DIVERSITY, NEWCOMERS, AND TEAM INNOVATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMMON IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we introduce a theoretical model to explain under which conditions different insights or approaches within a team do not necessarily undermine team cohesiveness or prevent the development of a common team identity, and can in fact even reinforce each other. We will review a program of research that examined the formation of a common identity in new collaborations, as well as the extent to which teams accept newcomers who possess unique resources. We show that clarity *and* congruence *determine the likelihood that team members will maintain a common identity while they effectively use the differences among them and accommodate to team changes.*

DIVERSITY AND NEWCOMERS IN WORK TEAMS

With the increasing focus on service provision and generation of knowledge (instead of production of goods) in contemporary organizations, the quality

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and effectiveness of work is more than ever determined by the successful exchange of (complex) knowledge in multi-disciplinary teams (Cascio, 1995; Gutek, 1995). On top of that, lifetime employment has become exceptional (Smith, 1997). Within organizations, employee turnover and mobility are a fact of life. As a result, the ability of workers to communicate and exchange unique task information with others who have quite diverse backgrounds and the ability to adapt to incoming team members – who are likely to bring in new contacts and also possess unique knowledge – have both become crucial for modern organizations to function effectively.

A commonly held view is that these developments should be beneficial in principle, as the periodical introduction of "fresh blood" to the organization and a consequent diverse workforce can help adapt to market developments and changing demands, and ensure the organization's potential for innovation. At the same time, scientific inquiry has revealed that it is not self-evident that these benefits are actually achieved (e.g., Katz & Allen, 1982; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). High levels of diversity among team members and differences between these members and a newcomer are indeed both sources of additional information that may increase creativity and quality of problem solving. Yet, the potential is not always realized, as this diversity may at the same time negatively affect the quality of interactions in the team (Gruenfeld, Mannix, Williams, & Neale, 1996; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999), or undermine team cohesiveness (e.g., Polzer, Swann, & Milton, 2003). In this chapter, we address this issue by drawing on different theoretical perspectives, and combining different types of methodologies. We aim to identify the circumstances under which team members are generally able to deal with differences in the task-related information, work styles, or work goals that they have. We argue that these circumstances determine the extent to which members deal with existing differences within their team as well as the different perspectives that are brought in by newcomers.

The main difficulty faced by teams that are confronted with diversity and mobility is that they need to incorporate the different and novel insights into their decision-making process, without losing a *sense of common identity* and commitment to the achievement of joint goals. It has been well established that a common identity and feelings of commitment are important for team decision making. People derive parts of their identity from the fact that they belong to groups (i.e., referred to as one's social identity; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This gives them a sense of meaningfulness and provides a basis for their self-esteem. For these reasons, people are willing to act on behalf of the team to which they belong, and are willing to make an effort for the team

(Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, the development of a common identity and feelings of cohesiveness are crucial for team decision making and performance (Ellemers, de Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998). In our analysis, we therefore focus on the development of *identification* and *cohesiveness* as we see these as the key factors determining whether or not the potential for improved decision making and innovation that is provided with intra-team differences is actually realized.

In this chapter, we will first elaborate on our theoretical model to explain that different insights or approaches (either offered by existing members or newcomers) do not necessarily undermine group cohesiveness or prevent teams from developing a common identity, and can in fact even reinforce each other. We propose that identity processes can help people articulate (normative) *expectations* about the way they relate to fellow (new) team members. As a result, they become aware of the way how each member of their team can best contribute to the achievement of common goals. We will review a program of research intended to examine the validity or this theoretical analysis. In examining the relation between identity processes and intra-team task differences, we first studied the role of expectancies in people's evaluations of cooperative intent to start a new collaboration with similar vs. different others. We then tested whether normative team expectations also affected the extent to which real teams accommodate to different newcomers and their consequent performance.

THEORETICAL MODEL

Previous attempts to review and combine insights from research on the effects of task diversity (e.g., Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003) have revealed that empirical findings seem inconsistent or incompatible with each other. On the one hand, the "value in diversity" approach (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991) suggests that the availability of multiple resources and skills can cause members of diverse teams to be more innovative and creative in problem solving than members of homogeneous teams (Earley & Mosakowsi, 2000; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003). Research has confirmed this notion, showing that teams that have become *too* unified and relatively static over time are less critical towards their own output and perform less optimally compared to teams consisting of members who have just gotten acquainted with each other and possess unique knowledge (Katz & Allen, 1982). This is why diversity and changes in team composition are expected to broaden the range of task information

and work strategies teams can draw upon, and thus to improve team quality and effectiveness.

On the other hand however, as we already outlined in the introduction, the benefits of diversity and the improvement potential newcomers represent are not always realized (e.g., Choi & Levine, 2004; Kane, Argote & Levine, 2005; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Members of diverse teams tend to experience a relatively high level of conflict and disruption due to their differences and membership exchange (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Jehn et al., 1999; Moreland & Levine, 1999). As a result, teams are not highly motivated to overcome the potential costs implied in dealing with unique views expressed by a dissenting team member or newcomer. It is generally preferred that they conform to existing team norms as this will help maintain team cohesiveness (Marques, Robalo & Rocha, 1992; Maass & Clark, 1984).

To conclude, based on the above-mentioned findings, it is often argued that relatively high levels of diversity and team mobility generally lead to categorization and decrease the quality of interpersonal relations in the group. As a result, it can impede the formation of a team identity (e.g., Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Riordan, 2000; Jackson et al., 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Much of the work described above draws on the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to explain that a lack of perceived similarity among group members can make it more difficult to develop a common identity. As a result of this reasoning, it is assumed that a task that requires team members to focus on the way they differ from each other precludes the development of a common identity, and hence reduces team motivation and team effectiveness (Polzer et al., 2003).

We argue, however, that this reasoning is based on a specific and incomplete account of the social identity perspective (Rink & Ellemers, 2007a; see also Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003; Haslam & Ellemers, 2004). That is, although the sharing of common features may help individuals develop a common identity, similarity among individuals is not the *only* basis for identity and group formation. The social identity approach (incorporating social identity theory – Tajfel & Turner, 1979 – as well as self-categorization theory – Turner, 1985) maintains that there are different circumstances that can make a collective identity salient. In addition to common identities that people develop when they perceive similarities among them, they can also focus on an identity they have in common with others when this identity matches relevant features of reality (i.e., normative fit principle, Oakes, 1987), or when the identity is seen as subjectively important and self-defining (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam,

2004, p. 462; Haslam & Ellemers, 2004; Jackson & Smith, 1999). Thus, the salience of a common identity is not based on cognitive perceptions of similarity alone. Regardless of the degree to which individual team members are familiar to each other and objectively share the same features, they should be able to derive a subjective sense of cohesiveness and develop a common identity when they feel that this helps them address the situation they are in (e.g., when they are drawn together by a common goal, task, or fate; see Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Ellemers et al., 2004; Gaertner & Schopler, 1998, p. 964). In organizations, this is often the case for members of work teams who have similar interests and are motivated to achieve valued collective goals (Haslam, 2001; Rabbie, Schot, & Visser, 1989).

Recent research in the social identity tradition has confirmed the validity of this reasoning. For instance, it has been established that the induction of individualistic norms and norms encouraging openness to change can help members and newcomers to express their unique opinion in their team without being considered deviant (Cini, Moreland, & Levine, 1993; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002; Postmes, Spears, & Cihangir, 2001). Thus, in principle *any* kind of norm can determine the content of a shared identity, even a norm that emphasizes diversity and mobility. A second line of work further showed that task-related differences can coincide with positive team processes, provided that team members (or people working with each other for the first time) can easily recognize their mutual differences (i.e., in information and work styles). This occurred more often when they were highly different from each other in *multiple* task-related ways (Rink & Ellemers, 2007c). Likewise, newcomers can also be more influential when the newcomer is unfamiliar to, and thus *clearly different* from the existing members (Thomas-Hunt, Odgen, & Neale, 2003; see also Lewis, Belliveau, Herndon, & Keller, 2007). These latter findings suggest that when task differences and intra-team changes are so evident for team members that they cannot be ignored, norms of diversity and mobility or even a common identity based on these features can also *naturally* emerge in teams (without training or specific instructions). Recent evidence for this notion also stems from work by Postmes, Spears, Lee, and Novak (2005), showing that within small work teams (which we focus on in this chapter), members indeed more often form a common identity on the basis of their individual actions on behalf of the team (i.e., inductive identity formation) than on the basis of their common features that distinguish them from other groups in that context (i.e., deductive identity formation). Social identity research traditionally focused on larger categorical entities that *do* require their

meaning only when they contrast their common features with other (out-) groups. However, work teams are more interactive and changeable by nature and operate relatively independently of their social structure (see also Gaertner, Iuzzini, Witt, & Orina, 2006).

In sum, in line with social identity reasoning, there is a growing body of empirical evidence indicating that mobility and the (consequent) presence of intra-team differences do not necessarily impede the formation of a common team identity in decision-making teams. In this chapter, we will thus argue that diversity can in fact come to constitute a *source* of common identity and foster feelings of team identification when these differences are considered functional for the achievement of common team goals, and are consistent with team norms. The next important question is *when* differences within a team are most likely to be regarded as functional and normative.

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, we specifically focus on intra-team differences that are directly related to the tasks teams have to perform. Our first proposition is that such *task-related* differences are more likely to form the basis of a common identity than other kinds of differences (e.g., that reflect different social categories, van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003). This is because task-related diversity most clearly provides a variety of resources that teams can bear upon to reach their common goal (Harrison & Klein, in press). Furthermore, task-related differences help define the nature of the interdependence among team members, and clarify the task roles of newcomers, as they specify who can contribute what to the team and prescribe what are optimal team actions (Jehn et al., 1999; Stasser & Titus, 1985).

Our second proposition is that challenges to team cohesiveness that emerge when team members or newcomers endorse different approaches to the task can be overcome when these differences are evident because this leads to the experience of *congruence* at the start of a collaboration. *Congruence* refers to the confirmation and reinforcement of expectations about the interpersonal relations within a team (see Heiders' balance theory, 1958). This implies that it is not *the actual extent* to which new team members are similar to or different from each other (or the extent to which a newcomer differs from the team), nor inter-group processes that are decisive for the teams' ability to effectively use these differences and maintain a sense of common identity. Instead, the *interpersonal* process of the immediate experience of congruence or incongruence in task-related differences determines whether or not people are able to value the complementary inputs from others and develop a sense of common identity with these others, or whether this causes them to evaluate a collaboration negatively.

In the sections below, we will first introduce and explain the importance of norm-congruity. We then provide evidence for our central argument that like similarity, task-related diversity can foster the development of a common team identity. As the influence of congruency and the development of a common identity are both most salient when people first start to work with each other and have just formed a team, we will start with presenting a program of research that examined the role of clarity and personal expectations in the way individuals evaluate an upcoming collaboration with a new partner. Our initial focus on dyadic collaboration enabled us to test how congruency in task-related differences affects the interpersonal relationships and consequent formation of a common identity *in isolation,* independently of the influences of more complex dynamic diversity processes that can occur in larger teams (e.g., alignment into subgroups, Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Yet, in the final part of the chapter, we introduce a line of research in which we examined whether clarity and expectancies also affect the acceptance of task diversity in *real* teams. As changes in team membership often enlarge the level of intra-team task differences in teams (Lewis et al., 2007), and thus have a direct impact on the teams' identity and level of cohesiveness, we tested how congruency influenced these teams' evaluation of a collaboration with a new diverging team member.

THE NORM-CONGRUITY PRINCIPLE

Central to our theoretical model is the proposition that task-related diversity is likely to become normative for a team – and emerge as a team-defining characteristic – when these differences are *congruent* with the expectations of team members. Expectancy violation theory maintains that people generally feel disappointed and appraise the situation as uncontrollable when initial expectations are violated (Bettencourt, Dill, Greathouse, Charlton, & Mulholland, 1996; Zeelenberg, Van Dijk, Manstead, & Van der Pligt, 1998b). Congruency (when the expectations about each other are confirmed) generally elicits instant positive feelings as it enables people to focus on the task, rather than on reconciling their unexpected discrepancies with others (Phillips & Loyd, 2006, p. 144). As a result, mutual expectations about the existence of task-related differences (regardless of the way these are valued) influence the way actual differences that emerge among team members affect their collaboration (Phillips, Mannix, Neale, & Gruenfeld, 2004). We therefore argue that in a congruent situation, team members will not only express their opinions more easily (Phillips, 2003;

Phillips et al., 2004), they will also be more motivated to work for the team, and will evaluate the decision-making process more positively than under incongruence (see Heider, 1958; Rink & Ellemers, 2007d). That is, when teams cannot easily be defined in terms of interpersonal similarities, *clarity* about other potential sources of a common identity – such as the ability of team members to draw upon different information of other unique resources that can help achieve common goals – will help give meaning to the team and can indicate how the team members relate to each other (i.e., in the meaning seeking phase, Oakes, 1987; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje & Manstead, 2003).

IDENTITY FORMATION IN A NEW COLLABORATION

The Importance of Clarity

We examined the validity of our reasoning in a first series of studies on identity formation in new collaborations between two partners. Based on a clarity account of identification and our social identity analysis of norm-congruency, we argued that when people differ from a new and unfamiliar collaboration partner, these differences can come to be seen as typical dyadic features and form the basis for a common identity, provided that the two partners clearly perceive these differences as characterizing the way they relate to each other and to common goals (see also Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). This should enhance their ability to deal with the differences between them and help them maintain a sense of common identity. By contrast, when team members are partially different from and partially similar to each other (i.e., when they differ in terms of one characteristic, but not in the other), it should be more difficult for them to recognize these differences in addition to their similarities. Such ambiguity generally makes it more difficult for people to give meaning to the situation and to uncover the different contributions they can make to common task achievements (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003; Scheepers et al., 2003). Are these the features that they share, or the features that they don't share? We therefore predicted that in this case, partners should have less clear views on whether to define their collaboration in terms of its similarities or in terms of its differences, and hence they should have more difficulty in developing a common identity.

We examined this prediction in the first study in which we specifically focused on the personal expectations of people. We compared partners that shared the same information and task goals, with partners that shared some task features but not others (i.e., they either differed from each other in terms of the information they had about the group task, or in terms of the goal they pursued with the group task), as well as partners that differed from each other on both task-related features. Our main dependent measures assessed the perceived clarity of the collaboration, the construal of typical dyadic features and dyadic identification. The results we obtained confirmed our prediction. Either when partners were fully similar to each other, or when *both* sources of task diversity were present, partners were relatively quickly able to develop a clear conception of their collaboration, and reported relatively strong levels of identification. Importantly though, the partners indicated having a less clear conception of their collaboration, and reported less dyadic identification when they were different in terms of one task feature and shared the other task feature. Finally, mediational analysis confirmed that the accumulation of differences fosters dyadic identification *because* it results in a clearer conception of the collaboration.

To conclude, the results of this first study are consistent with our clarity-based account of identity formation and confirm the notion that differences between partners who first start to collaborate with each other may constitute the basis for a common identity, just as well as similarities. By contrast, a combination of similarities and differences is more likely to confuse people as to what is normative for the collaboration, and what they may expect from their partners or fellow team members. In other words, it leads them to experience incongruence, which strains their collaboration and makes it more difficult to develop a sense of common identity or to become committed to joint goals.

Expectancy Violation

After having established the importance of congruence versus incongruence of task-related differences for perceived clarity and identification, we conducted a further series of studies to examine the role of *actual* expectancy violation in people's responses to diversity in an upcoming collaboration. Again, we argue that similarities or differences themselves do not determine the way people cope with any differences between themselves and others who they start working with. Rather, we posit that the degree to which these similarities or differences converge with prior *expectations* affects people's

willingness to benefit from the converging or unique contributions these others can make to the task.

In our analysis above we have argued that expectancy confirmation should generally result in more positive responses than expectancy violation. Furthermore, we posit that – in the absence of concrete information about others – people tend to assume that they will be similar to them rather than being different. As a result of such self-generated similarity expectations, people may experience a partner who turns out to be different from them as violating prior expectancies, and hence respond negatively. However, this should not be the case when diversity expectations are explicitly induced. Under these circumstances, actually emerging differences are congruent with prior expectations, and hence should enable partners or team members to respond positively to these differences and develop a sense of common identity and goal orientation.

Thus, creating diversity expectations by providing concrete information about the presence of task-related differences should help people to experience congruence and give meaning to their work situation. In fact, several scholars have additionally argued that in principle, *any* kind of expectancy violation should elicit negative reactions of people, regardless of the nature of the expectancy (Bettencourt et al., 1996; Burgoon, Le Poire, & Rosenthal, 1995). From this, we infer that task-related *similarities* can in fact be evaluated relatively *negatively* when these are unexpected, that is, when similarities occur after people had expected to differ from their collaboration partner or team members. This is of course more likely the case in situations that require some diversity of input from different team members (e.g., in new product development teams where people realize that the availability of multiple perspectives and the discussion of different strategies is critical for a successful performance) than in contexts in which task differences are less critical (e.g., production teams).

This reasoning was examined in an experimental study in which we simulated an upcoming collaboration between two partners who were at that point unfamiliar to each other (Rink & Ellemers, 2007b). We experimentally manipulated the work style that participants had, as well as the work style of their partner (which turned out to share the same work style or to have a different style than the self). We directly compared the effects of self-generated expectations and experimentally induced expectations in a single research design. We assessed self-generated expectations about the partner's work style, and examined how participants responded when these expectations were either confirmed or violated. The results of this study corroborate our reasoning, in that – regardless of the nature of the work

style they held – people generally expected their partner to hold the same goal as they did. Accordingly, when the partner turned out to have a different work style, people indicated their expectations had been violated, and reported greater disappointment than when similarity expectations were confirmed.

In the other conditions, we explicitly induced initial expectations, either leading participants to expect that their partner would have a different work style than they did or would share their work style before they entered the (simulated) collaboration with this partner. During the collaboration itself, participants then discovered that the actual work style of their partner was either the same as theirs or different from theirs. We then assessed the degree to which this discovery led them to report expectancy violation and disappointment. Additionally, we asked them to indicate the degree to which they had experienced task conflict, and felt committed towards future collaboration with this same partner.

The violation or confirmation of experimentally induced work style expectations showed parallel effects, regardless of the nature of these expectations. Regardless of whether participants had expected their dyad partner to be similar to them or different from them in terms of their work styles, violation of initial expectations caused them to report greater disappointment and process conflict than when initial expectations were confirmed. Furthermore, expectancy confirmation induced participants to have a clearer picture of their dyad partner, and to report greater commitment to the collaboration than expectancy violation. Importantly, the same effects emerged regardless of whether participants initially expected their partner to endorse the same or a different work style than they did. That is, the negative effects of expectancy violation emerged both when participants who had expected to be similar to their dyad partner turned out to be different and whether participants who had expected to be different actually turned out to be similar. Again, these results indicate that it is not the presence or absence of task-related differences in itself that affects group members' willingness and ability to collaborate effectively, but the degree to which actual similarities and differences converge with expectations about mutual task contributions.

In a second study on the role of initial expectations, we further examined the effects of expectations about task-relevant similarities and differences in relation to expectations based on demographic characteristics (Rink & Ellemers, 2006). In this study, we composed same-gender versus different-gender dyads, to examine whether these demographic differences might lead people to derive task-relevant expectations about their new collaboration

partner. Furthermore, we again aimed to establish how actually emerging similarities or differences (which were defined in terms of work goals in this study) subsequently affect participants' responses, which were assessed in terms of the level of disappointment reported, the clarity of the image they had of their partner, and their commitment towards future collaboration with this partner.

The results of this study show that the gender composition of the dyad affected participants' self-activated expectations about task-related features. That is, participants in same-gender dyads expected their new partner to endorse the same work goal as they did, whereas participants in mixed-gender dyads were more likely to expect their partner to have a different work goal than they did. Accordingly, the discovery that one's partner actually endorsed the same work goal as the self led participants in mixed-gender dyads to report more expectancy violation than in same-gender dyads. Likewise, actually having a different work goal than one's dyad partner induced more expectancy violation in same-gender dyads than in mixed-gender dyads. The other dependent measures showed the same pattern: when gender-based expectations about the partner's work goal had been violated, participants experienced greater disappointment, they indicated having a less clear image of their partner, and reported being less committed to future collaboration with this partner than when self-generated expectations about work goal differences were confirmed (i.e., when same-gender dyads shared the same work goal, or when mixed-gender dyads had different work goals).

In sum, these studies consistently show that instead of the presence or absence of similarities or differences per se, it is the degree to which these seem *congruent with prior expectations* that determines whether they benefit or undermine commitment to a new collaborative partner and to the joint task. In the absence of concrete information people tend to assume that others will take the same approach to the task, for instance based on the fact that they share some social category membership that is not necessarily relevant to the task. We argue that such self-generated similarity expectations may explain why people can develop a negative attitude towards team diversity. At the same time, we also demonstrated that such self-generated similarity expectations can be overruled by explicitly informing people that others may differ from them in terms of task-relevant characteristics. Furthermore, the introduction of such diversity expectations made it easier for people to cope with the occurrence of actual differences. In fact, under these circumstances people even responded more positively to the emergence of task-relevant differences than when their partner turned out to be similar to them.

NEWCOMERS AS A SOURCE OF TEAM INNOVATION

In the previous section, we have specifically focused on the influence of congruency on the formation of a common identity and a sense of commitment in new collaborations. In the remainder of this chapter we want to take our argument one step further and examine whether our reasoning is still valid in relation to the influence of a single new member who enters an existing team. As outlined above, the unique knowledge or additional networking opportunities that become available with the introduction of new team members often remain unused. It is therefore highly important to examine the conditions under which *teams* are willing to *accommodate* diverse newcomers, as it is crucial that their diverging and potentially innovative ideas are accepted by the team (see Moreland & Levine, 1985). So, again – as is the case with the presence of task-related differences among the existing members – the focus issue we address here is how teams can benefit from the unique input provided by a newcomer, without losing a sense of common identity and commitment to joint goals. This time, we will additionally examine whether the acceptance of a different newcomer and the maintenance of a common team identity will indeed enhance *objective team performance*.

Based on our norm-congruity principle, we argue that the confirmation versus violation of initial expectancies will also play a crucial role in the accommodation of teams to newcomers. We propose that two factors will facilitate this process, as they will make it likely that teams experience congruency when a newcomer brings in unique knowledge, namely; (1) the presence of a collective regulatory focus adopted by the team, and (2) the future prospects of the newcomer. The team's regulatory focus and the future prospects of both newcomers both indicate whether the status of the newcomer as someone who can provide a unique and novel perspective to the group task is congruent with team norms, or compatible with the role the newcomer is expected to take in the group.

Collective Regulatory Focus

Most diversity researchers focus on the situation in which unique knowledge, strategies or work goals is more or less equally distributed among all team members. As newcomers are in the minority and not yet seen as a full team member, it is generally even more difficult for them to convince their

team that their new, diverging ideas are valuable for the attainment of common goals (Maass & Clark, 1984). In the beginning of this chapter, we explained how norms that emphasize openness to change and individuality can overcome this problem, and makes team members more open to newcomers and intra-team differences (e.g., Cini et al., 1993; Jetten et al., 2002). Yet, how can management interventions enhance (or inhibit) the development and internalization of such team norms in practice? So far, this question still remains to be answered. Therefore, we have examined the collective regulatory focus of a team (Crowe & Higgins, 1997) which can be controlled and governed by clear management instruments (e.g., reward systems). We posit that teams can either have a *promotion-focus*, meaning that team members generally try to achieve certain ideals or accomplishments, and are oriented towards possible gains. Alternatively, teams can have a *prevention-focus*, so that team members are highly concerned with team duties, task responsibilities and preventing errors, as to avoid team losses (see also Faddegon, Scheepers, & Ellemers, 2008).

Up to now, one's regulatory focus has never been examined in relation to collective team norms and the development of a common team identity. Yet, Crowe and Higgins (1997) do argue that highly complex tasks are generally better performed by promotion focused individuals than by people with a prevention focus. Likewise, promotion focused people are more motivated to persist in a task on which they have previously failed than prevention focused people (Higgins, 1996). From this, we infer that when teams are stimulated to internalize a promotion focus and adapt this focus as a collective norm, they will not be discouraged or threatened by situations characterized by change, diversity and lack of structure. We therefore propose that such teams can also develop a common identity on the basis of task-related differences, and will expect others to bring in their unique views and perspectives in order to reach team success. By contrast, when teams adapt a prevention focus norm, members will dislike and try to avoid team changes and high levels of diversity. Within such teams, a common identity is more likely to be based on security and stability, and members are more likely to expect others to be similar to them. To conclude, we predicted that promotion focused teams will accommodate more effectively to newcomers holding opposing views, and will consequently perform better than prevention focused teams.

We addressed this issue in a first group study in this line of inquiry (Rink & Ellemers, 2008a). We examined teams consisting of students who have to perform several innovative tasks together in order to get course credits. After performing several tasks, teams were exposed to a newcomer

who possessed unique task information (see Choi & Levine, 2004; Choi & Thompson, 2005; Kane et al., 2005). Together they then had to perform a problem-solving task which could only be accomplished successfully when the existing team members used the unique input available from the newcomer (so called "hidden profile" task, Stasser & Titus, 1985). Collective regulatory focus was manipulated by either stimulating teams to assume a promotion focused mentality ("Anything for success"), or to assume a prevention focused mentality ("Failure is not an option" – Faddegon et al., 2008). Our main dependent measures were team accommodation (measured by self-report measures of newcomer acceptance), team identification, and objective team performance (Ellemers et al., 1999).

As hypothesized, the results of this study show that promotion focused teams pay more attention to the expertise of a newcomer and consequently outperformed prevention focused teams. Members of promotion focused teams felt more identified with their team and in fact accepted the newcomer more when this person offered a clear contribution to the team (i.e., congruence) than when he or she did not share unique information (i.e., incongruence). Importantly, we found the reverse in the case of prevention focused teams. This finding is in line with recent work on regulatory fit and also illustrates the importance of expectations in the context of newcomers (Freitas, Liberman, & Higgins, 2002). People tend to expect and prefer others to have the same regulatory focus as the self, and find it easier to perform well when individual self-regulatory preference match regulatory focus group norms. Promotion focused teams seem to respond positively to newcomers who fit this focus, and contribute to the attainment of team goals, whereas prevention focused teams apparently prefer newcomers of who fit in with this focus and easily adjust themselves to the existing team members.

Future Prospects Newcomer

The previous study clearly shows that a collective regulatory focus norm influences the extent to which existing members remain identified with their team in times of change and experience congruence when confronted with a dissenting newcomer. Our next step was to examine whether one important newcomer characteristic – the newcomers' future prospects – can also cause teams to expect unique input from newcomers.

We propose that the future prospects of a newcomer will influence the initial impressions and expectations of the existing team members about a

newcomer (see study 3 on gender-based expectancies). Newcomers can enter a team with the prospect of becoming a long term, *permanent* team member, or with the prospect of only becoming a *temporary* team member for a restricted period of time. Research has shown that permanent newcomers try to get involved in all team activities and generally share important features with fellow team members (Veenstra, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2004), hereby raising expectations of newcomer assimilation. By contrast, temporary team members do not usually fully participate in all team activities, nor are they necessarily expected to comply with team norms (Feldman, 1995). It is therefore more likely that teams expect temporary newcomers to have different perspectives on group tasks, and to introduce novel information. That is, whereas long-term prospects of having to work with a newcomer place more importance on developing good interpersonal relations, short-term collaborative relations make it easier to focus on how each can contribute to the task. As a result, we predict that teams would generally be relatively open to novel contributions made by a temporary newcomer, while they should be less inclined to accommodate to unique insights offered by a newcomer who is seen as a being in the process of permanent group member.

To examine our hypothesis, we conducted a second observational team study in this research program and developed a successful procedure to manipulate the future prospects of the newcomer (Rink & Ellemers, 2008b). We informed the teams and the newcomer that the newcomer was either a permanent member who had to work with the team on all remaining tasks, or that the newcomer was a temporary member who only had to work with the team on just one task. We used the same experimental set-up, decision-making task and dependent measures as in the first study on newcomers described above. The findings of this second study indicate that in general, teams evaluated newcomers who expressed different perspectives significantly more negatively when they were meant to acquire permanent group membership than in the case of a temporary newcomer. Additional measures revealed that teams felt threatened by a permanent newcomer and saw him/her as trying to exert too much influence on team processes. Accordingly, teams performed better when confronted with a temporary newcomer than with a permanent newcomer. Thus, this study shows how newcomers had the most positive influence on teams when they were expected to be different because of their temporary status. This position justifies their deviation from set practices or team opinions.

In sum, the results of this new line of research on the influence of membership change extend our reasoning on the role of congruency and

identification processes in relation to diversity issues. We argued and presented initial evidence to show that team norms that advocate a focus on promotion (instead of prevention) can help teams to open up to and even expect novel insights from newcomers. Subsequently, we showed that the prospect of the newcomer only being a temporary team member alleviated pressures towards assimilation and caused the team to expect input from the newcomer as well. In both situations, teams did not feel threatened by membership change, and did not suffer a loss of motivation to work on the group task. In fact, we found that in real teams too an increased level of task-diversity can go hand in hand with high levels of team identification. Thus, when team changes and the consequent task-related differences align with prior *expectations* or reflect congruence, team members are able to develop a common identity and remain committed. At the same time, they also use their mutual differences more effectively.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this contribution we have advanced the original argument on congruency and identity formation by showing that the confirmation of diversity expectations also elicit positive reactions, and even has an impact upon identification processes, actual task behavior and team innovation processes (Phillips, 2003; Rink & Ellemers, 2007b). In addition, we are the first to show that diversity expectations also influence the extent to which teams accept and attend to *newcomers* who hold an opposing view or have different perspectives. We have illustrated how diversity expectations can be explicitly induced (see study 1), or originate from team norms (i.e., the collective regulatory focus of teams). Moreover, we have shown that people develop expectations about others on the basis of diffuse characteristics and indirect cues (i.e., gender and future prospects) and respond positively towards those others when these expectations are confirmed instead of disconfirmed.

To conclude, in this chapter, we have presented a program of research on team changes and diversity. Our central argument is that clarity and congruence determine the likelihood that team members are willing to effectively use the differences among them, or accommodate to a newcomer who possesses unique resources. In all studies, we provide evidence for the notion that teams should acknowledge intra-group differences to optimize task performance, instead of regarding it as a threat to team unity or as an impediment to the formation of a common identity.

For future development of these ideas, we of course acknowledge that it may be important to examine whether only task-related differences can come to be seen as a typical group-defining feature that forms the basis for a common identity, or whether *social category* differences (e.g., in gender, or ethnic background) can also have this effect. We believe that the influence of these other kinds of differences on team functioning and identity formation might be more complex. On the one hand, the presence of multiple demographic or social category differences will most likely be noticed relatively easily and might therefore help people to develop a clear conception of these differences as characteristic for the team to which they belong (Jehn et al., 1999). On the other hand, however, it may be less evident to group members how these social category differences are related to the common team goals, or how they can help individual team members to achieve these goals. As a consequence, these differences are more likely to create uncertainty and endanger the formation of a common identity regardless of whether or not they are clearly perceived by group members. We therefore argue that social category differences are most likely to have a positive influence on teams when – as in Study 3 and 5 – these differences reflect, and are congruent with task-related differences.

The results of our research suggest that organizations can only benefit from the innovation potential of a diverse and changing work force when the value of diversity is explicitly acknowledged and rewarded. Policy measures that may help achieve this include concrete guidelines and rewards for organizations that stimulate them to implement multi-disciplinary teams and to achieve a certain level of diversity among their employees. At the micro-level, top management should foster an organizational culture that focuses on the achievement on success (instead of on the avoidance of failure). Our results additionally show concrete measures that can be taken to ensure that mobility and diversity will enhance team performance. The knowledge that the temporary presence of expertise is more favorable for innovation than a more permanent addition of new team members indicates that organizations should encourage horizontal mobility of employees within and across organizations and make it more attractive for workers with specific expertise to work on temporary projects.

With the analysis presented in this contribution we have aimed to focus on the main challenge teams and organizations need to overcome to be able to benefit from diverging and novel insights provided by people who represent a different perspective or are new to the team. We have argued that the potential contribution offered by collaborating with people who can provide different or novel insights can only be realized when these

differences do not prevent them from developing a common identity or becoming motivated to achieve joint goals. On the basis of existing theory and research we have argued that diversity among team members can constitute the basis for a common identity, and that clarity about the ways different team members can contribute to joint goals and the existence of diversity expectations and diversity norms can help maintain a common identity while taking advantage of their unique contributions to the task. We have presented empirical evidence in support of this analysis, referring both to team diversity and to the introduction of newcomers into existing teams. We trust this analysis will help researchers and practitioners successfully deal with diversity issues and to benefit from newcomers as a source of innovation and an important ingredient of team and organizational success.

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