For the newcomer?
 - What could have made the action more effective?

APPENDIX E

Sample Letter Inviting Owner/Manager and Newcomer to Participate in Interviews



Dear Sir/Madam

Newcomer Learning and Adjustment in Small Manufacturing Firms

Introduction

How do new employees adjust to their new work and organisation? How do new employees learn the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to function as fully effective and integrated members of the organisation? What effects do both employer and employee expectations and experiences, pre-employment and after the new employee joins the organisation, have on important outcomes such as productivity, staff retention, performance, social integration, task mastery and job satisfaction?

My name is Robbie Field. I am a Massey University doctoral student requesting your assistance to participate in a study that is dedicated to assisting small firms (those employing 10-49 employees) in Hawke's Bay in achieving successful outcomes, through answering questions such as those outlined above. I have chosen the small business sector to examine this issue because they make up in excess of 95% of businesses in the region; they play a vital role in creating employment and are regarded as the backbone for regional economic growth. The importance of the manufacturing sector, in particular, is borne out by it being the largest contributor to gross domestic product in the region over the past six plus years and manufacturing has also been the largest employer in the small firm sector. Most owner/managers of small businesses agree that having employees who adjust to their new job/work environment and who are then able to contribute and are committed to achieving business goals are key to an organisation's success. The effects of both employer and employee expectation and experiences, before and after newcomers (defined as those employees with 30% lowest tenure/service) join the organisation, plays a significant role in achieving successful outcomes, such as those highlighted. Unfortunately, 'gaps' exist between the

importance of these issues for owner/managers of small firms and the small number of studies undertaken to address these issues.

The outcomes of this research could provide valuable information for owner/managers of small firms and small business development agencies. Such research-based information assists in enabling stakeholder groups (such as small firms) in giving informed consideration to strategies for improving performance through their staff.

Your Involvement

Your organisation was selected through a process of sampling of small manufacturing firms in Hawke's Bay.

In order to explore this gap in research, it would be especially useful if I had the opportunity to speak to: (1) yourself and/or at least one of your employees who interact with 'newcomers', both pre- and post-employment; and (2) a couple of your 'newcomers' (employed during the past year), in order to obtain both employer and employee perspectives. If you chose to participate, it is expected that the time required for each interviews should be approximately 30 – 60 minutes. This interview will be at a time and location that is convenient for you. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. If you would like to check and edit the interview transcript, I can provide a copy.

Below, are sample interview questions:

Person involved with newcomer pre- and post-employment

- Describe a significant incident/event/activity that is an example of your **experience(s)** of a newcomer learning and adjustment **after** they join the organisation.

Newcomer

- Describe an example of an incident/event/activity that created an **expectation(s)** for you of the job/organisation/work role **before** joining the organisation.

Please Note: For each of: the person influencing newcomer learning and adjustment to the organisation/workplace/job **and** the newcomer, ideally, it would be useful if I could obtain specific examples of a total of approximately five significant events describing expectations and experiences pre- and post-employment.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All participants will be anonymous (names of participants are not required), organisations will not be identified by name and confidentiality will be preserved.

All paper copies of interview data will be stored in locked cabinets in the researcher's offices at EIT and digital audio-files will be held on secure, password-protected computers. Following completion of the study all relevant data will be destroyed. However, with your consent I will use the information you provide for conference presentations and to write in academic and business sector journals.

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, please contact:

Researcher

Robbie Field, Lecturer (Human Resource Management) in the School of Business, Eastern Institute of Technology. rfield@eit.ac.nz or (06) 974 8000 extension 5215

Supervisors

Dr Alan Coetzer: A.J.Coetzer@massey.ac.nz or (04) 801 5799 extension 6485

Prof Claire Massey: C.L.Massey@massey.ac.nz or (04) 801 5799 extension 6508

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Robbie Field

Doctoral Student

APPENDIX F

Consent Form



Newcomer Learning and Adjustment in Small Firms

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. (The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

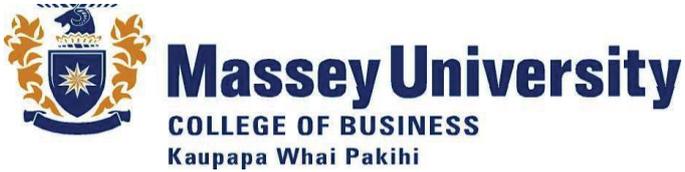
Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX G

Interview Transcript Letter



Dear

Interview Transcript

I trust that you are well. Enclosed, please find a copy of the interview transcript from our interview on (date).

It would appreciate if you would spend some time reviewing the transcript, as it will assist me in verifying the accuracy of the transcription process. This also confirms my commitment to you about the information that you shared with me during the interview process regarding your involvement, confidentiality, anonymity and your rights. In some cases the information from the interview was unclear during the transcription process and I have indicated it as a 'blank' (_____).

If you want to make any corrections on the interview transcript, please contact me on 9748000 x 5215 to discuss. If I do not hear from you within the next couple of weeks I will assume that the transcriptions are accurate.

Thank you once again for your time you have so generously given to me to assist me in my research.

Regards

Robbie Field

APPENDIX H

Mail Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

-

LEARNING & ADJUSTMENT

Please complete both sides of each page.

- ii. Think about **people at work** who have been regular and valuable sources of **job related or firm related information** for you. Please begin by writing the **initials** of each of these people (**for example, GB**) across the first row (point 1). Some of these people could have been listed as friends on the previous page as well. *List a maximum of eight.*

Once you have listed the initials for people across the first row (point 1), please respond to points 2-6 for **each** of the persons you have listed in Row 1.

	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	Person 5	Person 6	Person 7	Person 8
1	Write the initials of each of the work colleagues (people) who have been regular and valuable sources of job related or firm related information : →							
2	The person's section/department/work group/team (please specify) :							
3	The person's staff level : 1 = junior staff; 2 = experienced co-worker; 3 = supervisor/manager; 4 = senior; 5 = other (please specify)							
4	How close is your relationship with this person? 1 = not very close; 2 = reasonably close; 3 = very close							
5	On average, how often do you talk or exchange information with this person? 1 = daily; 2 = a few times a week; 3 = 3-5 times a month; 4 = once or twice a month; 5 = less than once a month							
6	Write the initials of other individuals you have listed across Row 1 who are also talk or interact with the person in this column during any given week (or write DK for "don't know")							

Section C: Experiences Since Starting Employment

The statements below describe the **experiences** people may have from the time they **start employment at a firm**.

Please consider the statements below and tick the appropriate box to show **your** level of agreement or disagreement:

Experiences Since Starting Employment		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1.1	I have been through a set of specific training processes designed to give newcomers a complete knowledge of job related skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C1.2	I did not perform any of my normal job responsibilities until I was completely familiar with work procedures and work methods.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C1.3	Much of the knowledge I have my current job has been obtained informally on a trial and error basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C1.4	My training in this firm has mostly been on-the-job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C1.5	I am aware that I am seen as "learning the ropes" in this firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C2.1	Experienced work mates view advising or training newcomers as an important part of their job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C2.2	I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this firm from observing my senior work mates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C2.3	I have received little guidance from experienced work mates as to how I should perform my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C2.4	I have little or no access to people who have previously performed my type of work in this firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C2.5	I have been generally left alone to discover what my role should be in this firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section D: Learning and Adjustment after Commencing Employment

The statements below describe how people may **think or feel** about learning and adjusting **after they commence employment**.

Please consider the statements below and tick the appropriate box to show **your** current level of agreement or disagreement:

Learning and Adjustment to Firm		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D1.1	I feel very knowledgeable about the firms' goals and objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.2	I feel very knowledgeable about the firms' policies, procedures and rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.3	I feel very knowledgeable about the firms' important values and acceptable ways of doing things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.4	I feel very knowledgeable about the unique language and jargon used in the firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.5	I feel very knowledgeable about the lines of reporting in the firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Learning and Adjustment to Firm		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D1.6	I feel very knowledgeable about who has real influence in the firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.7	I feel very knowledgeable about how to get ahead in the firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D1.8	I feel very knowledgeable about the history and stories about the firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.1	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.2	I enjoy discussing my firm with people outside it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.3	I really feel as if this firms' problems are my own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.4	I think that I could easily become as attached to another firm as I am to this one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.5	I feel like 'part of the family' at my firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.6	I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.7	This firm has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.8	I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my firm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.9	I attend functions that are not part of my job, but that help the firms image	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2.10	I defend the organisation when other workers criticize it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D3.1	If I have my own way, I will not be working in this firm three years from now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D3.2	I will probably be looking for another job in the next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D3.3	I often think of quitting my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Learning and Adjustment to Work Group		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D4.1	I look forward to being with my fellow workers each day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.2	I feel comfortable around my fellow workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.3	I feel accepted by my fellow workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.4	With my fellow workers, I am regarded as 'one of the team'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.5	I do not feel that I have much in common with my fellow workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.6	I feel little attachment to my fellow workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4.7	I often feel like an outsider when I am around my fellow workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and Adjustment to Job		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D6.1	All in all, I am generally satisfied with my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.1	I am confident about the level of my job skills and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.2	I feel competent doing my job tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.3	It seems to take me longer than planned to complete my job tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.4	I rarely make mistakes when conducting my job tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Learning and Adjustment to Job		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
D7.5	I have learnt how to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.6	I have mastered the required tasks of my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D7.7	I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.1	I feel certain about how much responsibility I have on my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.2	I understand the goals and objectives for my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.3	I know how to prioritise my time properly on my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.4	I know what my job responsibilities are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.5	I know exactly what is expected of me on my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.6	What has to be done on my job has been clearly explained to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.7	It unclear to me what 'good performance' is..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.8	It is clear to me to what extent I can change my tasks and duties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.9	It is clear to me what I can do to perform my job well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8.10	The requirements used to judge my performance are very clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section E: Approaches to Learning and Adjusting to Situations

The statements below describe the **approaches** people sometimes take when **learning and adjusting** to new situations.

Please consider the statements below and tick the appropriate box to show **your** level of agreement or disagreement:

Adjustment Approaches		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
E1.1	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.2	Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.3	If I see something I don't like, I make an attempt to fix it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.4	No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.5	I enjoy being a champion for my ideas, even when others disagree with my ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.6	I do well at identifying opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.7	I am always looking for better ways to do things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.8	If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.9	I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E1.10	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section F: General Information*Please tick the appropriate box. Names are not required and confidentiality is guaranteed.***F1 Gender**

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
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F2 Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to? *(You can tick more than one box)*

European / NZ European	<input type="checkbox"/>
NZ Maori	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pacific Peoples	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>

F3 What is the situation of your current employment?

Full Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part Time	<input type="checkbox"/>

F4 What is the situation of your current employment?

Continuing / Confirmed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Temporary / Casual	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------	--------------------------

F5 How long have you worked at this firm?

Up to 3 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 – 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 – 9 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 – 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longer than 12 months (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

F6 Please indicate your section / department / work group:

--

F7 Please indicate your job title:

--

F8 What is your highest level of education from the list below:

Some College	
Year 13 (7th Form)	
Trade Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Other (please state)	

F9 What is your age group?

16-24 years	
25-34 years	
35-44 years	
45-54 years	
55-64 years	
Over 65 years	

F10 Total number of years previous work experience before joining this firm:

0 years	
Less than 2 years	
2 – 5 years	
6 – 10 years	
More than 10 years	

Thank you for completing the survey.

APPENDIX I

E-Mail Correspondence requesting Survey Instruments

Attached is a scanned copy of the survey. I think you should be able to figure out which items go with each scale, but if not, let me know.

Elizabeth

Robbie Field wrote:

Dear Professor Morrison

I trust that you are well.

Thank you very much for responding - your assistance is much appreciated. If you are interested and I progress my study down the 'social network' route, I can let you know how my study pans out.

All the best

Robbie

-----Original Message-----

From: elizabeth morrison [<mailto:emorriso@stern.nyu.edu>]

Sent: Tuesday, 16 March 2010 9:02 a.m.

To: Robbie Field

Subject: Re: PhD Research: Social Network Structure

Sorry it has taken a few days to respond. I cannot find an electronic version of the survey, as the data were collected more than 10 years ago (1999). I am sure I have a hard copy of the survey somewhere in my files, but I will need to look for it.

When I find it, I will scan it and send it to you.

Elizabeth

Robbie Field wrote:

Dear Professor Morrison

Thank you very much for your prompt reply to my email-much appreciated.

I am interested in the measures and the layout of the first survey used in your 2002 study, as well as certain additional items from your second 2002 survey. These are the Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) eight item 'organizational knowledge' scale, which despite my best efforts I have unfortunately not been able to locate. I am also unsure as to the three specific items used to measure social integration (2002), which were obtained from your earlier scale (Morrison, 1993). I have fortunately

been able to access most of the other items used in your 2002 study.

Thank you once again for considering my request.

Regards
Robbie

-----Original Message-----

From: elizabeth morrison [<mailto:emorriso@stern.nyu.edu>]

Sent: Thursday, 11 March 2010 8:48 a.m.

To: Robbie Field

Subject: Re: PhD Research: Social Network Structure

Dear Robbie,
Which measures are you interested in using?
Elizabeth

Robbie Field wrote:

Dear Professor Morrison

I trust that you are well.

By way of introduction, I am a lecturer at a tertiary institute in New Zealand, currently in the process of completing a PhD. The focus of My PhD is, in broad terms, organizational socialization in small firms. An aspect of OS I am interested in is that of social network structure in a small firm context and your 2002 article ('Newcomers' Relationships: The Role of Social Network Ties During Socialization') is of particular interest to me.

My main purpose for contacting you is to find out if you would be willing to let me have access to the survey instruments used in your study. If so, could you possibly send them on to me, with permission to use. If this is possible, obviously the necessary sources would be referenced. I have been able to access Allen and Meyer's (1990) affective commitment scale.

Thank you for considering my request.

Kind regards

Robbie Field

APPENDIX J

Sample Letter Inviting Owner/Manager to Participate in Mail Survey



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Kaupapa Whai Pakihi

Dear

The Importance of Newcomer Learning and Adjustment in Small and Medium Sized Firms

Introduction

Most owner/managers of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) agree that having employees who learn and adjust to their new job/work environment through acquiring the required knowledge and skills to function as fully effective and integrated members of the firm and who are then able to contribute to achieving business goals and key outcomes are important. Unfortunately, 'gaps' exist between the importance of these issues for owner/managers of SMEs employing between 10 and 50 staff and the small number of studies undertaken to address these issues.

My name is Robbie Field, and I am a lecturer in the area of Human Resources at EIT. I am also currently a Massey University doctoral student requesting your assistance to participate in a study that is dedicated to assisting SMEs in Hawke's Bay in achieving successful outcomes, through examining issues such as those outlined above. I have chosen the SME sector to examine these issues because they make up in excess of 95% of businesses in the region; they play a vital role in creating employment and are regarded as the backbone for regional economic growth. I also have a strong personal interest in the employment practices of SMEs and how they contribute to business success.

The outcomes of this research could provide valuable information for owner/managers of SMEs and small business development agencies. Such research-based information assists in enabling stakeholder groups (such as SMEs) identify areas for improvement in employment practices. To this end, I would be happy to provide you with a summary of the results of this study.

Your Involvement

Your firm was selected through a process of sampling from a list of SMEs in Hawke's Bay. It would be appreciated if you would consider distributing the enclosed questionnaire, covering letter and pre-addressed postage paid return envelope to a staff member that has been **employed for one year and less** in your firm. It should take

approximately 20 minutes or so for the staff member to complete the questionnaire. Your willingness and that of your staff to voluntarily participate in this study is appreciated. If unable to participate, it would be appreciated if you would let me know if you have **not** employed any new staff during the past year.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All participants will be anonymous (names of participants are not required), firms will not be identified by name and confidentiality will be preserved.

Kind regards

Robbie Field

Doctoral Student

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, please contact:

Researcher: Robbie Field, Lecturer (Human Resource Management) in the School of Business, Eastern Institute of Technology. rfield@eit.ac.nz or (06) 974 8000 extension 5215

Supervisors: Prof Claire Massey: C.L.Massey@massey.ac.nz or (04) 801 5799 extension 6508;

Dr Karl Pajo: K.B.Pajo@massey.ac.nz or (04) 801 5799 extension 6929.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

APPENDIX K**Sample Letter Inviting Newcomer to Participate in Mail Survey**

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Kaupapa Whai Pakihi

Dear Sir/Madam

Finding out what you think about the way in which new staff learn and adjust to their workplace is important. Your thoughts will help develop a better understanding of how new staff learn and adjust at work, which could benefit both staff and firms.

I have contacted the owner/manager of your firm with the request to ask staff, who have been employed for one year and less, about their willingness to voluntarily complete the attached questionnaire. Your responses are strictly confidential and no individuals will be identified by name. This survey should take about 20 minutes or so to complete, since many of the questions involve ticking boxes. After you have completed the survey, please return it in the enclosed pre-paid reply envelope. If you would like a summary of results, please indicate this on your survey form.

Participation in this study is voluntary, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you very much for your help with this important research by completing the survey as soon as possible.

Robbie Field

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about the project, please contact:

Researcher:

Robbie Field, Lecturer (Human Resource Management) in the School of Business, Eastern Institute of Technology. rfield@eit.ac.nz or (06) 974 8000 extension 5215

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APPENDIX L

Summary of Factor Analysis Results for All Items

Summary of Factor Analysis Results for All Items

Item	Rotated Factor Loadings						
	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D1.1: Knowledge of firm's goals				.647			
D1.2: Knowledge of firm's policies				.772			
D1.3: Knowledge of firm's unique language				.598			
D2.1: Happy to spend career with firm	.633						
D2.2: Enjoy discussing firm with outsiders	.549						
D2.3: Firm's problems are my own							
D2.5: Feel 'part of family' at firm	.655						
D2.7: Firm has personal meaning for me	.678						
D2.9: Attend non-work related functions							
D2.10: Defend the firm from criticism							
D3.1: Often think of quitting job						.728	
D3.2: Think of quitting job in three years						.801	
D3.3: Think of quitting job within year						.736	
D4.1: Look forward to being with colleagues							
D4.2: Feel comfortable around colleagues							.630
D4.3: Feel accepted by colleagues							.803
D4.4: Am regarded as 'one of the team'							.630
D5.1: Willingly help others with problems							
D5.2: Willingly assist others with duties							
D6.1: Satisfied with job	.604						

D7.1: Confident with job skills level	.749
D7.2: Competent doing job tasks	.807
D7.4: Rarely make job mistakes	
D7.5: Learnt to perform job efficiently	.623
D7.6: Mastered required job tasks	.706
D8.1: Certainty about job responsibilities	.574
D8.2: Understand job objectives	.613
D8.4: Know job responsibilities	.784
D8.5: Know job expectations	.799
D8.6: Job requirements clearly explained	
D8.8: Task/duty changes clear	
D8.9: Job performance requirements are clear	
D8.10: Judging performance clear	
E1.1: Constantly look for ways to improve	
E1.6: Identify opportunities	.709
E1.7: Look for better ways to do things	.626
E1.9: Spot opportunities before others	.779
E1.10: Seeing my ideas turn into reality	.640
C1.1: Received specific job training	
C1.2: Familiarised with work procedures	
C2.1: Experienced colleagues train newcomers	
C2.2: Learning by observing senior colleagues	

Note: Extraction Method: Exploratory Factor Analysis.

APPENDIX M



Massey University

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9 September 2008

Robert Field
5 Alley Place
Taradale
NAPIER 4112

Dear Robert

**Re: The Nature and Significance of the Organisational Socialisation Process in Small Firms:
Employer and Employee Perspectives**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 9 September 2008.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia V Rumball (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics)

cc Dr Alan Coetzer
Department of Management
Wellington

Prof Claire Massey, HoD
Department of Management
Wellington

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council



APPENDIX N



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

8 October 2010

Robert Field
5 Alley Place
Taradale
NAPIER 4112

Dear Robert

Re: The Role of Social Networks and Significance of the Organisational Socialisation Process in Small Firms: Newcomer Perspectives

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 8 October 2010.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

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Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

cc Prof Claire Massey
School of Management
Wellington

Dr Karl Pajo
School of Management
Wellington

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

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APPENDIX 0

Interview Participants and Firms

Position Title of Interviewee	Type of Firm	Number of Employees
Team Leader (N1) Joiner (N2) Customer Service Representative (N3) Team Leader (SA1) Team Leader (SA2) Human Resources Advisor (SA3)	Engineering	47
Operations Manager (N4) Engineer (N5) Trade Hand (N6) Production Manager (SA4) Foreman (SA5) Team Leader (SA6)	Engineering	46
Production Operator (N7) Production Operator (N8)	Meat products	46
Customer Service Representative (N9) Customer Service Representative (N10) Manager (SA7)	Honey products	40
Team Leader (N11) Trade Hand (N12) Manager (SA8) Supervisor (SA9)	Engineering	33

Supervisor (N13) Trade Hand (N14) Manager (SA10) Supervisor (SA11)	Sheepskin products	28
Food Processor (N15) Food Processor (N16) Supervisor (SA12) Co-ordinator (SA13)	Pet food products	26
Quality Assurance Leader (N17) Quality Controller (N18) Food Processor (N19) Supervisor (SA14) Supervisor (SA15)	Processed food products	23
Welder (N20) Production Manager (SA16) Supervisor (SA17)	Engineering	20