



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

Establishing Company Values and Company Culture Through Onboarding

Master's thesis
Faculty of Education

Author:
Rosanna Grönroos

31.1.2025
Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: Adult Education

Author: Rosanna Grönroos

Title: Establishing Company Values and Company Culture Through Onboarding

Supervisor: University Lecturer Rauno Huttunen

Number of pages: 68 pages

Date: 31.1.2025

In my study, I focus on the onboarding process: the time frame between when a new employee has been recruited and when they are fully integrated in an organization. Furthermore, my focus is on how the onboarding process could establish company values and company culture to new employees – and additionally, how this process could be enhanced. I partnered with a global case company through conducting a commissioned thesis to investigate their current employee experience around these topics. My main theoretical framework includes *organizational socialization*, *the five C's model*, *psychological contract*, *the self-determination theory* as well as *person-organization fit*.

The qualitative method chosen for my study was a thematic analysis approach; more precisely, the reflexive thematic analysis approach. I conducted eight semi-structured interviews in which I inquired about relatively new employees' experiences of the company values and company culture's part of their onboarding. I conducted a predominantly experiential, semantic, and inductive analysis of the data, including reflexivity on my researcher position.

According to my analysis, the employee experience of current onboarding as an establisher of company values and company culture was principally regarded satisfactory by the interviewed employees. However, the onboarding process did not include much explicit introduction to company values nor company culture. Onboarding as an establisher of a *culture of teamwork* was highlighted by the employees; even though simultaneously, one of the main improvement suggestions for the process and general company culture was the repairment of silos. Other improvement suggestions included more visual presentation of the company values, more involvement from the management, and more clarity in onboarding.

Key words: onboarding, company values, company culture, socialization, human resources, reflexive thematic analysis

Pro gradu -tutkielma

Oppiaine: Aikuiskasvatustiede

Tekijä: Rosanna Grönroos

Otsikko: Establishing Company Values and Company Culture Through Onboarding

Ohjaaja: Yliopistonlehtori Rauno Huttunen

Sivumäärä: 68 sivua

Päivämäärä: 31.1.2025

Tutkielmassani keskityn perehdytysprosessiin: aikaväliin, kun uusi työntekijä on rekrytoitu ja kun hän on täysin integroitunut organisaatioon. Tutkin perehdytysprosessin osuutta yritysarvojen ja yrityskulttuurin vakiinnuttajana uusille työntekijöille sekä tämän prosessin kehittämismahdollisuuksia. Tein yhteistyötä globaalien yritysten kanssa toimeksiannon muodossa selvittäen heidän nykyisten työntekijöidensä kokemuksia kyseisistä aiheista. Pääasiallisena teoreettisena viitekehyksenäni toimii *organisatorinen sosialisatio, viiden C:n malli, psykologinen sopimus, itsemääräämistheoria sekä yksilön ja organisaation välinen yhteensopivuus*.

Tutkimukseni kvalitatiiviseksi metodiksi valikoitui temaattisen analyysin lähestymistapa: tarkemmin refleksiivinen temaattinen analyysi. Tein kahdeksan puolistrukturoitua haastattelua, joissa selvitin hiljattain aloittaneiden työntekijöiden kokemuksia yritysarvojen ja yrityskulttuurin osuudesta perehdytyksessä. Tein datalleni pääosin aineistolähtöisen, semanttisen ja induktiivisen analyysin sisältäen tutkijaposition refleksiivisyyden.

Analyysini mukaan haastateltavat olivat pääosin tyytyväisiä tämänhetkiseen perehdytykseen yritysarvojen ja yrityskulttuurin vakiinnuttajana. Perehdytysprosessi ei kuitenkaan sisältänyt paljonkaan eksplisiittistä johdatusta yritysarvoihin tai yrityskulttuuriin. Työntekijät korostivat perehdytysprosessin merkitystä *yhteistyön kulttuurin* luojana – vaikka samanaikaisesti yksi prosessin ja yrityskulttuurin pääasiallisista parannusehdotuksista kohdistui siilojen purkamiseen. Muita parannusehdotuksia olivat yritysarvojen visuaalisempi esittäminen, enemmän osallistumista johdolta ja selkeämpi perehdytysprosessi.

Avainsanat: perehdytys, yritysarvot, yrityskulttuuri, sosialisatio, henkilöstövoimavarat, refleksiivinen temaattinen analyysi

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
2	Theory of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture	7
2.1	Onboarding	7
2.1.1	Definition	7
2.1.2	The Five C's Model	8
2.1.3	Organizational Socialization: Socialization Tactics, Adjustment Outcomes, and Embeddedness	9
2.1.4	Psychological Contract	13
2.2	Company Values and Company Culture	15
2.2.1	Definitions	15
2.2.2	Self-Determination Theory	17
2.3	Establishing Company Values and Culture Through Onboarding	18
2.3.1	Person-Organization Fit, and Socialization Tactics	18
2.3.2	Individuality, Role of Recruitment, and Personal-Identity Socialization	21
3	Method	23
3.1	Research Questions and Purpose of the Study	23
3.2	Data Collection and Processing	23
3.3	Thematic Analysis	26
3.4	Position of the Researcher	28
4	Analysis	30
4.1	Current Employee Experience of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture	30
4.1.1	Outstanding Onboarding	31
4.1.2	Culture of Teamwork	32
4.1.3	Personal Alignment with the Company Values and Company Culture	36
4.1.4	Company Culture in the Background	39
4.1.5	Multiculturality	41
4.2	Improvement Suggestions for Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture	43
4.2.1	Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values	44
4.2.2	Repairment of Silos	47
4.2.3	More Clarity in Onboarding	51
4.2.4	Involvement from the Management	53

5	Conclusion	55
5.1	Discussion	55
5.2	Action Plan for the Case Company	58
5.3	Research Ethics	61
5.4	Evaluation of the Study	62
	References	64
	Appendices	69
	Appendix 1. Interview Structure	69
	Appendix 2. Interview Invitations	69
	Appendix 3. Privacy Notice, Included in the Interview Invitations	70

1 Introduction

A successful onboarding process is crucial to both parties – the employer and the employee. Onboarding is about familiarizing the new employee with the new organization and their new job position. Onboarding can be seen starting from hiring and ending when the new employee is fully integrated in the company.

Company values are part of a company's strategy, and their intent is to define behavior within the company and its employees. Company culture can be perceived as a shared set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace.

The aim of my study is to delve into what makes an onboarding process successful and moreover, how a company can establish its values and culture through it. I carry out my own study, collaborating with a case company to interview the recently employed about their onboarding experiences. I perform a thematic analysis and finally innovate an action plan for the case company for the best practices to establish company values and culture through onboarding in the future.

The topic is valuable as it touches anyone who works in an organization of any kind. In a fast-changing world, and for instance, through globalization, new research on the matter is continually needed. Not only was the topic in the interest of the case company that I conduct my study for as a commissioned thesis, I've also found the subject personally appealing as I work in the field of human resources and have previously conducted interviews about onboarding.

2 Theory of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical background for my research. I firstly focus on onboarding and related theories and then move on to company values and company culture and relevant theories. To conclude, I present theory that unites these different focus areas.

2.1 Onboarding

First, I focus on onboarding as a definition and a process. I subsequently present three theoretical frameworks for onboarding: *the five C's model*, *organizational socialization*, and *psychological contract*.

2.1.1 Definition

New employees enter a new organization, guided by cognitive maps not yet structured. They may experience relative disorientation and reality shock before understanding the new environment and their relation to it. (Allen, 2006.) For employees, this is a time when first impressions of the organization are made. Employees observe whether the job meets their expectations and if the organization has long-term potential on a personal level. (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 162.)

Organizational characters, for instance, size and strategy of an organization, may influence the ways of onboarding (Klein et al., 2015). According to research, even though full onboarding can take up to one year, events and experiences during the first 30-90 days of a new employee's time in a new organization are especially important (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 162). There are different aspects to onboarding, but I mainly focus on the social aspect of it.

Ashfort, Sluss, and Saks (2007) divide newcomer adjustment into concepts of *task adjustment*, which includes, for instance, job satisfaction and self-perceived job performance, and *organizational adjustment*, which includes, amongst others, organizational identification and intentions to quit. Learning about the job, group, and organization helps an employee to perform their job better. In addition, learning diminishes uncertainty and anxiety and therefore simultaneously increases job satisfaction through positive affect and evaluation of the job.

Learning, especially about the organization, tends to additionally promote employee's sense of connection with the organization. (Ashfort, Sluss, & Saks, 2007.)

Socialization content describes what is required of the individual to learn in order to become a full member of the organization (Ashfort, Sluss, & Saks, 2007). Nevertheless, the new employee isn't merely a passive recipient of the employer's methods for integration – discussed more in the next chapters – but additionally has an active role in the process. Employee's own proactivity, through altering and partaking in one's own socialization, is associated with positive adjustment (Ashfort, Sluss, & Saks, 2007).

2.1.2 The Five C's Model

Onboarding can be divided into five levels, according to the *five C's* model. *Compliance* includes legal and policy-related regulations and rules. (Bauer, 2011; Talya & Bauer, 2014, p. 2.) *Clarification*, in turn, focuses on employees' understanding of their new jobs and all related expectations (Talya & Bauer, 2014, p. 2). It describes how much information and understanding new employees have, and it consists of, for instance, assigning “buddies” – or other kind of mentors – to the new employee and providing informative materials. The new employee's own proactive behavior can also have a significant impact, for example, whether they seek information or ask questions. When employees know what is expected of them and have a good understanding of how things work in the organization, they will adjust better and have higher on-the-job performance. (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 164.)

Furthermore, *connection* consists of interpersonal relationships and information networks (Talya & Bauer, 2014, p. 2). It describes both a new employee's experience of being welcomed and feeling of integration and acceptance within the organization (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 164). Additionally, *culture* provides employees with formal and informal organizational norms (Talya & Baeur, 2014, p. 2), thus especially this part is closely linked to my research topic. One of onboarding's purposes is to communicate the organization's mission and values to the new employee. This helps the employee to understand whether they've reached a good person-organization fit – which I go into more detail in a latter chapter – which relates to the overall onboarding success. The concept of *organizational insiders* describes how the managers and peers influence the organizational culture and how and what information is given to the new employee. (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, pp. 165-167.)

Confidence attributes to if – and to what extent – new employees feel they can succeed in their new role. The more an organization helps the new employee understand what is expected of them and their role, simultaneously providing support to learn new things, the more confident the employee is expected to feel. Additionally, the personal qualities and experiences of the employee affect their level of felt confidence. (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, pp. 164-165; Figure 1.)

The Five C's	Description	Employer's supporting behavior (regarding the new employee)
COMPLIANCE	Legal and policy-related regulations and rules	Actualization
CLARIFICATION	New employee's understanding of the new job and related expectations	Access to mentors and informative material and clarification of expectations
CONNECTION	Interpersonal relationships and information networks	Support for integration and acceptance within the organization
CULTURE	Formal and informal organizational norms, person-organization fit, and organizational insiders	Communication of mission and company values
CONFIDENCE	New employee's expectations of succeeding in the new job	Opportunities for learning new things and clarification of expectations

Figure 1. The Five C's Model, based on the theory of Ellis and Bauer (2017).

2.1.3 Organizational Socialization: Socialization Tactics, Adjustment Outcomes, and Embeddedness

The social part of onboarding can be described as *organizational socialization*, which is “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Organizational socialization consists of *socialization tactics*, that can be described as “methods organizations use to help newcomers adapt” (Allen, 2006, p. 238). Socialization tactics can be divided into six types (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Collective socialization tactics signify learning experiences in a group setting, whereas individual tactics are about employee's independent learning. Collective tactics provide a common message about the organization and its roles. In addition, research proposes that newcomers tend to value opportunities for interaction and social learning. Moreover, *formal* tactics are clearly defined socialization activities while informal tactics include less formal on-the-job learning. Formal tactics distribute a consistent message and emphasize the importance of adapting to the new environment. (Allen, 2006, pp. 240, 243.) Moreover, formal tactics can be expected to lead to shared values and reduced uncertainty (Cable & Parsons, 2001).

Sequential tactics establish the intended steps of learning, which helps with process uncertainty, anxiety, and stress, compared to a more randomized process. Furthermore, *fixed* tactics focus on informing the employee about the timing associated with completing each socialization phase. Similar to sequential tactics, the aim of fixed tactics is to reduce uncertainty and develop a sense of control for the employee. (Allen, 2006, p. 240.)

Serial tactics equip the new employee with experienced organizational members as mentors or role models, while disjunctive tactics do not. *Investiture* tactics are about providing social support from experienced organizational members; in turn, *divestiture* tactics focus on negative social feedback until new employees adapt. Investiture tactics help newcomers develop a sense of competence. (Allen, 2006, p. 240.) According to Jones (1986), these six socialization tactics form *institutionalized socialization*. Reverse effects of the six, on the contrary, form *individualized socialization*. (Jones 1986; Figure 2.)

Tactics concerned mainly with:	INSTITUTIONALIZED	INDIVIDUALIZED
CONTEXT	Collective Formal	Individual Informal
CONTENT	Sequential Fixed	Random Variable
SOCIAL ASPECTS	Serial Investiture	Disjunctive Divestiture

Figure 2. A Classification of Socialization Tactics according to Jones (1986), based on Van Maanen and Schein (1979).

Saks, Uggerslev, and Fassina's (2007) study indicates that institutionalized socialization tactics have a positive impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and role orientation. Furthermore, they have a negative relation to employee's role conflict, role ambiguity, and intentions for quitting. Additionally, social tactics, particularly serial and investiture tactics, are the strongest predictor of adjustment outcomes, and the link appeared to be the strongest amongst recent graduates (Figure 3). (Saks, Uggersley, & Fassina, 2007.)

Tactics	Description	Effects
Serial tactics	Experienced organizational members as mentors / role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of social cues
Investiture tactics	Social support from experienced organizational members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger sense of competence

Figure 3. Socialization tactics that are the strongest predictor of adjustment outcomes, according to Saks, Uggersley, & Fassina (2007).

Adjustment outcomes can be short- or long-term, and they reflect the success of the carried-out socialization process. Three key short-term outcomes are *role clarity* (knowledge of expectations related to one's role and work), *self-efficacy* (confidence in oneself to be able to perform one's job successfully), and *social acceptance* (feeling of belonging). (Bauer et al., 2007.) Long-term adjustment outcomes consist of better job attitudes and more effective newcomer behaviors (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 170).

According to Mitchell et al. (2001, p. 1102), *embeddedness* "includes individuals' links to other people, teams, and groups"; "perceptions of their fit with job, organization and community"; and "what they say they would have to sacrifice if they left their jobs". Allen (2006) suggests that socialization tactics help embed new employees in an organization. Embeddedness is also a mediator between newcomer turnover and socialization tactics. Especially collective, fixed, and investiture tactics are positively related to on-the-job embeddedness (Figure 4). Furthermore, on-the job embeddedness is negatively related to

turnover. (Allen, 2006.) On-the-job embeddedness describes an employee's perceived fit with one's job or organization; in turn, of-the-job embeddedness represents an employee's perceived fit with one's community (Porter et al., 2019, p. 678).

Tactics	Description	Effects
Collective tactics	Learning experiences in a group setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social learning • Opportunities for interaction • Common message
Fixed tactics	Information of the timing associated with completing each socialization phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of uncertainty • Stronger sense of control
Investiture tactics	Social support from experienced organizational members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger sense of competence

Figure 4. Socialization tactics most positively related to on-the-job embeddedness, according to Allen (2006).

Furthermore, Ashforth, Sluss, and Saks's (2007) longitudinal survey data indicated that *how* new employees are socialized has more value over *what* they learn. For a new employee, who has a relatively unstructured psychological field of their job and role in the organization, the effort from the employer to create a more structured psychological field increases embeddedness in the employee. Thus, newcomers are less likely to leave – even when facing a force in the direction of leaving, such as unmet expectations or needs. Hence, socialization can be seen as a method of embedding employees more extensively. (Allen, 2006, p. 242.)

Allen's (2006) finding that especially collective, fixed, and investiture tactics positively relate to on-the-job embeddedness is important from the viewpoint of the case company. There is a hybrid working model of remote work and onsite work, with some employees working remotely full-time. For investiture and especially collective tactics, this setting might be seen as a challenge, as there may be distinctly fewer, particularly informal, experiences in a group

setting. Additionally, social support might be easier to deliver face-to-face and in a more casual setting compared to video calls.

Collective tactics aren't only more challenging to implement remotely, but moreover, the size of the company is a crucial factor in their application. In smaller and even mid-sized companies, there aren't as many employees starting simultaneously, which makes learning experiences in group settings harder to organize. Furthermore, it might be important to acknowledge personality differences regarding the enjoyment of group activities. I would also take into consideration collective phenomena, such as the COVID-19 leading to remote ways of living and working as well as the growing individualism in many societies, which may have an impact on how social learning is experienced.

2.1.4 Psychological Contract

Psychological contract, in the context of employment, describes employee's perceptions – affected by the employer – of the rights and responsibilities between the employee and the employer (Rousseau, 1995). The psychological contract is formed by employee's observations of the employer's actions and behavior, even before they begin an employment relationship. Psychological contract can also be formed with a different party than the employer, for instance, the department, the team, the manager, or with one's work or career. Active talent management positively affects psychological contract and leads to better work satisfaction and commitment. (Nylund & Koivunen, 2022, pp. 70-71.)

According to Rousseau et al. (2018), psychological contract (PC) can be divided into phases, which include creation, maintenance, renegotiation, and repair. As the focus of my study is onboarding, I focus on the *creation* phase, which can be perceived taking place during the first few months of the employment, correlating with organizational socialization (De Vos et al., 2003; Feldman, 1981). During this time, new employees “form beliefs about what their organization owes them and what they owe it in return” (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1085).

Organizational information contains explicit and implicit promises (Louis, 1980; Rousseau, 1995). In addition to explicitly stated or agreed upon promises, employees can perceive employer promises, for instance, from encounters with their managers or the organization's established norms and policies. Organizational cues related to an employee's personal goals

are more likely to be noticed and internalized, through the experience of positive affect. Additionally, the employee is more likely to include these “promises” in their PC and see them as obligations of the organization thereupon. (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1086.) For instance, if an employee values independence and notices the employer conveying opportunities that support this value, the employee is likely to experience positive affect and form an expectation of the employer to provide similar independence-supporting opportunities in the future.

If there are little to no employer promissory clues, employees tend to rely on their prior experiences and expectations (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1086). If an organization has a positive reputation, people may associate a positive impression with other positive characters of the organization. When inside information is lacking, applicants may use the organization image as a deciding factor whether to pursue a job opportunity. Corporate and recruitment image as well as any other pre-entry expectations influence new employees’ perceptions of organizational promises. New employees, who have had a longer career and more job experiences, have more realistic expectations and perceive fewer promises towards their new employer, compared to recent graduates. (Tomprou & Ioannis, 2011, p. 348.)

If an employee notices a poor employee-organization fit during the creation phase, they may leave (Louis, 1980). Those, who choose to stay, rely on the PC that has formed, to guide how they will behave and what to expect in the future (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1086). Additionally, individual differences, such as personality traits and values, affect PC creation. For instance, proactive personality is positively related to perceived employer promises, whereas ideologies of reciprocation and self-reliance are negatively related. (Tomprou & Ioannis, 2011, pp. 343, 349-351.)

In addition, social interactions within the organization affect PC creation. Social interactions can be divided to *contract makers* – such as managers, recruiters, and human resources: people who can act on behalf of the organization to fulfil obligations – and *facilitators* – employees who informally inform the new employee about the employment relationship, such as colleagues. They can help to clarify the promissory messages given by the organizational representatives. (Tomprou & Ioannis, 2011, pp. 351-352.)

PC's state is dynamic and adaptable throughout the employment relationship (Rousseau et al. 2018, 1086). It is also important to notice that the context of work life on a larger scale affects PCs. Stability and predictability used to be important parts of a PC, whereas nowadays, resilience and adaptability tend to have a bigger emphasis. (Rousseau et al., 2018, p. 1092.)

2.2 Company Values and Company Culture

In this subchapter, I first define the concepts of *company culture* and *company values*, and then, I introduce the *self-determination theory*.

2.2.1 Definitions

Goffee and Jones (1996, p. 134) define culture as community; how people relate to one another. In turn, McGregor and Doshi (2015) define culture as “the set of processes in an organization that affects the total motivation of its people”. Culture is influenced by the personalities and interactions of its employees and the industry, geographic location, and history of the organization (Sadri & Lees, 2001, p. 854). Within an organizational realm, culture is also the operating system (McGregor & Doshi, 2015). Organizational, company, and corporate culture all describe the same phenomenon – the variant is what kind of an organization and scope is in question. In my thesis, I principally use the variation *company culture*.

Culture closely intertwines with core organizational values. Culture and values influence how people behave inside and outside the organization, for instance, towards customers (Flamholtz, 2001). In effective corporate cultures, the corporate vision and values are present on all levels of the organization and they are consistently modelled by top management. There are always subcultures within the broader organizational culture due to, for instance, geographic and functional differences. However, the dominant organizational culture should be strong and inclusive enough for different employees to be able to accept and embrace it. (Sadri & Lees, 2001.)

Company processes and how they are designed have a crucial impact on employee motivation (McGregor & Doshi, 2015). For instance, teamwork, communication, rewards, recognition,

training, and development are all dimensions of company culture that motivate employees' commitment to an organization (Zain et al., 2009). Additionally, higher customer satisfaction has a link to stronger workplace cultures (McGregor & Doshi, 2015). Thus, company culture and its development additionally have a clear business impact, with effective culture management being one of the attributes to success (Flamholtz, 2001).

The most frequently cited research on organizational culture has been carried out by anthropologists, sociologists, and management scholars. One important sociological perspective is the distinction between the *explicit* and *implicit features* of an organization – which both are regarded meaningful. (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985, pp. 3, 6). Furthermore, Flamholtz (2001) names four “key areas of cultural concern” in which all organizations ought to manage their culture and values: 1) treatment of customers, 2) treatment of an organization's own people or human capital, 3) standards of organizational performance, and 4) notions of accountability.

Schwartz and Davis (1981, p. 32) divide organizational components into *structure*, *systems*, *people*, and *culture*. One way to define an organization's culture is to consider how tasks are divided within the key relationships (Schwartz & Davis, 1981, p. 36; Figure 5). Schwartz and Davis (1981, p. 35) state that culture tends to be what has worked in the past; furthermore, studies of small groups show that their members incline to choose leaders who best embody the norms of their group (Sadri & Lees 2001).

Tasks	Relationships			
	Companywide	Boss-subordinate	Peer	Interdepartment
Innovating				
Decision making				
Communicating				
Organizing				
Monitoring				
Appraising and rewarding				

Figure 5. Corporate Culture Matrix, according to Schwartz and Davis (1981, p. 36).

However, while it might be easiest to build a desirable culture when a company is founded, culture can also be actively affected later on. To achieve this, the management has to fully know and understand the current culture, to comprehend what and where the change is needed. (Sadri & Lees, 2001.) Sadri and Lees (2001) suggest that cultural change can be achieved through management's involvement in modelling the target behavior, for instance, by developing visionary statements, celebrating employees' successes, and distributing material, such as newsletters and videos, that emphasize the culture.

2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory

Focusing on company culture and its effect on the motivation of employees, it's useful to mention Deci and Ryan's (1985, 2017) self-determination theory (SDT), in according to which humans – adequately in an organizational setting – have three key sources of motivation: *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness*. In a work setting, these three could look like allowing the employees to 1) feel freedom to experiment and initiate instead of pressure to behave in a controlled and directed way, 2) feel confident and/or gain competencies, and 3) feel belonging and respect regarding supervisors and peers (Deci et al., 2017).

These three basic needs – and their actualization in the work context – affect employees' performance and well-being. When employees understand the worth and purpose of their jobs and feel autonomy and ownership in them, they tend to become more autonomously motivated and perform, learn, and adjust better. Receiving clear feedback and support enhances these effects. (Deci et al., 2017.)

Integration within different identifications – for instance, an identification with one's job and an identification with one's family – is important for employees to be fully engaged (Deci et al., 2017). Aim of a work-life balance is something an organization can encourage in their company culture – either explicitly or implicitly. This phenomenon can be especially linked back to one of the core opponents of the SDT theory: autonomy. It is meaningful to distinguish the concept of autonomy from the concepts of individualism, independence, and separateness. Regardless of cultural differences – for instance, whether a culture is collectivist or individualistic in nature – autonomy, as one of the basic needs according to the SDT theory, is associated with well-being. (Chirkov et al., 2003.)

Whether autonomy is part of the company culture can be observed by monitoring how much an organization is supportive of it. This can be demonstrated, for instance, by managers showing interest in their subordinates' viewpoints and facilitating employees taking more initiative – both in regards to decision making within groups and in relation to aspects of their own jobs. Also providing informational feedback without it being controlling and demeaning is one way to show autonomy support, which leads to more positive and trusting attitudes toward the top management – even if the manager sharing the feedback would actually be much lower in the organizational hierarchy. (Deci et al., 2017.)

Another aspect of the SDT theory, greater pay, correlates to employees feeling more valued and fairly treated by the organization. Nevertheless, it does not lead to greater need satisfaction nor intrinsic motivation. In turn, managerial need support predicts need satisfaction – fulfilment of all of the three basic needs – and intrinsic motivation. Policies or practices in the work place, that support need satisfaction, are likely to facilitate well-being, autonomous motivation, and high-quality performance. Organization cultures where managers encourage employees' perspectives and self-initiation, offer choices for groups and individuals, share meaningful feedback, assign optimally-challenging tasks, and give a rationale when requesting a behavior are likely to lead to these outcomes. (Deci et al., 2017.)

2.3 Establishing Company Values and Culture Through Onboarding

In this subchapter, I present theory that integrates onboarding, company culture, and company values, including *person-organization fit* and *personal-identity socialization*.

2.3.1 Person-Organization Fit, and Socialization Tactics

Person-organization (P–O) fit assesses the match between an individual's own values and the values of an organization. New employees' experiences during their first months in a new organization are crucial for consolidating this fit. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004, pp. 52-53.) How the employer manages initial interactions with the job and other members of the organization implies to the new employee what the organizational culture is like (Cable & Parsons, 2001, pp. 1-3).

Revisiting the institutionalized socialization tactics introduced in the chapter 2.1.1., sequential and fixed socialization tactics (i.e., *content tactics*, grouped by Jones 1986) as well as serial and investiture tactics (i.e., *social tactics*, grouped by Jones 1986) are linked to better P–O fit perception. Furthermore, through these tactics, new employees’ personal values are more likely to shift toward perceived values of the organization. Additionally, social aspects are related to new employees’ perceptions of fitting in. (Cable & Parsons, 2001, p. 15; Figure 6.)

Institutionalized socialization tactics mainly concerned with:	Tactics	Description	Effects
Content	Sequential tactics	→ Information of the intended steps of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better P–O fit perception • Employee’s personal values more likely to change
	Fixed tactics	→ Information of the timing associated with completing each socialization phase	
Social Aspects	Serial tactics	→ Experienced organizational members as mentors / role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better P–O fit perception • Employee’s personal values more likely to change • Perception of fitting in
	Investiture tactics	→ Social support from experienced organizational members	

Figure 6. Socialization tactics most positively related to perceived P–O fit, according to Cable and Parsons (2001).

Perceived fit isn’t the only aspect of P–O fit that can be measured. For instance, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2004) examined *actual* P–O fit, alongside perceived P–O fit, through an independent assessment of employees’ personal values and organizational values. Then again, their finding was that after the first stage of socialization, perceived fit and actual fit become more strongly related. Moreover, actual fit at organizational entry significantly predicts individual outcomes after the first stage of socialization. This further implies that, in the

recruitment phase, asking applicants about their values and comparing these to the organizational values can be used as an indicator of the applicant's possible future fit and outcomes with the organization. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004, pp. 67-69.)

New employees' initial fit perceptions tend to become less positive during socialization. The degree, to which initial fit perceptions change, depends on new employees' experiences with socialization tactics, particularly, in parallel to one of Cable and Pearson's (2001) findings: investiture tactics. New employees who received more social support from organizational insiders had a greater perceived fit after the first four months, with higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. This may be due to new employees feeling valued for what they bring to the organization and therefore having a positive outlook on organizational values. Alternatively, employees who have a greater fit to begin with may receive more positive treatment from their colleagues. However, the finding that investiture tactics predicted greater perceived fit rather supports the first explanation. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004, pp. 69-70.)

Nevertheless, Cable and Parsons (2001, p. 15) found out that new employees who have more simultaneous job offers when accepting their new job are less likely to change their personal values toward the perceived organizational values. Presumably, these employees may have a better P-O fit to begin with, as they have had more options to choose the most suitable job and organization, or they feel less pressure to conform as they perceive more possible opportunities elsewhere (Cable & Parsons, 2001, p. 15).

Cooper-Thomas and colleagues (2004, p. 69) additionally concluded in their study that the stability of actual fit indicates that new employees do not change their personal values in the first months of socialization. Actual fit is more stable over time and less affected by socialization experiences compared to perceived fit. However, after the first few months of socialization, the perceived fit relates to individual outcomes even more than actual fit. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004, pp. 69-70.) It is additionally important to note that some organizations may want to promote adaptation and change, even with the risk of potential greater turnover, and in this process, more individualized socialization tactics may be suitable, even preferable (Cable & Parsons, 2001, pp. 17-18).

2.3.2 Individuality, Role of Recruitment, and Personal-Identity Socialization

Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) state, that when employees are encouraged to apply their personal strengths to the job, they also feel a stronger sense of connection with their colleagues and more engagement in their work. Moreover, the likelihood of them staying with the company increases (Cable et al., 2013). Cable et al. (2013) propose shaping the onboarding process around individual identity rather than adaptation to the organization's culture.

Cable et al. (2013, p. 24) present that when new employees are led to accept an organization's identity, "they are expected to downplay their own identities". I would counteract this notion by highlighting how relatively vague company values tend to be. I would regard the most important step to avoid the collision of the company values, culture, and identity with the individual counterparts to be adequate recruiting. If the values are clearly brought up in the recruitment process, it gives both the employer and the employee a better chance to avoid a mismatch and ensure a natural person-organization fit.

Nevertheless, the approach of Cable et. al (2013, p. 24) of *personal-identity socialization*, which consists of encouraging new employees to express their own perspectives and strengths on the job from the beginning of the employment, is also to be taken into consideration. Cable et al. (2013, p. 24) carried out a study where incoming employees were divided into three groups that had different emphases for the employees' first day, with otherwise identical onboarding experiences. The three divided groups' approaches were: emphasis on the individual identity, emphasis on the organizational identity, and the control group (Cable et al., 2013, p. 24).

What was found in the study was that emphasizing the new employees' personal identities resulted in stronger employment relationships, greater customer satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower employee turnover. The individual-identity approach heightened employees' self-esteem in an otherwise stressful situation. (Cable et al., 2013, pp. 24, 26.) This finding can vaguely be linked to Saks, Uggersley, and Fassina's (2007) emphasis on the importance of serial and investiture tactics for employee's increased sense of competence. In both studies, the sense of heightened individual competence is achieved through other people.

When new employees feel that they are using their signature strengths at work, oftentimes, they experience less emotional burnout and stress and more satisfaction (Cable et al., 2013, p. 28). Cable et al. (2013) share four principals to promote employees' personal identities (Figure 7).

1. Break out the traditional employment trap.
2. Help newcomers identify their authentic strengths.
3. Facilitate introductions to other organizational members.
4. Ask newcomers to consider how their authentic strengths can be applied to the job.

Figure 7. Getting the Onboarding Process Right: Four Principles, according to Cable et al. (2013).

When discussing individuality, it is important to note the differences in individualistic and collectivist cultures; this can also have a significant effect on what motivates and whom. Simultaneously, it is important to notice that there are equally variations within cultures as between them (Chirkov et al., 2003). Santos, Varnum, and Grossmann (2017) state, that individualism has generally increased in most societies during recent centuries – with cultural differences still remaining. I believe that could be considered at least one of the reasons, why there seems to be a shift in newer research supporting more of an individual approach to onboarding.

3 Method

In this chapter, I first focus on my research questions and the purpose of the study. Then, I introduce, how I collected and processed the data. To conclude, I present principals of the chosen analysis method *thematic analysis* and reflect on my position as the researcher.

3.1 Research Questions and Purpose of the Study

Research questions of this study are:

1. What is the current employee experience of the onboarding process as an establisher of company values and company culture?
2. How can this process be enhanced?

My research questions rise from the case company's needs, as this is a commissioned study as well as from the importance of the topic in the field of human resources. Onboarding is a crucial process in organizations, predicting not only the job satisfaction and turnover probability of a new employee but also their adaptation and attunement to the organization. Additionally, company values and company culture are an important part of an organization's strategy and are therefore ideally well-familiarized with the employees. Onboarding can be viewed as an opportunity to implement this goal of learning but, unfortunately, organizations don't always utilize the chance – at least, to its full potential.

Moreover, I personally find the research questions and topic interesting. I hold the view, backed by research, that the success of onboarding has a crucial role in familiarizing the new employees with their new workplace and ultimately even determining the length of their lifecycle in the organization. Additionally, there is not much research that integrates onboarding and company values as well as company culture, thus this is also an important topic from a research viewpoint.

3.2 Data Collection and Processing

I carried out my research and collection of needed data following the methods of qualitative research. The intention of my study is to understand the employees' personal experiences on a

deeper level and in rich detail, which makes the qualitative method fitting. Additionally, qualitative approach offers the flexibility to ask for clarification and elaboration. Nishii et al. (2008) suggest that the effect, that HR practices have, is construed by the meanings that employees attach to these practices. Fiske and Taylor (1991) contributed to social attribution theory, according to which people perceive different meanings in social stimuli. These studies among others furthermore support the importance of focusing on the employee experience regarding my research topic.

In my study, I interviewed the recently joined employees of the case company. Through my employment and role in the case company, I had visibility to the data – located in the HR tool in use – that I needed for sending the interview invitations: the names, emails, and start dates of the recently employed. In the privacy notice, attached to my interview invitations, I detailed the personal data used in my study as well as the purpose, usage, and anonymization of the personal data. Furthermore, in the privacy notice, the rights of the data subject were shared. Informing research participants about the ways their personal data will be processed is a legal requirement of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), that aims to increase transparency between different parties. The participants have the right to know how their personal data is collected, used, stored, disseminated, or otherwise processed. (Finnish Social Science Data Archive, n.d.)

I sent the email invitations in stages, starting from the most recently employed; subsequently monitoring how many employees were interested in participating. When stretched to a one-year timeframe, I got a couple of volunteers more than eventually needed for my study. As a global company, the interviewees resided all over the world, which is why I interviewed them through business communication platform *Microsoft Teams*, where I also recorded the interviews. As I shared with the employees in the privacy notice, the recordings were deleted, no later than 60 days after the recording of the interviews.

Before starting the actual interviews, I conducted a pilot interview with a colleague, which was useful for assessing the questions that I had planned and, as a result of the interview, slightly modified. Altogether, excluding the pilot interview, I interviewed eight employees who had started working in the case company within a year when receiving my interview invitation. The length of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to over an hour. I chose the participants for interviewing in the order that I received responses of interest from them. I

made the decision of eight interviewees after I had conducted seven interviews and identified that the scope and richness of data neared adequate. Simultaneously, I had begun to notice topics that I observed to be repeating in the data.

Before interviewing and recording, I made some small-talk with the interviewees, thanked them for taking time to participate in my study, and introduced myself. I described my role both as an employee in the case company and as a university student, writing my master's thesis. I emphasized my role in the interview as the researcher, not the employee. I shortly described the topic of my study and explained that I was conducting my study for the case company.

In addition, I revised some key points from the privacy notice; primarily, that everything that the interviewees were going to say was confidential and would be anonymized, thus I was the only person to be able to link the opinions to their expressers. I also stated that there were no wrong or right answers; I was interested in their experience. Moreover, I also defined the terms we were going to use during the interviews: *company values*, *company culture*, and *onboarding*. In every interview, I used principally the same shortened definitions that I adapted from the definitions in my theoretical framework.

For a data collection method, I chose semi-structured interviews. I used my interview structure in the interviews, asking all the questions, that I had prepared, from every interviewee – occasionally asking additional questions related to the things that the interviewees brought up to understand their experience and opinions better. While conducting the interviews, I listened to the interviewees actively; simultaneously encouraging them, for instance, with head nods and small affirming words, such as “mmhm” and “yeah”. I aimed to allow there to be enough silence after an interviewee had stopped talking, for them to be able to continue sharing if they felt like it. Likewise, when I unintentionally interrupted an interviewee, I encouraged them to keep contributing.

At the end of the interviews, I aimed to ask the interviewees, whether there was anything else that they would have wanted to say regarding the topics discussed in the interview. After this part of the conversation, I stopped recording and thanked the interviewees for participation. Sometimes, at this point, the interviewees wanted to share some thoughts regarding the interview or the themes discussed.

I started transcribing whilst I was still simultaneously conducting more interviews. Transcribed material, from verbal to written, amounted to 74 pages. I aimed to transcribe the material from word to word, adding notes if there were any actions taken that affected the words said, for instance, a laugh that influenced the discussion. When transcribing, I instantly and simultaneously anonymized the data, so that all personal data was removed. For words that could give away any potentially significant data of the interviewee, I replaced with neutral words in square brackets; descriptive of the meaning of the original word said. This style of anonymization is called *categorization of identifiers* (Ranta & Kuula-Luumi, 2017).

All the interviews were conducted in English. In the case company, there are employees who speak English as their first language and employees who do not. For preserving the anonymity of the interviewees, when transcribing, I modified some errors in the speech or other signs that could contingently give away the first language or nationality of the interviewee. However, these minor modifications were such that they did not affect the material and its content in any notable way.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a commonly used qualitative method that was initially used in the field of psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 3). TA is one of the most transparent and systemic forms to provide groundwork for models of human thinking, behavior, and feeling. It highlights both the importance of themes and the depth of analysis. (Joffe, 2011, p. 210.) TA should be viewed more as a transtheoretical technique than a theoretically informed framework for research (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 3).

What is common to all TA methods – and there are several of them – is theoretical flexibility, coding, and theme development. (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 3). A theme signifies a pattern of meaning that is construed from the data (Joffe, 2011, p. 209). Other unifying factors include the possibility for both inductive and deductive approaches to analysis as well as coding of both explicit and implicit meanings of the data. To produce TA research with methodological integrity, the research needs to intentionally choose an approach out of a diverse range and engage in conceptual and design thinking. (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, pp. 3-5.)

Braun and Clarke (2022a, p. 8) distinguish three main approaches of thematic analysis: coding reliability, codebook, and reflexive approach. In my study, I used *reflexive thematic analysis*. In this fully qualitative approach, themes are created after coding the data, and they are patterns of meaning connected by a unifying concept. Additionally, themes are not perceived as emerging from the data but as the researcher actively discovering them. (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 9.) Thus, researcher subjectivity is explicitly recognized, which I discuss further in the following subsection of this chapter.

As the focus in my study is to research the concrete events and opinions regarding onboarding – especially related to the company values and company culture – I use *experiential TA* in my study (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). This means that I am interested in the explicit feelings and opinions of the recently employed and I approach them, for the purpose of my research questions, by viewing language as accurately reflecting meaning; not focusing on the constructionist nature of language. Furthermore, I take a predominantly semantic approach to the coding of data, focusing on the explicit opinions and meanings articulated by the interviewees; instead of exploring implicit or underlying meaning of the data. This focus of meaning is aligned with my research questions and the purpose of my study.

I chose the reflexive thematic analysis – furthermore, a predominantly inductive, data-driven approach – because I wanted to emphasize the experiences of the employees, without trying to categorize them into a pre-existing coding frame. I began my thematic analysis by reading through the transcribed and anonymized data, simultaneously highlighting some of the phrases that I found significant. At this point, I was already somewhat familiar with the data, after having conducted and transcribed, simultaneously anonymizing, the interviews.

After the first reading, I read the material again; this time, taking notes and forming a different file with phrases, that I thought could either be possibly significant regarding my research questions or had some unifying element with other parts of the data. Already, at this state, I started to group together pieces of data that I perceived obtaining some unifying element and drafting some initial names for them. This is understood to be *coding*: similar parts of data are categorized together and a name that describes the common feature is given to the category (Juhila, 2021). In reflexive thematic analysis, codes can expand and contract as well as be combined, split, or refined throughout the process (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 9).

I used slight deductive analysis to ensure the relevance between the research questions and the data-driven codes.

I re-read the transcribed material again; especially re-checking the statements that I had initially collected and whether there were any others that I found significant and had previously left out. Simultaneously, when grouping statements together, I started generating and developing themes. Themes are a combination of data, the researcher's subjectivity, theoretical and conceptual understanding, as well as training and experience (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 10). In reflexive thematic analysis, the emphasis is on themes across cases, rather than within individual cases (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 13). I followed this principle when constructing the themes in my study. I kept reviewing, refining, and renaming the themes throughout the end of the process.

3.4 Position of the Researcher

When evaluating any study, it is crucial to evaluate the position of the researcher. In qualitative research, the researcher's role is central, as an influencer of the collection, selection, and interpretation of data as well as the behavior of the participants (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). Qualitative data can be coded and thematized from many different angles, which makes the role of the researcher significant. When coding, it is important to focus on the paradigm of the research and the research questions – which, if needed, can be simultaneously modified during the coding process, when the researcher learns to understand the data more extensively. (Juhila, 2021.)

In reflexive thematic analysis, the approach used in my study, researcher subjectivity is one of the primary tools and seen as a resource. Knowledge is perceived to be inherently subjective and situated, thus the researcher's voice is apparent. (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I acknowledge that my experiences, interests, and associations have an effect on the research and especially the analysis. I have insight to the field of human resources – including onboarding – through my work experience and I am completing my master's degree in educational sciences. This background gives me a suitable foundation to conduct this study.

Regarding my position as a researcher, it is furthermore important to mention that I was an employee in the case company while carrying out my research. The study that I conducted

was commissioned. Even though I have some preceding and personal context of the case company related to the topic of my research – hence, to also what the interviewees shared with me – throughout the study, I intentionally focused on the employees' experiences, not my own.

In the interview invitations that I sent, I explicitly stated that participation was voluntary. Along with this being standard practice, I also wanted to emphasize that my role in the work community should have not pressured anyone to partake in my study. When interviewing the employees, I emphasized my role in the interviews as a researcher, not an employee. Regarding a small minority of the interviewed employees, I had participated in their onboarding but had not been in charge of the induction of the company values and company culture. Regarding the majority of the employees, I had not been a part of their onboarding nor even met before.

In the interviews, I posed interview questions that were planned in advance and inquired more about topics that the interviewees brought up themselves – not related to my personal onboarding experiences. Although in reflexive thematic analysis, the subjective role of the researcher is seen as an asset, not a threat, it was still important for me to position myself as a researcher in the interviewing phase – not as an employee who had at one point been onboarded nor an employee who had participated in onboarding others. When construing codes and themes, I concentrated on what the employees had shared and to what extent; not on my personal opinions on the matters. Simultaneously, I still had an active role in interpreting codes and themes and reviewing them against the research questions.

4 Analysis

I construed two themes that I considered to be the most organic way to understand the rest of the thematic analysis: *Current Employee Experience of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture* and *Improvement Suggestions for Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture*. These themes are additionally in line with my research questions. They also provide an approachable mapping and context to the subthemes, that I construed, altogether nine: *Outstanding Onboarding, Culture of Teamwork, Personal Alignment with the Company Values, Company Culture in the Background, Multiculturalism, Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values, Repairment of Silos, More Clarity in Onboarding, and Involvement from the Management*. (Figure 8.) I present all these themes in the following subchapters.

Current Employee Experience of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture	Improvement Suggestions for Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture
Outstanding Onboarding	Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values
Culture of Teamwork	Repairment of Silos
Personal Alignment with the Company Values	More Clarity in Onboarding
Company Culture in the Background	Involvement from the Management
Multiculturalism	

Figure 8. Themes and Subthemes.

Regarding how I present the following transcripts, for clarification of data – for instance, context for an ambiguous word that cannot be fully understood from the extract – I added explanation in parentheses, for instance: “- - there’s, like, different levels (of trust) also inside the company - -.” I believe that differentiating the use of parentheses for description, from the use of square brackets for anonymization, facilitates reading and following the transcripts.

4.1 Current Employee Experience of Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture

This is one of the two themes that I construed, consisting of transcripts where the employees describe the current state of onboarding, company values, and company culture. There are

altogether five subthemes that I subsequently present: *Outstanding Onboarding*, *Culture of Teamwork*, *Personal Alignment with the Company Values*, *Company Culture in the Background*, and *Multiculturality*.

4.1.1 Outstanding Onboarding

The first theme in my thematization is *Outstanding Onboarding*. All of the employees regarded their onboarding experience as positive, even in cases where they additionally had some improvement suggestions. The majority even mentioned that their experience of the onboarding was better than their previous experiences or better than they expected.

But you know, it (onboarding) went really well. This is probably my, I think, my [ordinal number] company I've worked at, and it was probably one of the better onboarding processes. - So, that was really good; I really liked it. (I3)

Overall, especially the organization and clarity of onboarding stood out to employees.

- - it was, like, one of the best onboardings that I've had honestly so far, because usually, it's been more or less, like, learning by doing, and instead here, there was, like, really a script on how the onboarding should go. (I3)

Organization and clarity in onboarding were achieved, for instance, by usage of an HR tool and onboarding documentations.

Well, I thought that the onboarding experience was very modern and pleasant, so everything was handled through the [HR tool in use] and there wasn't any, let's say, the normal hassles that are associated with such process, so it was, I think, much more organized and streamlined than I would have expected. (I1)

Personally, I think that the onboarding was very good. I have not much experience because I have changed work [number] times, so I don't know a lot of onboarding, but I think that this onboarding was the most complete and well-organized that I found. - - here, I find a lot of documentation, a lot of courses to introduce the company, the product, and the document to explain the regulation. So, it was very clear. I found a lot of courses, documents, so that I was able to onboard, like, in an autonomous way. (I5)

These experiences are linked to the general onboarding; not particularly to onboarding in regard to the company culture or company values. As an exception, one employee expressed the impactful aspect of the introduction of values during onboarding.

- - at least this time, it was like, the company values were more present, because I had to read and accept the company values, so that's the first time I've done anything like that. Yeah, that, I suppose, made a difference. (I3)

The majority of the employees also expressed their contentment and thankfulness towards the teamwork at display during the onboarding process. I included those experiences as part of the following subtheme: *Culture of Teamwork*.

4.1.2 Culture of Teamwork

The culture of teamwork was strongly highlighted by the interviewed employees. The majority of the interviewees repeatedly communicated their positive experiences of teamwork, especially within their own teams. Teamwork is one of the case company's core values, but it was also distinctly the most intuitively discussed company value by the interviewees. Some of these experiences were related to the onboarding phase that the employees had had and some were more general perceptions about the company. First, I introduce experiences of onboarding as a creator of a company culture of teamwork.

They (HR Manager and Manager) both worked on it (onboarding) well – very, very good. Always making me feel comfortable, making me feel listened; if I have some questions, if I have some doubts, and everything. Obviously, [HR Manager] for the first part. So, obviously, when I just came or before I came here, [she/he] was the one that if I had doubts, if I needed more information of the company, and everything. And then [Manager], too, for the job; for that part of the onboarding. (I2)

[The HR Manager] has been a really nice person. We discussed openly everything: problems, not problems, expectations, from global side, from [location's] side, my expectations towards the company and stuff like that. So, we were really kind and open. (I6)

Really just everybody, like everybody over here, helping out like [Manager] and [HR Manager] really stepping in and showing me the ropes and, you know, [another person] helping me with the [department] stuff like everybody really helped me along, which was fantastic. (I4)

These citations focus on the managers – from interviewees’ teams and from the HR department – and how they were eager to help the new employees. Additionally, the generous help and support from team members during onboarding was repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees. Positive affect was described through expressions, such as being *comfortable* and *satisfied*.

Everything good, but beside them, even my colleagues, I think that they also are a part of the onboarding process, because they are the people that I’m talking to the most, so they are the people that I communicate with the most; I have to work with. So, they, I think, are the ones that make me even more comfortable. (I2)

I felt like people were preparing me to succeed versus, at the last place, it was more of “here’s your computer, off you go” kind of situation. (I4)

So, I’d say the team is pretty cool with the onboarding process and they’re easy to talk to. That’s actually what I asked for, like, the manager, like what kind of team are we going to have in here. So, I’m really satisfied with that. (I8)

According to these experiences, shared by the employees, the case company’s onboarding establishes a culture of teamwork; of helping and openness. These same areas of focus were also clearly distinguishable in the interviewees’ more general descriptions of the company culture, without the onboarding framework. The experience of offered help from team members was a shared element of teamwork amongst the interviewees.

- - if I ever have a problem, I can just reach out to three or four people and I have three or four solutions. It’s just really nice. (I4)

- - it’s really nice here that, you know, if I ask something, like, I sent an email last week asking for people, for anybody international [about role-related information], and I got responses back in like a day, which is amazing. So, it’s stuff like that; that kind of teamwork really helps. (I4)

What I see is that people really help; they offer, really, a lot of help to each other, so it's very good. (I5)

- - inside [the team], the team work is very good. I feel very, very good with my colleagues because they are very open to discuss, open to help me, so I have no problem. Also, with the other colleagues, from the external team, if I ask help for something, we are very collaborative and helpful. (I5)

The help from others was occasionally specified as taking place specifically within the interviewee's own team. Naturally, those are simultaneously the people an employee tends to work and spend most of their time with, depending on the job description.

Yes, but even as I already said, the teamwork; the fact that they support me, they reply to all my questions. So, I think that is an important part of the teamwork and the part of the respect of other people whom you're working with - -. From as I said, from my side, from my team, because I haven't worked with other colleagues that are not from my team for now. (I2)

I see that inside my team, there is a lot of help between people, so if someone has some problem, in 0.5 second, there is a person that will help the person. (I5)

The context of one's own team was also sometimes specified when employees talked about teamwork in a more general sense.

- - it (teamwork) works quite well, I think, inside, like, for example, our team - -. (I3)

- - at least in our team, I feel that, like, people get along quite nicely. (I3)

I asked for a good team quality, a good teamwork, and that's exactly what I got. (I8)

Alongside the culture of offering help, openness is another component of teamwork that was mentioned frequently.

- - because they (team members) share everything to me, all knowledge. They don't, like, hide whatever I need to know. They're open with everything. (I8)

Openness was also expressed in relation to the importance of constructive criticism and the ability to deliver it. Freedom to share – even negative – opinions was seen as part of an open culture and giving feedback.

- - that it's kind of, like, open in that sense that there are some, definitely some, issues in the past, and probably some issues in the present, and people are like talking about those quite openly. I think that's a good thing. (I3)

I think that people feel quite free about raising concerns about if something feels, like, off for them or doesn't feel fair. Then, people tend to quite freely express their opinions. (I3)

- - I think feedback is supposed to be good and bad, like, it can be constructive as long as it's not like, you know, you suck and you're the worst person ever. But I do think we do have a good enough culture where – and good enough relationships with people where – you know, if I do something wrong, people can tell me and I take it constructively, not negatively. And I think that's important to be able to have, you know, “pros and cons” talk with somebody - -. (I4)

Other aspects of teamwork discussed by the interviewees were, for instance, the perceived friendliness of employees and the importance of being able to trust others – and the employer.

I see that people are trusted, that I have noted, and that people are proud of the integrity of their work and try to do their work to the best of their ability. And people are friendly, and for the most part, there aren't, or at least I haven't noticed, any kind of hard feelings or anything like that. So, everyone is at least professionally courteous to each other. (I1)

- - it's everybody pulling the rope at the same time to get the company going in the right direction. It doesn't really feel like – I know some companies, you know, people try to set you up to fail, so they can either get your job or whatever. (I4)

So, if I feel not good with people and the team, also, my work will not be good - - I need to trust the people and my team, because I can work well with my team, but if I have no trust in them, or also, if I have no trust in my manager, in my leader, this could be a very big problem. (I5)

But I feel that team manager and also the company are very present, so if we say that we have a problem, they immediately search for a solution. (I5)

Two interviewees also mentioned the experienced importance of connection beyond the professional realm.

- - I see a lot of time, that my colleagues maybe meet also outside work, so they have something – they like to be together also outside the work as well. - - I like to see people that have something to interact on, also outside the work, because I think that it creates a strong collaboration and a stronger integration between people. So, for me, it's a positive thing. (I5)

(On the importance of shared interests) That's an amazing thing. Because you have someone to talk about those things with while you're drinking coffee. (I2)

As several theories in my theoretical framework, this subtheme captures the important employee experience of feeling integrated and supported by others in the company – whether it be colleagues, managers, or the HR department.

4.1.3 Personal Alignment with the Company Values and Company Culture

The theme of *Personal Alignment with the Company Values and Company Culture* encompasses the employee experiences of personal alignment with the company values and company culture.

I didn't have any expectation rather than have a company that follows at least my personal values, which is something that has been fulfilled. - - the company values are pretty close to mine. (I6)

The adaptable nature of the company values was mentioned: some employees emphasized that they see the values, not only aligned with their personal values, but applicable in a broader sense.

(Q: Are the company values meaningful to you personally?)

Yeah, yes, I think they are. Well, let's say they are such that I can stand behind them. And try to adhere to them in my work. (I1)

Of course, those company values that we have, it's like, it could be said that it should be close to any like personal values of individual workers. - - But yeah, as I said, I read the company values and I think those are good values. (I3)

(Q: Are the company values meaningful to you personally?)

Yeah. As I said before, it's kind of like – it should be like – many of them could come, like, naturally. They don't have to be pointed out that these are, like, company values. They should be, like, while using any co-operation with people. Those are good, like, reminders if there come some moral questions, for example, how to behave in each situation; though then usually, in those kinds of situations, it's good to reflect company values. (I3)

Another sentiment that was distinguishable in regard to personal alignment was gratefulness of the subtlety of the company values.

Like I said, I remember us going over them, but I mean they're pretty easy to pick up, especially that I'm looking at them again, but it's pretty easy to – everything makes sense like I know what trust and integrity is. You know, some companies have, like, made-up, market-y words for their stuff and then it's hard to figure out what that really means, but our stuff is simple enough, it's pretty self-explanatory. (I4)

(Q: If you didn't look, would you remember them ((company values))?)

- - I don't remember them by heart; that's for sure. But even because it's not a mantra that I need to learn and I need to repeat every morning. And I'm very thankful for that - - still, the values that the company embraced are the ones that I have myself, so even if I don't recall them; let's not say that I don't care just because I don't need to remember them. - - I don't remember them by heart, but I don't need to remember those, because those are my personal values as well. (I6)

One employee elaborated how a previous experience in a different organization had had a negative impact on to how the employees perceived the company values.

They would have it everywhere. It was kind of too much everywhere. It was a distraction, like we would have, like they would put it on the inside of, like, the bathroom stalls. Like it was everywhere. (Interviewer laughs) Yeah, it was fun. It was fun. They would make it be your computer screen, like it was literally to the point where it was almost propaganda. - - it was

like beating over the head with it, to the point where it was just dumb. So, our way is a lot more natural. - - we would make fun of it all the time. - - it feels like you're in one of those, like, Hunger games-y kind of movies, where you're just like putting up like propaganda and that's what it felt like, like, literally every like 10 feet was a poster or something dumb and it's like – we would literally make fun of it all the time. So, it had the opposite effect on us. Or maybe the goal was to bond us by making fun of it; if that was the case, they achieved it - -. (I4)

The majority of the employees were personally satisfied with the case company's values. One employee voiced that it would be easier to remember them if they were *catchier*. In addition, there were shared feelings of pride felt towards the company and its products.

I think, you know, the values are right; they are right for our company. And I think everyone should follow them whole-heartedly. (I7)

I, you know, I love the company. I think it is really an amazing company when you think of what it has achieved so far - -. (I7)

- - it's really cool to see how much better our stuff is, and I think that's part of the culture, too. Cause if people aren't, if people aren't happy or they don't like where they're at, they don't care what they make. - - But you can really tell here, we have pride in our [products] and I think that really comes from the culture, too, because I mean, if you don't care, then it's just gonna fall apart. That's not gonna work. (I4)

Like, it's really nice being able to go somewhere and enjoy. I feel like I'm needed and I feel like I'm appreciated and I enjoy being there. So, that's really nice. It makes going to work 8 hours a day a lot easier when you actually enjoy it, instead of being miserable for forever. So, I mean, I really do appreciate the culture and the people, like I really do think I fit in pretty well to it. (I4)

One employee articulated how they felt aligned with the company culture regarding how the working hours were arranged.

What's about the safety, also about the, for example, the working hours, that I can have a lot of time free on the day, because I have the possibility to organize my time at work as I want,

and this is very important for me. That is not very often in [location] to find this kind of management of working hours - -. (I5)

Two of the employees emphasized their own adaptability over the company values rather than evaluating if they felt aligned with the company values intrinsically.

(Q: Do you personally feel aligned with the company culture?)

Yeah, yeah. I would say yeah, based on how I do things, and if there's an adjustment in the company culture, I adjust, so I would say I got aligned with it. (I8)

I'm a person that usually, when guesting in a new company, sits and waits – or better, observes – what is the company culture and then understand whether it's feasible for me or if there are things that I need to change. I analyze what the culture is and then see how to interact with it - -. (I6)

The subtheme of *Personal Alignment with the Company Values and Company Culture* encompasses many positive meanings that the employees associated with the employer's values and culture, such as pride, autonomy, enjoyment, appreciation, belonging, thankfulness, sensibility, and even love. Others described their alignment with the company culture and company values more discreetly – highlighting either the adaptable nature of the values or the adaptable nature of themselves.

4.1.4 Company Culture in the Background

The next subtheme in my thematization is *Company Culture in the Background*. Several employees stated that they do not often think about company culture or company values and their presence.

That's a good question that kind of assumes that people may be perhaps, unlike me, constantly – not constantly, but from time to time – thinking about the company values. (I3)

Sorry, I'm just a little confused on, like, the culture-wise and such, like, thinking on what I'm gonna say. Like when you say about culture. Because, sometimes, I don't, like, you know, notice those kinds of things. (I8)

(Q: How does the company culture manifest as behavior in your opinion?)

I don't actually know how. I believe it's, to an extent, present in the operations inherently. But at least I haven't made any special observations concerning that: "Now they are adhering to the company culture or manifesting it". So, I think it's in the background, but I haven't made any observations directly. (I1)

Two employees stated the viewpoint that their field and focus are directed elsewhere.

Maybe it's my problem because I consider myself like a technician. All the things that are technical, for me, it's good and I remember it. All the things that are outside the technical point of view, maybe, I forget very quickly. (I5)

(Q: Would you have done something differently in how company culture was established in onboarding?)

I don't really know; that's because I'm not a person that is creative on these things. So, it was what the manager thought was a good way to embrace it, and for me, that's fine. (I6)

Some employees stated the implicit nature of the company culture, perceiving it to be in the background.

Maybe it feels that company culture is something that is like: "It is what it is". That's my opinion. (I3)

(Q: How do you see the company culture now?)

It's there. (I6)

And on the other side, the company culture is something, I mean, how the people work and behave and blah blab blah – it's something that you are not introduced during your onboarding. It's something that you need to understand while you live the company itself. (I6)

These experiences can be interpreted as displaying the focus of intrinsic motivation of some of the interviewed employees – which might not be culture- or people-driven. The employees identified the implicit nature of company culture, thus the challenge in communicating something that might be intangible, complex, and hard to define. Simultaneously, it can be assumed that there was not much explicit company culture guidance from the case company's side as that did not come up in the interviewees' experiences. This conclusion was supported

by the interviewed employees' answers to explicit questions about company culture familiarization.

4.1.5 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is one observation that a few of the interviewed employees brought up as part of the company culture. The case company is an international corporation. There was a feeling of appreciation for the multiculturalism expressed by some of the employees.

The fact that we are all mixed, we are all different cultures, and that's so beautiful, I think - -. (I2)

- - so, to see it (mixed cultures) in our organization, I think that's amazing, I mean to talk to someone that is like right now in [another location] that I can say is my colleague. Or I have [name] in my team, that is from [another location]. Then, sometimes we also talk to the colleague in [another location]. So, you have this mix that I think is amazing because you also could talk about you know: "For Christmas, here in [interviewee's location], we do those things; how is it in [location example] or how is it in [another location example] - -. (I2)

There are some distinct observations made about different locations and how they handle things differently. Especially, positions on values, mental health, work-life balance, and working pace were discussed.

I think that the first thing that I saw was the differences between us here in [location] and with the colleagues in [a different location]. Because I think that there is some kind of – because if I have to take, like, a totally [nationality] organization, things like mental health, like values, like all these things, are not even mentioned. So, coming in an organization that follows all those things – that has, I'd say, a head organization in [a different location], that cares about all those things – is pretty different. It was something, it's bad to say, but different. But, although, very good, it was like: "Oh god, they care about my mental health – what, really?" That's strange. But yes, that was the first thing that I saw. (I2)

It's totally different, because I saw that in [location of the headquarters], the organization cares about the free time of the people. So, I saw that for them, it's important that you just do the hours that you have and that's all. You do those hours, everything you have to do in those

hours, and then feel free to do everything you want; to have some hobbies, to do some sports, to – if you want – hang out. And trust me that in other [nationality] organizations, mostly [nationality], it's not like that. They don't care if you have hobbies; they don't care if you do some sports. In fact, I think that I saw that many of my colleagues here in [location] do a lot of sports - -. (I2)

Beside also the fact that, yes, you could see some differences between us and the [nationality] colleagues, that is – there is just culture. You know, from what I saw, they took everything more calmly. Just, if I have to do this thing: “Okay, I do it with my time, I don't have to rush, I do it”. You know, and that's not like that for us. [Nationality] people are like: “Oh, this thing shows up, I have to do it right now.” It can wait. So, that's another difference that I saw in the organization. (I2)

One employee described the feeling of hesitation they felt before joining the company, because they had had a bad experience working in an international company previously.

Like I said before, like, I was at a point where, you know, I didn't really know what to expect because this is another international company, and, you know, [location], [continent] culture is closer to us than like the [location of previous job] culture. But I still didn't know what to expect because there are different cultures. But it was night and day difference, like from day one, I felt welcomed. I felt like I was part of the team. (I4)

Two employees expressed that they had adjusted their expectations of collaboration in some way because of cultural differences. The first statement was voiced after detailing a situation of conflict.

And that was the part that I would have seen; that I would see an improvement in, but that is probably something in the middle of cultural differences that could be in way of people that are used to, I don't know, give trust to others and stuff like that, so it's not something that is related to the company itself. (I6)

(Q: Has your view on the company culture changed since you started?)

I think it changed by starting to acknowledge all these things that I already said, so starting to understand, maybe even how to write – just like to keep it simple – how to write an email to a [nationality] colleague or a [nationality] colleague. Because I think that's also different, how

to interact with those different colleagues. So, yes, I think that changed; to learn how to interact. (I2)

One employee emphasized the opportunity of increased open-mindedness that multiculturalism provides.

I think that for someone that comes here in this organization, it's also a good thing, because if you weren't before, you could start and have an open mind. Because, you know, seeing some [nationality] people there, even my age, so in their [age] – it's difficult to approach someone that is not [the same nationality], you know. “We, [nationality], we do the best – we have the best culture, we do everything” – that's not true. That's absolutely not true. No. I think that as behavior, you start to have even more an open mind, you know, just to embrace all those different cultures that I think that right now are the base of the company, of the organization, I think. (I2)

Another employee pointed out multiculturalism in relation to understanding the company culture.

It was easier to get the local culture rather than the international one. - - But I think that it's the same for also other departments, because at the end of the day; because there are multiple departments that are not connected, in a cross way. Maybe a part of couple of teams, more or less. Everyone learns the local culture, rather than the global one or the global vision. (I6)

Some interviewees brought up their appreciation for multiculturalism and internationality, and some expressed associated adaptation. Regarding the future actions related to the company culture, it is important for the case company to seek balance in creating a united company culture and acknowledging its subcultures.

4.2 Improvement Suggestions for Onboarding, Company Values, and Company Culture

In this theme, I've included subthemes that could be considered useful improvement suggestions for the case company related to onboarding, company values, and company culture. These subthemes are: *Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values*, *Repairment of Silos*, *More Clarity in Onboarding*, and *Involvement from the Management*.

4.2.1 Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values

The majority of the interviewed employees expressed their wish for more repetition of the company values. No one remembered the company values by heart when asked. Low visibility of the company values was mentioned several times.

It's the same issue that I feel that's always with company values: I read those when I first started in the company, but then, those are not visible anywhere, so it's not in active memory and it doesn't guide my day-to-day work. - - it's (company values) not like in active memory when I'm working at the moment. (I3)

Yeah, I would say that [this company] has less visibility of the values (compared to previous experiences with other organizations), you know. (I7)

No, to be honest, no; I don't think it's (the company values) in everyone's minds. And my experience with previous companies is that they make the company values, you know, very frequently visible to everyone. So, it has to be, you know, repeated, repeated over and over for people to absorb that and to become part of the culture. You know, so I think that there has to be a lot more that the company has to do to push the values, you know, so be constantly reminding people. (I7)

Yeah, as for me, so, I'm like a visual – I memorize things, when I see it, sometimes. So, after onboarding here, there's not much information about, like, the onboarding, the company values that I saw, like, there's no posters and such. - - that's one big thing for me to actually understand it, to always see it, I would say. (I8)

The employees suggested more visibility of the company values in a visual form. One employee particularly embraced the idea of high visibility of the values.

So, where, you know, you have the [company] logo, you could also have, you know, the values. So, they are present everywhere, so whenever people are just going about their business every day, at the work, they're coming across messages about the company values. So, they're written on the walls; they are on the pages on the computer, you know; they are in the mouse pads; they are, you know, in the backgrounds. They are in every system they open,

you know, they see them somewhere. It's just reinforcing the message, and then, during the introduction, there is an introduction to the values. (I7)

Two of the interviewees additionally mentioned that although they had some posters on the walls of their office premises, it might not solely help: one employee described that there were some posters at their office but because they did not remember the company values, they were not sure what the posters were about. At the end of the interview, the interviewee concluded that the office posters in question could most likely be about the company values. Another employee expressed that they had grown so accustomed to the values on their office walls, that they did no longer pay attention to them – still not remembering the values.

I think that these experiences illustrate that although it is important to add more visual elements – and that there are also many ways to implement that – that is not enough as an independent act without promoting a more extensive comprehension. Other ways that the interviewees suggested the onboarding to be improved and the values to be presented include more discussion, events, questionnaires, an introduction video, and inclusion of the company values in meetings.

Maybe the HR could have talked about it (company values) a little bit more. (I2)

I don't know, maybe like a questionnaire or something to check that you read the document (regarding company values) or you have taken care of the introduction. Because I really don't remember. (I5)

Maybe the only thing that I can say is that the company should make some more – I don't know if they could be events; they could be workshops, or whatever. - - We have some banners attached to the walls and nothing more. So, maybe, there should be something more on this side - -. (I6)

Yes, I would make sure that there is, like, a video, for example, on [company] academy that people have to watch, as an introduction to the company values, and then, the manager has to go through it and reinforce them; talk about them, you know. (I7)

During the meetings that involve, you know, a number of people, briefly touch on the values, you know; when you send a message about something that correlates to one of the values, you

link it to the values. So, if you celebrate some achievement, you go back to the values and say, you know, this relates to this value. (I7)

A couple of employees suggested for a *refresher* of the company values and the company culture, to be implemented with a delay after the beginning of employment. Simultaneously, these employees highlighted how much there was to learn in the onboarding phase alongside the company values and company culture.

I don't actually, well, recall anything specific concerning the company culture (as part of onboarding), although it was kind of discussed at conjunction with the values somewhat, but I don't recall much of it, as in the onboarding process, it's so much information at a short time, so I, at least, have to basically filter out what I don't need at that particular point. So, there could be, for example, some refresher a while from onboarding, concerning the values and culture, because I believe it's the situation with most. (I1)

The introduction is kind of, usually the whole introductory phase is kind of, like, so intensive that this kind of – of course, there's this company culture and company values, but there's also, like, you are introduced to your new work tasks and work environment and stuff like that. And the information flow is so, like, overwhelming at that point and then it – at least, I, myself, tend to focus on those, like, work tasks to get, like, the substance knowledge, so everything else tends to be a little bit more in the background.

(Q: Do you think it would have helped if the company culture and company values would have been introduced a little bit after you started?)

(break) Yeah. Yeah, perhaps. Yeah. And also, at that point, the person could have formed some kind of like opinion [themselves]. Those values and culture would have like more meaning at that point, in my opinion, because that's kind of something that it's, like, kind of difficult to read from the paper. It has like kind of very little substance at that point. (I3)

- - I don't know, but one or two times check the culture and the values with, for example, a questionnaire or some open-answer could be okay to take in the values and the culture.

Because I think that sometimes, we fall in a situation that we see every day, every time, all the same things, so it becomes the normality - -. So, it seems that we don't think about that because it's the normality, so...But maybe to remember one or two times per year - -. (I5)

On the contrary to the previous statements, one employee highlighted the importance of the values to be understood from the beginning.

So, I'm a little bit, didn't see – just a little bit – didn't see the goal because of that (that the values were not introduced in the beginning). - - Just because of that part, because I didn't see the values, or yeah, I'm really thinking right now, if it got mentioned before. It could have been mentioned, but it just didn't sink in my head probably at that time. - - So, because of that, yeah, I wasn't aware of the values, and the lack of information a bit on that part is, you know, kinda stays away on what the company would want me to actually do for them. (I8)

The unifying factor in this subtheme is the wish for more repetition of the values, with some varying concepts of means and timing.

4.2.2 Repairment of Silos

The employees actively spoke about the forming of silos and the need to repair them. Teamwork within teams and related to onboarding was considered overall satisfying but teamwork across the company and between teams and locations seemed to have distinct challenges.

Inside the team, I think, yes, there is very strong collaboration, but as soon as the collaboration gets outside the team, it breaks. (I5)

I have noticed that there are some issues with the teamwork part, especially concerning the relations of the – let's say – other sites concerning to the, kind of, group functions. (I1)

- - we are a bunch of companies that are under the same hat, and I sometimes don't see that "hey, we are our company", but I still see a bunch of companies that are working with each other. So, that is where I see some really huge points of improvements; being able to take out the local identity, but not because it's a bad thing, but just because it needs to be, if we really want to be a single company; that is where I see the most problems - -. (I6)

I think where is lacking a bit, it's in the internal collaboration and in breaking these silos, you know, to create an environment of trust and team spirit and everyone working together towards the same goals. (I7)

One cause for silos that some interviewees identified is a lack of communication. Two employees detailed how they had both had experiences where there were challenges between

co-working departments: in both of the experienced shared, at least two departments worked on the same project and related to it from their team's – and more extensively, from their field's – viewpoint. The challenge formed from the lack of information of the other department's viewpoint, the tendency to overwrite the other department's suggestions if not understood, and making changes without a potential broader context. Furthermore, another employee mentioned the challenge of too strict focus and compartmentalization of one's own area of expertise, disregarding the broader scope of the project.

- - just the communication styles, I guess between different countries is, when I started, I thought would be a little bit better. I mean it's not terrible, but I mean, I thought it would be better. - -

(Q: Do you have any ideas on how that could be improved?)

- - I would think, just you know, just talking to each other more. It feels like a lot of times, like, we'll do something and, like, [people in another location] have been feeling like: "Why did you do that?" And instead of explaining why we did it, we just say: "Because we've always done it that way." - - like there's not a lot of communication both ways. So, it's like, you know, we don't explain why we did it, but at the same time, like, maybe [another location] doesn't let us explain, why we did it, if that makes sense. (I4)

But I see that between teams, the collaboration is not too good. And I don't know if it's a problem of communication, because often, in previous companies, I see that communication was the first problem of interacting with the other teams, and a leak in communication creates a lot of problems that could be solved very easily with the right words. (I5)

I think that the problem is that the other colleagues have other problems to solve - -. But as they have no experience in the field, maybe, they change something without thinking bigger, and then, lots of problems come - -. It's not: "I know this can create a problem, but I want to make this change."

Q: Yeah. Do you think communication would help; if there was better communication?

(break) Probably, yes. I think that communication would solve a lot of problems, but communication should be done in the right way. And I think that's the most difficult part of the work. (I5)

And then you have people that come to, you know, a project, and they say: "Oh, I only have to do this bit that is about my area." And they don't want to help in the other area, so, I think it's not conducive to collaboration. (I7)

As some of the previous extracts demonstrated, along the importance of teamwork and communication, some interviewees emphasized that communication should be done in the *right way* and with the *right words*. Another aspect of co-working and silos that is reflected by a few interviewees is varying levels of trust within the organization.

- - what was kind of surprising when I came into the company is that there's, like, different levels (of trust) also inside the company, so there's like – I feel that people are careful, for example, in [department], what they are talking to [another department] people, so not everything that is ongoing is revealed, even inside the company, and that felt like a little bit odd for me, at the beginning at least. So, I don't fully understand what's behind that. Is that something that could be something that is not kind of official; if a salesperson is in like some sort of, like, sales situation, they might accidentally slip some information that was confidential? That's kind of like what I, like, wasn't used to in previous positions. - - I don't know if it's a trust issue or what, but that's what I thought was a little bit odd. (I3)

Maybe inside the team, I think yes, there is no problem of trusting each other, but outside the team, I see that sometimes, there is a problem of also trust. But not trust on people, on the person, but maybe trust on model of working, you know. (I5)

As in the preceding statement, the different levels of trust were commonly expressed to be the result of, not individual employees or their competences, but of broader models. Nonetheless, there seemed to be some disconnect or even competitiveness within some employee subgroups, such as departments or locations.

What I have noticed in [department] is that the [department] is a bit more fragmented concerning the geography than I would have expected. So, basically, yeah, there's a bit of a thing that [employees in a different location] have their own thing and they do it and the [employees in another location] are having their own thing and they do it and so forth. Group structure is, well, confusing. (I1)

I do think there's a little bit more – sometimes, it does feel like each location kind of is “us versus them” - - like the communication doesn't flow 100 %, like it should. (I4)

One employee even suggests building the business structure to be more focused on the local teams.

But I think that the company has to work on building a more cohesive culture where people really work together. I would recommend building a more regional structure where people are given clear goals and they share their strategy and objectives really well. So, people are really well-aware of what they have to do and then give them, you know, the autonomy and the resources to go and achieve that. So, then they can work together with their local team in the same time zone and, you know, feel closer to the teammates; break the silos, you know; change from having all these different business structures; just make one, cohesive thing – it is all [this company]. (I7)

And these people, instead of working together as like regional teams, they are all, like, connected to the headquarters, and that makes it difficult for them to really be connected and really feel, you know, that they are in close touch and they are working together, because of the time difference, the distance, and everything. So, people in these regions feel a little bit lost. (I7)

Other reasons mentioned for felt disconnection of teams include the challenges of remote work, time zones, and insufficient guidance from the manager.

- - but there's like certain silos and barriers, I feel, between teams that should or should not co-work together. But I feel that's mostly because many of the people are working remotely most of the time, so you don't have a chance to see people live, for example, at coffee tables and stuff like that. So, you don't meet so many people from other teams. Except for [department] people seem to be quite much in the office. So, there's lots of, like, more chat with those. (I3)

And people in [location] feel that, you know, we are here a little bit isolated, and yeah, so it is difficult for us to engage with the headquarters, because, you know, it's always made it more difficult because of the time zone and because nothing is like on a regional basis; it's always "communicate to the headquarters". It has this kind of a disconnection. (I7)

It's like the team is very compact inside, but for me, it's in that the manager cannot create a link between different teams. And it seems that there is no transition of information between the teams. Maybe sometimes, some request arrives from a team, but we don't understand why. We don't understand why we have to make that – if the direction is another. And they feel that

there is some problem in the trust with the manager that can be linked with team collaboration. (I5)

Additionally, two understanding views of silos were presented. One employee pondered whether the separation of teams was somewhat intentional and another understood the integration challenges with more than one company involved.

I can concentrate on my work without some interference of other departments, because in the other company, I have a lot of interference with the other department, for example, from the [department], from the [another department]. They really interfered with my work and mistrusted, but here, I see that they are very organized, and there is, like, a wall between other departments that I think that it's good, because they cannot directly interfere with my work, but I don't know if it's because I started a few months ago, so maybe next year, it changes. (laugh) I don't know if it's a culture of the company that they want to separate and create a good environment for working. Maybe yes, I don't know. (I5)

And the company will continue to adapt and change and will – when they acquire new companies, it's also a bit challenging, because you're bringing a whole new team and a new culture into your own culture. So, you know, there's always some small issues and difficulties in the integration. (I7)

Even though onboarding has a limited effect in establishing the company culture since employees' experience of company culture remains dynamic through their whole lifecycle in an organization, I believe it is important to take into consideration the interviewed employees' improvement suggestions – regarding both onboarding and company culture.

4.2.3 More Clarity in Onboarding

Although the onboarding process was generally regarded successful by the interviewees, five employees expressed their wish for more clarity regarding the written materials and training. This wish was also related to the company culture and the company values.

(Q: Would you have done something differently in how the company values were established in onboarding?)

Perhaps, I personally like to read the documents and to get some explanation, also, in that way --. (I3)

Yeah, I would say, maybe, getting some of the, like, policies and stuff like that in writing. We have some stuff that's just kinda, like, word of mouth like passed down: "You can do this these days, but not this day." And it's not written anywhere. So, if nobody tells you, then it just kind of, you don't know. So, I think it's one of those things where if it's a written-down policy, I think it would go. And then, people ought to sign it or whatever. (I4)

There are some role-related documents that were missed. In addition, one employee expressed that there were more than one onboarding task list.

For as my role in the [department], I was supposed to read like quite many like [role-related] documents and these. It was only later noticed that I hadn't read these, and there were no tasks assigned for me about this, so that should have come earlier. But also, what caused some difficulties were, like, at least three different lists where I was reading from, that I was supposed to accomplish: there was one created by HR, it was tasks in [the HR tool], then there were tasks in [another software platform], and also, there was this printed list of introductory tasks that was given by my, like, own supervisor. (I3)

So, I think I needed more information on the [function] that I'm doing, so usually, during the training, we're handed out, like, books, or, like, manuals, so I'd say there's less manuals than usual that I got. That's the main reason why it took me longer to know [functions]. (I8)

Additionally, a couple of employees pointed out that there could have been more clarity or training regarding some of the tools in use.

Possibly, just bit further information concerning some of the things that were in the [HR tool] to be filled: hobbies and things like that. It could have used some more elaboration why they were there and how they were going to be used and what kind of information was basically expected. So, examples, so to speak. (I1)

So, the parts that I felt that could be improved is on the training of business systems. So, the company does have quite a lot of business systems; so, we have systems for [X], [Y], and [Z]. So, we have [a tool], there's the HR system and the [other] system. So, there's quite a lot of different systems that are used. The training on that was very minimal, let's say. So, that's an

important part of our job. So, that's something that I would recommend the company to do is to improve the training on those systems right at the beginning. (I7)

Even though every related statement made is not tightly tied to the viewpoint of company culture and company values' part in the onboarding process, these topics are still relevant in establishing, especially, the company culture. The flow of the onboarding process is part of the first impression of the new company for the new employee, which guides the scheme and beliefs that they start to build of their new work place (Ellis & Bauer, 2017, p. 162).

4.2.4 Involvement from the Management

One topic that the employees addressed a couple of times is a wish for the leaders to be more involved. This applies, for instance, to the onboarding process.

And also, always good to have someone senior from the leadership team spending, you know, 15 minutes to welcome a new employee, you know, and have a quick introduction, you know, that goes a long way to show the commitments to the new employee and share a welcome message and – first impression, the employee coming in and feeling: “Oh, I got this senior person to talk to me and introduce himself and then the company.” Just is very short: 10 minutes, 15 minutes is all you want. (I7)

The onboarding is not the only aspect where a few employees would hope for more involvement from the ones in leader positions. Company culture and company values are also hoped to be promoted from the top.

So, it (establishing the company culture) is from the board to the CEO and to the leadership team and all that, and it has to permeate through all the levels. Yeah, but it has to start at the top, and - - with people, you know, building the culture and showing the examples and living the culture from the top, so people can see, people can experience and people can relate to it. (I7)

I don't know if it's a problem of communication; maybe, yes, I don't know – but it seems that there is no full comprehension of the goals or the direction that, maybe, the leader or the manager wants of the people and the teamwork. So, it seems like someone drives the car, but the car doesn't know where to go. It seems like there is no connection between the

steering and the direction of the tires. - - Maybe, it's linked also with the team collaboration, for what I see. (I5)

There is a senior person commenting on them (the company values), or the manager. (I7)

Additionally, one employee points out that a leader is also an important creator of company culture.

Some teams can have a really nice culture because the leader of that team is a good leader, and then you can have another team that doesn't work as well, because the leader might not be as good as a leader. (I7)

This subtheme, in accordance with my theoretical framework, furthermore emphasizes the important meaning of social interactions as part of onboarding, establishing company culture, and integrating the company values.

5 Conclusion

I begin by discussing and concluding the analysis, with additional integration of the theoretical viewpoints. Afterwards, I present an action plan for the case company. Finally, I reflect on research ethics and evaluate the study.

5.1 Discussion

According to my analysis, the current employee experience of the onboarding process in establishing company values and company culture was mostly regarded positive in the case company. The interviewees perceived onboarding to have established a culture of teamwork, openness, and helping others. There were different experiences of explicit introduction of the company values– or company culture – among the employees, but they principally felt personal aligned with both. Company culture was regarded implicit and not actively focused on within or outside the onboarding phase – either by the employees nor the employer. Multiculturality was seen as an asset for growth and a reason for modifications in behavior.

Based on the interviewees' experiences, the effectiveness of introducing – and reinforcing – the company values could have used improvement in the onboarding, including the introduction timing. Furthermore, even though the first phases of onboarding were perceived to establish a culture of teamwork, the participants' experiences also reflected the need for repairment of silos and collaboration between teams, departments, companies, and locations. Designing and executing related preventative measures already in the onboarding phase could have a positive effect on this phenomenon. Employees wished for some more clarity in onboarding regarding written materials and trainings. More integration from the management regarding onboarding and establishing the company values and the company culture was also another improvement suggestion.

Serial and investiture tactics – that are included in the *institutionalized socialization tactics* (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and found to be the strongest predictor of adjustment outcomes (Saks, Uggersley, & Fassina, 2007) – were already, at least partially, used in the onboarding of the case company. The interviewees emphasized the presence of a culture of teamwork and support, especially, within interviewees' teams. The social support provided by

team members, manager, and HR was praised and seen important both during and after onboarding. The five C's model (Ellis and Bauer, 2017) likewise recognizes the role of *organizational insiders* – managers and peers – who influence the organizational culture and the information shared with the new employee.

Nevertheless, the interviewed employees also expressed a wish for some more involvement of the management. This finding is additionally aligned with the notion of Sadri and Lee (2001), in which the vision and values are consistently modelled by top management and should be present on all levels of organization in effective corporate cultures. While Sadri and Lee (2001) suggest this modelled behavior is equal to visionary statements, celebrating employees' successes, and distributing material, such as videos and newsletters, the interviewees in my study emphasized their hope for enhanced direction and a short introduction from the management during onboarding.

According to Cable and Parsons (2001), applying serial and investiture tactics – thus, social support and mentoring from experienced organizational members – is linked to a better person-organization perception and a perception of fitting in. I identified the person-organization fit amongst the employees that I interviewed to be strong. They explicitly described their feelings of personal alignment with the company values.

For bettering P-O fit further, some sequential tactics – information of the intended steps of learning in onboarding – and fixed tactics – information of the timing associated with completing each socialization phase – could be applied in the case company's onboarding process. However, actual and stable person-organization fit indicates that employees do not change their personal values in the first months of onboarding. Nonetheless, employees who receive more social support have a greater perceived P-O fit, commitment, and job satisfaction. (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004.) This could be one of the reasons why the employees that I interviewed seemed to have such a good person-organization fit: they simultaneously reported a lot of support from organizational members in the beginning of their employment.

Another reason for the employees' perceived good person-organization fit could be the positive reputation that the employees perceived the case company to have. Employee's observations of the employer's actions, behavior, and reputation – even before an

employment relationship – affect the forming of a psychological contract between the employee and the employer. A psychological contract can also be formed between the employee and, for instance, the manager, the department, or the team. (Nylund & Koivunen, 2022.) The employees who participated in my study appeared to have especially strong psychological contracts with their own teams, which could be viewed as off-the-job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2019).

In addition, the concept of psychological contracts (PC's) is apparent in the content of the theme *Company Culture in the Background*. Rousseau et al. (2018) state that organizational cues that are related to employee's personal goals are more likely to be noticed and included in PC's. Some interviewed employees explicitly described themselves not to be intrinsically people- or culture-oriented. Some of these employees were thus satisfied with the case company's implicit introduction of company culture. Others particularly hoped for a more explicit introduction, because they acknowledged both the importance of the culture but simultaneously the challenge to independently prioritize it.

Another value that seemed to be especially important to the interviewed employees was their independence. Personal alignment and satisfaction with the arrangement of working hours was expressed. Work-life balance was generally perceived to be supported by the employer by actions regarding, for instance, work time and mental health. Promotion of work-life balance could be seen as part of the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985): especially regarding autonomy, but also competence and relatedness.

By either implicitly or explicitly affirming work-life balance, the employer encourages the independence, confidence, and perception of respect of the employees, which in turn enhances their motivation, performance, and well-being. Simultaneously, accommodating employee's integration within different identifications – e.g., with one's job, family, or hobbies – supports the employees' engagement. (Deci et al., 2017.) A couple of interviewees brought up the significance of sharing interests and even free time with their colleagues, which was seen, at least partially, as a product of the work-life balance promoted by the employer. Autonomy could be even further supported by the employer with clearer expectations about the company values and company culture as well as the business structure. When employees understand the meaning and purpose of their job and receive clear feedback, they tend to adjust and perform better as well as be more motivated (Deci et al., 2017).

5.2 Action Plan for the Case Company

I used the five C's model, introduced in my theoretical framework, to formulate an action plan for enhancing the onboarding process in the case company. I've divided the action plan based on the five C's of the model: compliance, clarification, connection, culture, and confidence. In each, I've included the related theme(s) of my analysis and the suggested actions for the employer, based on the collected data, analysis, and theoretical framework of my study.

The Five C's Model	Theme	Suggested Actions for the Employer
COMPLIANCE (Legal and policy-related regulations and rules)	<i>4.2.3 More Clarity in Onboarding</i>	→ Check if there are any policies that should be updated or created regarding unspoken rules of the company culture (e.g., specific days for doing specific things).
CLARIFICATION (New employee's understanding of the new job and related expectations)	<i>4.2.3 More Clarity in Onboarding</i>	→ Create instructions for what personal information new employees should fill out in the HR tool – and how the information will be used and who has access to it. → Create a visual outline for the onboarding process, to help the employee (and manager) to understand the intended steps for learning and the timing of each phase. → Transfer from using several onboarding task lists to using one. → Check the process of forming training plans; ensure adequate training of business systems is in place. → Ensure any role-related manuals are in place.

<p>CONNECTION (Interpersonal relationships and information networks)</p>	<p><i>4.2.2 Repairment of Silos</i></p> <p><i>4.2.4 Involvement from the Management</i></p> <p><i>4.1.2 Culture of Teamwork</i></p>	<p>Enhance communication between teams, departments, and locations, e.g., by following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Host casual local gatherings regularly to encourage local culture. → Review the organizational structure from the viewpoint of opportunities for enhanced communication. → When onboarding a new employee, include short introduction from an employee from every department, introducing their unit. (Regarding the scope of the case company, this could be attainable, alleviating collaboration in the future and clarifying the organization structure to the new employee.) → The department introduction could potentially be held by the leader of the department. → Sustain the culture of teamwork; of trust, helping, and openness.
<p>CULTURE (Formal and informal organizational norms, person-organization fit, and organizational insiders)</p>	<p><i>4.2.1 Repetition and Refreshers of the Company Values</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clarify who is responsible for introducing the company values and company culture to new employees and what is the structure and main points of the introduction. → Have more visuals of the company values, both during onboarding, e.g., an introductory video, and after onboarding, e.g., at the office premises.

	<p><i>4.2.4 Involvement from the Management</i></p> <p><i>4.1.3 Personal Alignment with the Company Values and Company Culture</i></p> <p><i>4.1.5 Multiculturalism</i></p>	<p>→ Have a refresher of the company values and a discussion of the company culture a while (e.g., 3 months) after a new employee has started. Additionally, integrate the company values in the evaluation discussions and goal setting.</p> <p>→ Include company values more in all human interactions globally: e.g., monthly team meetings and celebration of employees' achievements.</p> <p>→ Train managers at all levels to see their role in establishing the company culture and setting an example.</p> <p>→ Do not go overboard with the company values – some level of subtleness can be a good thing.</p> <p>→ Check that there is a clear strategy of what parts of company culture should be globally and locally shared.</p> <p>→ In onboarding, establish a culture of both diversity and unitedness, emphasizing the importance of both global and local cultures.</p>
<p>CONFIDENCE (New employee's expectations of succeeding in the new job)</p>	<p><i>4.1.1. Outstanding Onboarding</i></p> <p>+ <i>Theory: Social-Identity Socialization</i></p>	<p>→ Sustain outstanding onboarding by maintaining organization, clarity, and teamwork's integration in onboarding.</p> <p>→ Regarding onboarding, integrate emphasis on getting to know the new</p>

		employee and empower their unique strengths.
--	--	--

Figure 9. Action Plan for the Case Company (integrating the Five C's model of Talya & Baeur, 2014).

5.3 Research Ethics

I respected the dignity and autonomy of all research participants, aiming to make them feel comfortable, informed, and autonomous. I conducted my study so that it did not cause any major risks, harm, or damage to its participants. Altogether, I followed the guidelines for ethical research set by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (2021). I intentionally considered the ethical perspective in every phase of my study. Moreover, I operated as the data controller of the study and thus was responsible for decisions made concerning data protection.

All the employees, that were invited to partake in the study, received context of the study and a privacy notice in the interview invitations that I sent. Participation was highlighted to be voluntary. The privacy notice detailed the usage of personal and other data. I created the privacy notice following the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation and internal guidelines from the University of Turku, with the approval and – some guidance – of the Data Protection Officer at the University of Turku.

I took thorough care of the anonymity of the employees. From personal data, a person or persons, can be either directly or indirectly identified (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, 2021). In my study, only necessary personal data – work emails, names, and start dates – was used to enable finding and contacting the eligible employees. Through my employment in the case company, I was familiar with the context and scope of the community, which I believe to have facilitated anonymization.

The personal data that was collected during the interviews conducted in Microsoft Teams – thus, the video tapes, names of the employees, and shared experiences including any personal data – was deleted after 60 days of recording. Me and each of the interviewees, with regard to their own interview, were the only ones that had access to the recordings. There were two legal bases for processing the personal data: Article 6, section 1(a) and (e) of the EU General

Data Protection Regulation (European Parliament and Council, 2016). When I transcribed the material, I simultaneously anonymized it. Accordingly, the personal data was never stored outside the limited collection and storage in Microsoft Teams, where all the equally strict safety and data protection measures and regulations, that the case company uses and that the employees had given permission to at the start of their employment, were in place.

5.4 Evaluation of the Study

Research may be regarded congruent when different components – such as, research questions, epistemology, methodology, theory, research subjectivity, and conceptualization of language – match each other (Braun & Clarke, 2024, p. 4). I've familiarized myself with the research of reflexive TA research and aimed to adhere to it.

I use Braun and Clarke's (2022b) ten recommendations for reporting methodologically coherent thematic analysis followingly. I've recognized the plurality of thematic analysis and chosen a TA approach: in this study, the reflexive thematic analysis. I've located the use of TA theoretically and linked personal reflexivity to my analytic practice, parallel to my approach. I've discussed how I've engaged with the TA approach, including its integration in my theme development and analysis. Furthermore, I've provided a figure of the theme structure and ensured that the quality practices cohere with the chosen TA approach.

With any study, it is crucial to additionally shed light on its limitations. My theoretical framework included plenty of quantitative data, although my own approach was fully qualitative. The two themes that I construed for mapping my subthemes were not characteristic to reflexive TA. There could have likely been even more reflexivity on my part. Moreover, I had limited experience of qualitative interviewing before conducting these interviews. Retrospectively, in the first two interviews, I could have been more actively asking follow-up questions.

My subjective researcher position could be perceived to have both benefits and constraints. Although I was able to understand the context and some of the nuances of what the interviewees shared with me more, simultaneously, the fact that the interviewees knew my role in the organization, could have potentially held them back from sharing more difficult opinions. At the same time, I observed there to be distinct openness present in the interviews,

that could have been a result of the emphasis of anonymity and the interviewees' willingness to show vulnerability, for instance.

Furthermore, the first language of all the participants – including me – is not English. However, although it may have held someone back from expressing opinions as freely and deeply as with their native language, all the employees in the global company are more or less used to speaking English related to work settings. I would not consider the language an obstacle in conducting my interviews.

Not much prior qualitative research has been carried out that has integrated all three aspects of my study: onboarding, the company values, and the company culture, with a focus on the employee experience. This would be a great topic of research to investigate and construe further, by also using different methods and approaches. It is a meaningful phenomenon that is an essential topic in the field of human resources – and inescapably present in all working life.

References

- Allen, D. G. (2006). Do organizational socialization tactics influence newcomer embeddedness and turnover? *Journal of management*, *32*(2), 237-256.
- Ashforth, B. E., Sluss, D. M., & Saks, A. M. (2007). Socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models. *Journal of vocational behavior*, *70*(3), 447-462.
- Bauer, T. N., Bodner, T., Erdogan, B., Truxillo, D. M., & Tucker, J. S. (2007). Newcomer Adjustment During Organizational Socialization: A Meta-Analytic Review of Antecedents, Outcomes, and Methods. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *92*(3), 707–721.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.3.707>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2022a). Conceptual and Design Thinking for Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Psychology (Washington, D.C.)*, *9*(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022b). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International journal of transgender health*, *24*(1), 1-6.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). A critical review of the reporting of reflexive thematic analysis in Health Promotion International. *Health Promotion International*, *39*(3), daae049.
- Cable, D. M., Gino, F., & Staats, B. R. (2013). Reinventing employee onboarding. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *54*(3), 23.
- Cable, D. M., & Parsons, C. K. (2001). Socialization tactics and person-organization fit. *Personnel Psychology*, *54*(1), 1-23.
- Chirkov, V., Ryan, R. M., Kim, Y., & Kaplan, U. (2003). Differentiating autonomy from individualism and independence: a self-determination theory perspective on internalization of cultural orientations and well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *84*(1), 97.

Cooper-Thomas, H. D., Van Vianen, A., & Anderson, N. (2004). Changes in person–organization fit: The impact of socialization tactics on perceived and actual P–O fit. *European Journal of work and organizational psychology, 13*(1), 52-78.

De Vos, A., Buyens, D., & Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24*, 537-559.

Deci, E. & Ryan, R. (1985.) *Self-determination and Intrinsic Motivation in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.

Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual review of organizational psychology and organizational behavior, 4*(1), 19-43.

Ellis, A. M., & Bauer, T. N. (2017). How do we get new entrants ‘on board’? Organizational socialization, psychological contracts, and realistic job previews. An introduction to work and organizational psychology: An international perspective, 161-175.

Fiske, S. T & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

European Parliament and Council. (2016). Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). *Official Journal of the European Union, L 119*, Volume 59. Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679&qid=1738102000962>

Feldman, D. C. (1981). The multiple socialization of organization members. *Academy of Management Review, 6*, 309-318.

Finlay, L. (2002). “Outing” the Researcher: The Provenance, Process, and Practice of Reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(4), 531–545.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129120052>

Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK. (2021.) Guidelines for ethical review in human sciences. Retrieved from <https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials/guidelines-ethical-review-human-sciences#3>

Finnish Social Science Data Archive. (n.d.) Data Management Guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/en/services/data-management-guidelines/>

Flamholtz, E. (2001). Corporate culture and the bottom line. *European Management Journal*, 19(3), 268-275.

Goffee, R. and Jones, G. (1996.) What holds the modern company together? *Harvard Business Review*, 74(6), 133-148.

Joffe, H. (2011). Thematic analysis. *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*, 209-223.

Jones, G. R. (1986). Socialization tactics, self-efficacy, and newcomers' adjustments to organizations. *Academy of Management journal*, 29(2), 262-279.

Juhila, K. (2021). Koodaaminen. Teoksessa Jaana Vuori (toim.) *Laadullisen tutkimuksen verkkokäsikirja*. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoaarkisto [Tampereen yliopisto]. <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/fi/palvelut/menetelmaopetus/kvali/analyysitavan-valinta-ja-yleiset-analyysitavat/koodaaminen/>. [Referenced 23.1.2025.]

Klein, H. J., Polin, B., & Leigh Sutton, K. (2015). Specific onboarding practices for the socialization of new employees. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 23(3), 263-283.

Louis, M. (1980). Surprise and sensemaking: What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, 226-251.

McGregor, L., & Doshi, N. (2015). How company culture shapes employee motivation. *Harvard Business Review*, 11, 1-13.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, *1*(1), 61–89.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z)

Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., Lee, T. W., Sablinski, C. J., & Erez, M. (2001). Why People Stay: Using Job Embeddedness to Predict Voluntary Turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*(6), 1102–1121. <https://doi.org/10.5465/3069391>

Nishii, L. H., Lepak, D. P., & Schneider, B. (2008). Employee attributions of the “why” of HR practices: Their effects on employee attitudes and behaviors, and customer satisfaction. *Personnel psychology*, *61*(3), 503-545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00121.x>

Nylund, R., & Koivunen, N. (2022). Nuorten insinöörien psykologinen sopimus teknologiateollisuudessa. *Hallinnon Tutkimus*, *41*(1), 67-83.

Ouchi, W. G., & Wilkins, A. L. (1985). Organizational Culture. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *11*, 457–483. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083303>

Porter, C. M., Posthuma, R. A., Maertz, C. P., Joplin, J. R. W., Rigby, J., Gordon, M., & Graves, K. (2019). On-the-Job and Off-the-Job Embeddedness Differentially Influence Relationships Between Informal Job Search and Turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(5), 678–689. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000375>

Ranta, J. & Kuula-Luumi, A. (2017). Teoksessa Hyvärinen, M., Nikander, P., Ruusuvuori, J., & Aho, A. L. (toim.) *Tutkimushaastattelun käsikirja*. Vastapaino.

Rousseau, D. M. (1995). *Psychological Contracts in Organizations: Understanding Written and Unwritten Agreements* (1st edition.). SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231594>

Rousseau, D. M., Hansen, S. D., & Tomprou, M. (2018). A dynamic phase model of psychological contract processes. *Journal of organizational behavior*, *39*(9), 1081-1098.

Sadri, G., & Lees, B. (2001). Developing corporate culture as a competitive advantage. *The Journal of Management Development*, 20(9), 853-859.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710110410851>

Saks, A. M., Uggerslev, K. L., & Fassina, N. E. (2007). Socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment: A meta-analytic review and test of a model. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 70(3), 413-446.

Schwartz, H., & Davis, S. M. (1981). Matching corporate culture and business strategy. *Organizational dynamics*, 10(1), 30-48.

Santos, H. C., Varnum, M. E. W., & Grossmann, I. (2017). Global Increases in Individualism. *Psychological Science*, 28(9), 1228–1239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617700622>

Tomprou, M., & Nikolaou, I. (2011). A model of psychological contract creation upon organizational entry. *Career development international*, 16(4), 342-363.

Van Maanen, J. and Schein, E.H. (1979.) Toward a Theory of Organizational Socialization. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 1, 209-264.

Zain, Z. M., Ishak, R., & Ghani, E. K. (2009). The influence of corporate culture on organisational commitment: A study on a Malaysian listed company. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 17(17), 16-26.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Structure

→ *Introduction & definition of company values, and company culture, and onboarding*

- How was your onboarding experience?

(Supporting questions: What went well in the onboarding? What could have been improved?)

- Do you remember the company values?
- In your opinion, are the company values present in employees' behavior and actions?
If so, how?
- Are the company values meaningful to you personally?
- Were the company values included in your onboarding? If so, how?
- Would you have done something differently in how the company values were established in onboarding?
- How have the company values been established in onboarding in other organizations that you have worked for? How would you compare these experiences to the one you had in this company?
- What kind of general company culture were you familiarized with during onboarding?
- How do you see the company culture now? How does the company culture manifest as behavior?
- Has your view on the company culture changed since you started?
- Do you personally feel aligned with the company culture?
- Would you have done something differently in how company culture was established in the onboarding process?
- How has the company culture been introduced in onboarding in other organizations that you have worked for? How would you compare these experiences to the one you had in this company?

Appendix 2. Interview Invitations

Hi,

Hope you're doing great! ☺

Along with working in our global HR team, I'm currently working on my master's thesis. I'm cooperating with our company to research 1) the current onboarding process, especially, from the viewpoint of company values and company culture, and 2) how this process could be enhanced.

This is an invitation for you to participate in my study, as you are recently employed and the onboarding process is still fresh in your memory. I'm carrying out my study by conducting interviews, with questions regarding your onboarding experience and the company values and culture's part of it. An interview may take place during your work day and shouldn't take longer than an hour *at most*. I'm hoping to conduct the interviews in the upcoming weeks.

The interviews will be carried out and temporarily recorded via Microsoft Teams. Thereupon, the interviews will be transcribed and anonymized. To read more about your privacy and rights, see the attached Privacy Notice.

Attendance is voluntary.

Please reach out to me if you're interested in being interviewed. I'll also gladly answer any question you may have!

Best regards,
Rosanna

Appendix 3. Privacy Notice, Included in the Interview Invitations

1. Name of the Research Registry	Onboarding Experiences of the Recently Employed
2. Data Controller of the Research	Rosanna Grönroos +358503657710 rjgron@utu.fi University of Turku, FI-20014 Turku, Finland
3. Research Project Leader	Rosanna Grönroos

4. Data Protection Officer at the University of Turku	DPO@utu.fi +358 29 450 4361
5. Purpose and Legal Basis of Processing Personal Data	<p>Interviews will be held for inquiring onboarding experiences of employees who have recently started working in the case company. The purpose of the study is to research the current onboarding experience, from the viewpoint of company values and company culture, and how this process could be enhanced.</p> <p>Interview questions center around experiences of onboarding, with special focus on company values and company culture's part of the process. Interviews will be conducted and recorded via Microsoft Teams on a company computer, and the recordings will be saved by Microsoft Teams, to be deleted when no longer needed, no later than 60 days after recording the interview.</p> <p>The legal basis for processing personal data is the Article 6 (section 1) of the EU General Data Protection Regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the data subject has given consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purposes (1.a). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest - - (1.e).
6. Categories of Personal Data Included in the Research Data	<p>Following information will be temporarily recorded in the register:</p> <p>first and last name, speaking voice, video, onboarding experiences (to be transcribed and anonymized).</p> <p>Employees' start dates in the case company are used for finding suitable, thus recently employed, candidates to contact with invitations to participate. Employees' emails are used for sending these interview invitations and for booking the interview meetings.</p>
7. Transfers or Disclosures of Data Outside the Research Group	<p>Personal data shall not be transferred outside the research group. The anonymized data regarding onboarding experiences is used 1) to carry out research about the subject in the form of a master's thesis and 2) to</p>

	understand and enhance the case company's onboarding process.
8. Transfers or Disclosures of Data Outside the EU	Usage of Microsoft Teams is carried out according to the global case company's policies. Anonymized information regarding onboarding experiences is used to enhance the case company's global onboarding process, also outside the EU.
9. Principles of Safeguarding Personal Data and Processing of Personal Data After the Research Ends	Recordings of interviews will be transcribed and anonymized, no later than 60 days after interviewing. Identifiers are erased during anonymization of data. Recordings of interviews will be deleted, no later than 60 days after the interviews.
10. Rights of the Data Subject	<p>The data subject has a right to inspect their registered data (GDPR, Article 15). The data subject has the right to rectification of their data. The data subject has the right to erasure of their data (Article 17). However, the right to erasure of data is not applied in scientific or historical research purposes in so far as the right to erasure is likely to render impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the objectives of that processing. The data subject has a right to restrict the processing of data (Article 18). The data subject has a right to object the processing of data (Article 21).</p> <p>The contact person regarding rights and responsibilities of the data subject is Data Protection Officer at the University of Turku, whose contact information can be found above.</p>
11. Origin of Data	The names, start dates, and emails of the participants will be retrieved from the case company's global HR tool.

	Information of the employees' experiences will be collected directly from them in interviews via Microsoft Teams.
12. Automated Decision-making	Information will not be used for automated decision-making or profiling.