The Academy of Management Annals
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rama20

Team Receptivity to Newcomers: Five Decades of Evidence and Future Research Themes

Floor Rink a, Aimée A. Kane b, Naomi Ellemers c & Gerben van der Vegt a

a Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen
b Palumbo Donahue School of Business, Duquesne University
c Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Leiden University

Published online: 01 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: Floor Rink, Aimée A. Kane, Naomi Ellemers & Gerben van der Vegt (2013) Team Receptivity to Newcomers: Five Decades of Evidence and Future Research Themes, The Academy of Management Annals, 7:1, 247-293, DOI: 10.1080/19416520.2013.766405

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2013.766405

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and
Abstract

Reviews of research on newcomers mostly address socialization processes, focusing on individual adjustment. This article takes a different approach by examining the ways in which teams adapt to newcomers, indicating team receptivity. We review the empirical research published over the last five decades (1960–June 2012) that examines the antecedents of three team
receptivity components—team reflection, team knowledge utilization, and newcomer acceptance—across different research disciplines and team settings. Drawing on this literature, we propose that team receptivity to newcomers can have positive consequences for sustained team performance, provided that team reflection and team knowledge utilization coincide with newcomer acceptance. We challenge scholars to tackle these three components simultaneously and provide methodological recommendations for doing so. To facilitate such efforts, we present a conceptual multi-level model specifying team, oldtimer, and newcomer characteristics that contribute to team receptivity and are amenable to managerial intervention.

Introduction
The nature of today’s work force is changing in important ways. The demise of the “job for life” means that individuals are often on the move. In the USA, for example, the median duration of tenure with a current employer is approximately four years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Internal restructuring initiatives, promotions and transfers, and temporary task force assignments all contribute to a state of membership flux in today’s organizations, with work teams being the primary unit in which these changes take shape (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Organizations often actively recruit new members or rotate employees between different work teams with the hope that their “fresh blood” will enhance work team performance (Argote & Ingram, 2000). As the number of highly educated and skilled newcomers increases (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009; Winfrey, 2008), their presence may indeed create a unique opportunity for teams to adapt their existing work practices and to improve their performance. The seminal work of Katz (1982), as well as more recent insights in the antecedents of team innovation (Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004), suggest that teams become less critical toward their own output when they do not regularly change in composition. Within stable teams, the ideas of the members tend to converge, which limits their interest in and ability to develop and implement new ideas or work processes (De Dreu & West, 2001). This suboptimal use of innovative potential arising from a lack of newcomers is, generally speaking, harmful for the quality of teamwork (Guimerà, Uzzi, Spiro, & Nunes Armaral, 2005).

There is growing evidence, however, that the arrival of a newcomer does not automatically spur positive changes in a team (Baer, Leenders, Oldham, & Vadera, 2010). Teams tend to have a strong preference for familiarity, as on balance, acquaintance and closeness creates trust and commitment (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; Liang, Moreland, & Argote, 1995; Van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Kuipers, 2010) and facilitates the coordination of team activities (Bunderson, 2003; Espinosa, Slaughter, Kraut, & Herbsleb, 2007; Littlepage,
Robison, & Reddington, 1997). Moreover, teams often believe it is functional to repeat behavioral patterns that worked well in the past (Ziller, 1965). Accordingly, the classic socialization model of Moreland and Levine (1982) suggests that the initial disruption that teams experience due to newcomer entry often makes them reluctant to fully accept this person, as well as his or her task contributions (Moreland & Levine, 2006).

Resistance to the unique perspective of newcomers is understandable and may indeed be beneficial in the short-term when teams need to fulfill direct task demands under time pressure or in an efficient manner. Nevertheless, research suggests that resistance to newcomers tends to be detrimental to the survival of teams in dynamic environments that require innovation (Guimerà et al., 2005; McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000). Organizational learning scholars, for example, have shown that the long-term viability and performance of a social system depends on collective explorations of new patterns of behavior (March, 1991), which occur primarily when teams are open to newcomers. In this contribution we therefore examine the ways in which small groups and work teams respond to newcomers, here conceptualized as team receptivity. Drawing on five decades of empirical research on this topic, we develop a new conceptual framework that enables us to gain a better understanding of the conditions under which teams are open to newcomers and of the potentially innovation-enhancing instability that they inevitably bring to the team.

In the sections that follow, we distinguish among three theoretically exhaustive components of team receptivity to newcomers. The first component, which we refer to as team reflection, entails the team’s tendency to reflect upon existing work processes, alter routines, and generate new ideas due to the mere presence of a newcomer. The second component corresponds to the team’s inclination to utilize and adopt the newcomers’ unique knowledge, skills, and aptitudes, here labeled as team knowledge utilization. Compared to these two characteristics of the team’s task behavior, the third component is more psychological in nature and encompasses the team’s willingness to accept the newcomer as a full team member. As will be shown below, this tripartite conceptualization of team receptivity can be derived from the literature and provides a logical conceptual framework for organizing the divergent findings that exist on team receptivity and for clarifying the conditions under which teams are most likely to be completely receptive to newcomers (in all three ways).

By examining the empirical research on these three components of team receptivity to newcomers, we aim to advance the existing newcomer literature in several important ways. First, understanding team receptivity to newcomers is as important as understanding other, more frequently examined forms of membership change, such as team effects of turnover (Arrow & McGrath, 1995; Dineen & Noe, 2003) or employee departures (Hausknecht & Trevor,
2011). Organizations need to be able to harness the potential contributions of all employees, including newcomers.

Second, most reviews in this area examine organizational socialization processes that primarily describe how newcomers collect information that enables them to adapt to their individual position in the organization as well as to its culture, policies, and procedures (for a meta-analysis, see Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). Although commonalities exist between this stream of literature and our review (i.e. joint focus on newcomer social adjustment), there are important differences. The organizational socialization literature takes an individual perspective to examine how newcomers can be brought up to speed with the current performance levels of oldtimers. Our review takes a team perspective to examine how teams can adapt to newcomers who—if managed appropriately—can be an important source of external contacts and unique knowledge through which teams can increase their chances of long-term survival (March, 1991). Thus, whereas prior reviews tend to describe newcomer adjustment processes that are likely to maintain the status quo, our review will describe the kind of team responses to newcomers that are likely to spur innovation and permanent change.

Third, extant theory development by scholars in management, organizational behavior, and psychology reflects the topic’s relevance across these different fields. However, because these different disciplines tend to work with their own paradigms and methodologies, each tends to examine team receptivity with a different focus. For example, the reviews that do exist on team responses to newcomers typically discuss only one of the aforementioned components of team receptivity and only include the body of research on this topic from one discipline (e.g. Arrow & McGrath, 1993; Dineen & Noe, 2003; Levine & Choi, 2011; Levine, Choi, & Moreland, 2003; Moreland & Levine, 2006). As a result, researchers may have difficulty seeing how work carried out in a different research tradition applies to their own research questions, or complements their findings. By proposing and conjointly examining three components of team receptivity to newcomers, we provide a state-of-the-art review that integrates the disparate findings in this research area and that connects the different research streams and literatures.

**Article Overview**

The current contribution is structured as follows. We first provide our rationale for proposing that team receptivity consists of three distinct components (i.e. team reflection, team knowledge utilization, and newcomer acceptance). We then specify the procedure we followed in our literature search, and compare the different research methodologies used to examine team receptivity to newcomers. Next, we review the relevant studies along each of the three proposed team receptivity components, after which we examine the role of team
receptivity in the relationship between newcomer entry and team performance. On the basis of this detailed review of the literature, as well as our own recent research on team receptivity to newcomers, we finally present a conceptual model for future research that connects the findings from different perspectives.

**Tripartite Conceptualization of Team Receptivity**

In their seminal work in the 1960s, Ziller and colleagues introduced the idea that teams respond to newcomers in task-related ways. They examined whether newcomer entry increased the number of original ideas generated by the teams themselves (Ziller, Behringer, & Goodchilds, 1962) and whether teams adopted unique knowledge coming from a newcomer directly (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller, Behringer, & Goodchilds, 1960; Ziller, Behringer, & Jansen, 1961). Ziller and colleagues also proposed that newcomer entry has the potential to elicit social psychological responses in teams and examined how team members perceived working with the newcomer compared to working with other oldtimers (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961, 1962). Unfortunately however, this distinction was not followed through in subsequent work, as research drawing on this early work tended to examine only one of these three responses to indicate team receptivity, without relating them to each other. For instance, Baer et al. (2010) only address idea generation, whereas Kane, Argote, and Levine (2005) focus on knowledge adoption. To the extent that prior studies did incorporate research findings regarding different types of task-related responses, they were combined to highlight the general possibility that newcomers can influence teams (Hansen & Levine, 2009).

In contrast to these prior approaches that used different aspects of team receptivity interchangeably or conflated them, we propose that greater conceptual specificity is needed to advance our understanding of the exact ways in which teams can be receptive to newcomers. In our discussion of the literature, we therefore distinguish between three distinct components of team receptivity, namely: (1) team reflection on existing work processes (due to the mere presence of a newcomer), (2) team knowledge utilization (of unique newcomer knowledge), and (3) psychological newcomer acceptance. This tripartite conceptualization of team receptivity to newcomers provides a conceptual framework that allows us to organize and understand the divergent findings on this topic. It also helps clarify the conditions under which teams are most likely to be completely receptive to newcomers (i.e. when they are open to the newcomer in all three ways). Our key prediction is that these three team receptivity components are theoretically exhaustive and together determine a team’s ability to yield long-term benefits from the introduction of a newcomer.

In the first part of this paper, where we review the literature, we consider each of these components separately. In the second part, however, we
discuss the importance of having alignment among the two task-related components on the one hand, and the third psychological component of team receptivity on the other. We further suggest research approaches that enable researchers to assess complete receptivity and relate it to team performance. Additionally, we argue that an alignment among the three components is best understood by considering *multiple levels* of analysis. We propose a relevant team-level characteristic (the role of status hierarchy), an oldtimer-level characteristic (the security of their position) and a newcomer-level characteristic (the use of certain identity strategies) and illustrate how these may influence complete team receptivity. By providing examples of how these multi-level characteristics may moderate the existing findings, we intend to offer a structured guide to researchers and practitioners who aim to realize the team benefits from being *completely* receptive to newcomers.

**Literature Search**

*Selection Criteria*

This review considers research published over the past five decades (1960–June 2012) in the fields of organizational behavior/management and psychology that examines one or more components of team receptivity to newcomers. In so doing, we draw on the work of McGrath et al. (2000) and Guzzo and Dickson (1986) who clarify that a team is a bounded, relatively small set of individuals whose interdependent, purposeful endeavors confer upon them a past, present, and future as a social entity, which they themselves and others acknowledge. This definition implies that members have collaborated with sufficient intensity to establish a sense of team identity, which is important as it suggests that a default response to a newcomer is to see them as an outsider who has yet to earn the team’s trust (Delton & Cimino, 2010).

We searched for empirical articles in the Thompson Reuters (formally ISI) Web of Science—Social Science Citation Index database whose title, abstract, or keyword referred to “newcomers” or “membership change in teams/groups”. We conducted the searches using the following specific search terms “newcomer and group”, “newcomer and team”, “membership change and group”, and “membership change and team”. The lemmatization option was used so that alternative forms of the search terms were also generated (e.g. tooth and teeth). These four searches yielded 189 articles. However, 74 of these articles were unrelated to our topic as they used the same terminology to address different concepts (e.g. immigration) or discussed team membership change studies where only team departures took place, no newcomer entries.

We systematically reviewed the remaining 115 abstracts and classified them according to the following criteria: (a) published between 1960 and June 2012, (b) empirical, (c) published in fields of management/organizational behavior
and psychology, and (d) focus on team responses to newcomers. The majority of the articles that did not meet this last criterion were papers that focused on newcomer responses to teams (e.g. newcomer assimilation, newcomer adjustment, and newcomer performance) rather than on team responses to newcomers (e.g. team reflection, team knowledge utilization, newcomer acceptance, and resulting team performance). This work primarily examines the effectiveness of organizational socialization practices (see the meta-analysis of Bauer et al., 2007), although some studies also investigated these practices at the team level (e.g. Chen, 2005; Chen, Tjosvold, Huang, & Xu, 2011). Of these latter studies, only two examined team receptivity to the newcomer as an intervening variable in the newcomer assimilation process (Chen, 2005; Chen & Klimoski, 2005). As these articles revealed antecedents of team receptivity, they were included in our review.

Altogether, we found 52 articles that fulfilled our criteria. The teams in the studies reported in these articles engaged in a variety of interdependent, purposeful endeavors. As will be discussed in the upcoming section, an equal number of these teams were observed in experimental as well as naturalistic organizational settings. Experimental teams engaged in highly involving tasks requiring their members to, for example, generate ideas (Choi & Thompson, 2005), produce origami sailboats (Kane et al., 2005) or to solve complex analytical problems (Rink & Ellemers, 2009b). Teams from the field also collaborated with intensity on tasks such as providing nursing care (Molleman & Van der Vegt, 2007), starting a new venture (Chandler, Honig, & Wiklund, 2005), staging a Broadway musical (Guimerà et al., 2005), or developing an information technology system (Chen, 2005; Chen & Klimoski, 2003).

Many of the articles included in our selection were published in key journals for management and organizational behavior (e.g. Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Management, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Organizational Science, and Management Science), social psychology, (e.g. European Journal of Social Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin), and for interdisciplinary audiences (e.g. Science and Small Group Research). In order to compare the relative interest from psychologists and management scholars, we categorized articles according to the primary discipline of the publication (see above listing), except for interdisciplinary publications, which were categorized according to authors’ departmental affiliation (e.g. Arrow & McGrath, 1993 was coded as psychology; Guimerà et al., 2005 was coded as management).

Over the past five plus decades, the abovementioned disciplines contributed a roughly equivalent number of articles on team receptivity to newcomers with 25 from psychology and 27 from management. As can be seen in Figure 1,
however, the disciplines have displayed different temporal patterns of interest. The initial interest in the topic in the 1960s displayed by social psychologists, such as Ziller and colleagues (i.e. Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961, 1962), waned during the 1970s and 1980s before making resurgence in the 1990s. Notable among studies in the 1990s were the three quasi-experimental, longitudinal JEMCO workshop studies conducted by McGrath and four of his students (for overviews, see McGrath, 1993; McGrath, Arrow, Gruenfeld, Hollingshead, & O’Connor, 1993).

The 2000s marked a new era with not only a significant increase in interest in the topic overall (52% of the articles), but also a new found interest from management scholars whose work represents 63% of the articles published in the decade. Greater interest from management than psychology appears to be unfolding in the 2010s as 73% of the articles appearing between January 2010 and June 2012 were published in management outlets. This development illustrates the convergence between insights from these different disciplines, and a joint recognition that it is important to take the work teams in which newcomers are placed into account when examining newcomer socialization.

Of the three components of team receptivity, relatively more attention has been paid to newcomer acceptance than to team reflection or knowledge utilization. As can be seen in Figure 2, this attention has been evidenced primarily by psychologists (19 of their 25 publications) rather than management scholars (9 of their 27 publications). Interest in team reflection and knowledge utilization is displayed fairly evenly across disciplines.

The empirical research on the three components of team receptivity to newcomers has been conducted in various ways. The methodologies used range from causal experimental design to naturalistic variation in the field, each having their own methodological benefits and drawbacks. Experimental
methodologies emerge most frequently, dating back to Ziller and colleagues’
classic social psychological studies. As can be seen in Figure 3, experimental
studies characterize the vast majority of the work published on the topic in
social psychology (21 of 25 articles) as well as nearly half of the articles pub-
lished on the topic in management (13 of 28). Field studies represent the
other half of the management articles (13 of 28) with the remaining two articles
employing computer simulations. We will discuss the most common used
research approaches below.

Figure 3  Publications as a Function of Methodology and Discipline.
Note: Guimerà et al. (2005) is counted twice as it uses field archival methods
and simulation methods.
Research Approaches

Experimental methods. Experimentalists examine team receptivity to newcomers with a variety of methods that range from tightly controlled laboratory teams to relatively naturalistic interactions between teams and newcomers. The most common design considerations include (a) whether to draw on participants’ pre-existing team affiliations (Hornsey, Grice, Jetten, Paulsen, & Callan, 2007) or to create an experimental work team (Kane et al., 2005; Ziller & Behringer, 1960); (b) whether to simply add a newcomer to an existing team (Fromkin, Klimoski, & Flanagan, 1972; Ziller et al., 1961), or to also replace an oldtimer (Kane, 2010; Rink & Ellemers, 2009a, 2009b); (c) whether to introduce newcomers through asynchronous, hypothetical communications (Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010) or in real-time interactions (Phillips, Liljenquist, & Neale, 2009; Rink & Ellemers, 2009a, 2009b); (d) whether to compare team receptivity to different types of newcomers (Hansen & Levine, 2009; Kane et al., 2005; Phillips et al., 2009) or to compare team receptivity to newcomers with team receptivity to full, marginal, or other out-group members (Hornsey et al., 2007; Pinto et al., 2010); and (e) whether to endow newcomers with unique knowledge (Choi & Levine, 2004; Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005; Ziller & Behringer, 1960) or to let their task-relevant knowledge develop naturally with experience (Baer et al., 2010; Grunfeld, Martorana, & Fan, 2000; Ziller et al., 1962).

Studies with the highest levels of control draw on participants’ pre-existing team affiliations and solicit reactions to newcomers who are described in hypothetical scenarios or in other asynchronous, one-way communications (Hornsey et al., 2007, studies 1 and 2; Joardar, Kostova, & Ravlin, 2007; Joardar & Matthews, 2010; Pinto et al., 2010). For example, Hornsey et al. (2007) drew on participants’ pre-existing work group affiliations (e.g. healthcare workers) and solicited their reactions to a hypothetical criticism of the team ostensibly provided by a newcomer. Pinto et al. (2010) also drew on participants’ pre-existing team memberships (e.g. membership in same course of study), and solicited participants reactions to an opinion ostensibly provided in a previous experiment by a newcomer, full member, marginal member, or out-group member. Using a somewhat different approach, Joardar and colleagues (2007) asked teams of participants to reach consensus regarding their likely acceptance of hypothetical newcomers whose attributes were systematically varied using a policy-capture methodology.

Given the limited interaction between newcomers and teams in the highly controlled experimental designs, these studies only measure the oldtimers’ initial impressions of and their behavioral intentions toward a newcomer, such as their inclination to accept the newcomer or their anticipated motivation to attend to newcomer knowledge. Yet, as can be seen in Figure 3, the majority of experimental and quasi-experimental studies of team receptivity
investigate behavioral team reflection and team knowledge utilization, for which some degree of interaction between the team members is necessary. Such investigations are typically achieved with more naturalistic experiments characterized by interdependent collective tasks with real-time interactions between newcomers and teams (Choi & Thompson, 2005; Gorman & Cooke, 2011; Gruenfeld et al., 2000; Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005; Lewis, Belliveau, Herndon, & Keller, 2007; Phillips et al., 2009). With membership change designs these studies have clearly adopted the perspective of groups as dynamic, adaptive entities that McGrath et al. (2000) advanced in their review of a century of literature on groups. Although confederates of the experimenter have been used in some of these more naturalistic experiments, (Choi & Levine, 2004; Hansen & Levine, 2009; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961), a number of recent studies have employed naïve participants in the role of the newcomer (Gruenfeld et al., 2000; Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005; Phillips et al., 2009; Rink & Ellemers, 2009b).

Field methods. The field researchers that examined team receptivity to newcomers mainly focused on team reflection or on newcomer acceptance. They use a variety of methods that range from retrospective accounts typically obtained with surveys (Smith, Amiot, Callan, Terry, & Smith, 2012) to longitudinal accounts gathered via archival techniques (Guimerà et al., 2005) as well as through multi-wave, panel surveys (Molleman & Van der Vegt, 2007).

Some common design considerations include (a) whether to gather these accounts from archival team composition and performance data (Perretti & Negro, 2006), from surveys of team members’ (Hirst, 2010), or from both (Van der Vegt et al., 2010), (b) whether to collect responses from oldtimers (Chandler et al., 2005; Cini, Moreland, & Levine, 1993), from newcomers (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), or from both (Molleman & Van der Vegt, 2007), and lastly (c) what criteria will be used to differentiate newcomers from oldtimers. To define what constitutes a newcomer, survey researchers tend to employ temporal criteria (e.g. those who have worked in the project team for no longer than three months [Chen & Klimoski, 2003] or six months [Smith et al., 2012]), whereas researchers using publicly available archival data focus on newness of the individual to a particular project team or industry (Guimerà et al., 2005; Perretti & Negro, 2007).

The question of the factors that are used to distinguish newcomers from oldtimers in organizations has been examined in some depth by Rollag (2004). He found that whether someone is seen as a newcomer is not so much a function of the absolute amount of time worked in a team or organization (e.g. six months, one year, or two years) as it is of relative tenure (how much shorter the individual has been working in the team or organization than other team members or employees). In particular, he found evidence suggesting that when employees reach the 30th percentile (i.e. 29% of the
other employees worked for a shorter period of time in the work group or organization than them), they no longer feel like newcomers and are not treated as such by oldtimers. A mathematical model, in turn, suggested that in slower growing organizations it will take about one to three years for employee to reach the 30th percentile in relative tenure, which converges with the criterion socialization studies in large organizations tend to use to identify newcomers.

In our review of this literature, we organize the key research findings published in management, organizational behavior, and social psychological journals in terms of the three components of team receptivity to newcomers; (1) team reflection, (2) team knowledge utilization, and (3) newcomer acceptance. We present the findings obtained for each component separately before considering their combined effects. Each section also provides additional details on how these three forms of team receptivity tend to be operationalized. We complete our review with a discussion of the relationships between newcomer entry and work team performance, distinguishing between direct effects and indirect effects through the components of team receptivity.

Literature Review on Team Receptivity

Team Reflection

Assessment. Of the 52 articles examined, there were 13 that addressed team reflection, or the team’s tendency to reflect upon existing work processes, alter routines, and generate new ideas due to the mere presence of a newcomer. These studies conceptualized and captured team reflection in multiple ways, including: (1) team creativity and/or innovation (Choi & Thompson, 2005; Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007; Perretti & Negro, 2007; Ziller et al., 1962); (2) reliance on team cognitive processes (Lewis et al., 2007), (3) reflection on internal group processes (Arrow & McGrath, 1993), (4) the production of unique ideas (Baer et al., 2010; Gruenfeld et al., 2000), (5) team attention allocation (Phillips et al., 2009), (6) the duration of and openness in team discussions (Gorman & Cooke, 2011; Hirst, 2010), and (7) team learning and team task flexibility (Van der Vegt et al., 2010). The common denominator connecting these measures is that they all indicate a certain degree of team reflection on existing work procedures and team creativity as a function of pure newcomer presence and/or membership change, which is independent of the knowledge that the newcomer may possess. This team situation differs from team situations where newcomers do contribute specific knowledge to spur these processes, which we focus on in the below section on knowledge utilization.

Research findings. The role that newcomers can have in team reflection was first explored by Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller and colleagues in the 1960s (1962). They established that teams experiencing membership change
(so-called “open” teams) generated more original ideas than stable or “closed” teams. This effect occurred independently of the performance of the teams prior to newcomer entrance, but did seem to depend on how newcomer entry took place (i.e. through team member replacements or team member additions). Although no statistical tests were presented to compare the effects of different newcomer entries, member replacements resulted in the highest originality scores (i.e. \( M = 28.2 \) versus \( M = 22.8 \) for member additions and \( M = 18.7 \) for closed teams).

It was not until the 1990s that management researchers and psychologists resumed interest in this work on team reflection (or in their other studies of knowledge utilization and newcomer acceptance [Ziller & Behringer, 1960], which will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow). Subsequent research largely confirmed the classic finding that membership change involving newcomers enhances team reflection. Arrow and McGrath (1993), for example, found that teams confronted with a newcomer—either through experimental induction, or through spontaneous membership changes—reflect more on internal processes compared to relatively stable teams. Similar results have been obtained for discussion duration in computer-mediated teams that contained new members (Gorman & Cooke, 2011), for idea generation in teams who welcomed replacement members (Choi & Thompson, 2005) or previously departed members (Gruenfeld et al., 2000), and for innovative outcomes of teams with newcomers to the film industry (Perretti & Negro, 2007). Along related lines, Nemeth and Ormiston (2007) also found that open teams were more creative than closed teams. However, in this study, closed teams thought of themselves as being equally creative as the open teams indicating that teams may not recognize the team reflection advantage of newcomers.

Not all membership change studies yielded straightforward effects for newcomer entry on team reflection, however. There is some evidence suggesting that membership change involving newcomers can inhibit a team’s tendency to reassess their current ways of working as it led to transactive memory system (TMS) inefficiencies in one study (Lewis et al., 2007), and impeded team learning behavior and task flexibility in a team field study (Van der Vegt et al., 2010). These findings suggest that the influence of newcomers on team reflection may be contingent on certain team characteristics, environmental characteristics, or on specific newcomer traits. We discuss such boundary conditions below.

**Moderating factors.** There are indeed several team characteristics that seem to mitigate the influence of newcomers on team reflection. For example, a supplemental study conducted by Lewis et al. (2007) showed that newcomer entry did go hand in hand with efficient team cognitive processing when teams were clearly instructed to reflect upon the collective knowledge in
their TMS prior to task execution. One other recent study showed that newcomers enhanced team reflection when the teams were just newly formed (Hirst, 2010). Thus, what seems to matter for team reflection is not so much newcomer entry in itself, but rather whether the team’s longevity supports or impedes adaptation to membership changes. Similarly, Baer et al. (2010) demonstrated that member rotations enhanced team reflection (i.e. in terms of enhancing idea generation) when there was little intergroup competition in the direct work environment. This finding supports the team innovation literature we referred to earlier, suggesting that newcomers may be necessary for teams to unleash their innovative potential under circumstances that are otherwise relatively secure and safe (Anderson et al., 2004). When, however, intergroup competition rises, newcomer presence is no longer related to team reflection. External threat can provide a different reason for teams to think of ways in which they can become (or at least seem) more successful and competitive—independently of the presence versus absence of newcomers.

Finally, one study examined whether characteristics of the newcomer could influence team reflection, in this case, the newcomer’s social distinctiveness (Phillips et al., 2009). It was argued that a newcomer’s social distinctiveness entails more than just “being new” in a team. Rather, it also encompasses whether or not the newcomer is different from the oldtimers in terms of important social demographic categories (e.g. race, gender, or functional background). A comparison between team responses to newcomers who were similar in this respect and newcomers who were socially distinct revealed that team reflection was higher when confronted with a socially distinct newcomer. It was argued that teams unwittingly expect socially similar newcomers to agree with collective task perspectives, causing the team to stick to existing ideas despite the introduction of a newcomer. As these expectations regarding task agreement were lower for socially distinct newcomers, teams became more self-reflective.

In conclusion, most of the studies on newcomers and team reflection support the stimulating properties of membership change. Although some boundary conditions have been established, there is substantial evidence that the mere arrival of newcomers can have profound effects on the work behaviors of oldtimers, with newcomers increasing the number of unique ideas that they develop, and enhancing team creativity (Choi & Thompson, 2005; Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007; Ziller et al., 1962) and innovative outcomes (Perretti & Negro, 2007).

Team Knowledge Utilization

Assessment. Continuing with team utilization of newcomer knowledge, we review the studies that examined whether teams actually use the newcomers’ unique knowledge and/or adopt their skills. There were 15 articles reporting
studies that included behavioral or perceptual measures of team knowledge utilization. Classic studies assessed behavioral knowledge utilization by observing the extent that team’s changed its quantity estimations toward the correct estimate provided by a knowledgeable newcomer (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961), but later studies directly examined team adoption of unique newcomer ideas (Gruenfeld et al., 2000), task strategies (Choi & Levine, 2004; Hansen & Levine, 2009), production routines (Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005) and task knowledge (Rink & Ellemers, 2009a, 2009b). Perceptual measures of team knowledge utilization include leader ratings of newcomers (i.e. their influence, Cini et al., 1993; their competencies and task contributions, Craig, 1996; Molleman & Van der Vegt, 2007), team member’s ratings of the newcomer (e.g. their influence, Ziller et al., 1961), and anticipated team agreement with newcomer criticism (Hornsey et al., 2007).

With their specific focus on team responses to newcomer input, these team knowledge utilization measures clearly differ from the more general measures of team reflection.

Research findings. Ziller and colleagues were the first to examine team adoption of unique newcomer knowledge (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961). In one study, they only obtained suggestive evidence that open teams (i.e. those that expected and experienced membership change) utilized the newcomer’s task estimates to a greater extent than did closed teams, but these differences were not statistically significant (Ziller et al., 1960). Moreover, when, in a second study, an oldtimer and a newcomer possessed the same set of valuable task answers, both open and closed teams perceived greater influence on the team from the oldtimer than from the newcomer (Ziller et al., 1961). In another study, Ziller and Behringer (1960) did find behavioral evidence of team utilization of newcomer knowledge when teams believed that they had a history of task failure. Compared to the successful teams, many more of the poorly performing teams adopted the task estimates that the newcomer provided.

The more recent body of literature on team utilization of newcomer knowledge cuts across social psychology, management and organizational behavior. This research also suggests that teams are not automatically willing to adopt unique newcomer input. For instance, in line with the work of Ziller et al. (1961), a series of experiments revealed that teams were significantly and consistently less willing to agree with newcomers than with oldtimers, even when both expressed the same task criticisms (Hornsey et al., 2007). And, although Gruenfeld et al. (2000) found newcomer effects on team reflection, they were unable to establish such effects for team utilization of specific newcomer ideas. Two field studies show a similar pattern of results. In the first study, even the leaders of understaffed teams, who were in need of new members,
indicated that their newcomers had relatively little influence (Cini et al., 1993). In the second, longitudinal study, teams were only willing to utilize newcomer knowledge after the newcomers were socialized into the team, and had gained 18 months of work experience (Molleman & Van der Vegt, 2007).

These seemingly contradictory effects of newcomer entry on team reflection versus team knowledge utilization have motivated a number of researchers, including ourselves, to examine whether there are circumstances under which teams are more willing to utilize newcomer input.

**Moderating factors.** Some of the more recent work indeed confirmed that teams were more willing to adopt newcomer knowledge when their past performance had been poor (Choi & Levine, 2004), or when they had lower performance expectations (Hansen & Levine, 2009; see Ziller & Behringer, 1960). These studies further found that it matters whether teams had been working with an assigned or self-chosen task strategy (Choi & Levine, 2004). In particular, teams adopt newcomer knowledge more often when their own work strategy had been assigned to them as they are less committed to their own approach in these situations. Finally, in one experiment (Rink & Ellemers, 2009a), the utilization of newcomer knowledge was greater in teams with a collective promotion focus that consider complex and unpredictable situations a challenge (see Higgins, 1997) than in teams with a collective prevention focus that aim to prevent failure and focus on formal task responsibilities.

Some of the more recent research has also examined whether newcomer characteristics affect team utilization of newcomer knowledge. Hansen and Levine (2009), for instance, showed that teams are, on average, more likely to adopt a new task strategy from a newcomer when this person behaves rather assertively. Most other work has examined whether the social distinctiveness of a newcomer is related to team knowledge utilization. Hornsey et al. (2007) demonstrated that one way in which socially distinct newcomers can enhance team agreement with their criticism of team practices, is to distance themselves from the teams to which they previously belonged. Rink and Ellemers (2009b) found that the utilization of knowledge stemming from socially distinct newcomers depended on how long such newcomers would stay in the team. When a socially distinct newcomer only joins a team temporarily, teams seem able to adopt a task focus, and become relatively receptive to their unique knowledge. When, however, it is clear that a socially distinct newcomer has joined permanently, teams are more relationship focused and appear to need some shared sense of social similarity before adopting newcomer knowledge.

Two other studies examined whether joint membership in an overarching social category could provide a basis of shared social similarity that is sufficiently strong to promote knowledge utilization. Kane et al. (2005) proposed that the presence of a superordinate identity (e.g. a newcomer already
working for the same organization as the team) could reduce the social distinctiveness of a newcomer. They indeed established that team utilization of valuable newcomer knowledge was greater when a socially distinct newcomer belonged to the same larger group as the team than when both did not share such an overarching binding identity. Subsequently, Kane (2010) further established that this was the case in particular when the newcomer’s superior knowledge was low in demonstrability. Put differently, when it is not self-evident for the team how the knowledge of the newcomer can contribute to the task at hand, teams are more likely to consider and utilize a newcomer’s valuable knowledge when the newcomer seems socially similar to the oldtimers because he or she shares a superordinate identity with the team.

Taken together, the literature on team knowledge utilization suggests that it is difficult to motivate teams to effectively use the unique knowledge and expertise of newcomers. For teams that perform well and thus experience positive behavioral reinforcement, or for teams that have difficulty discerning the intentions of a newcomer, it may indeed be functional to maintain their current status quo. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that there is a greater inclination to utilize a newcomer’s knowledge when the team is not performing up to standard, or when the team believes that the newcomer truly wants to become part of the team. Such team beliefs can develop as a result of an overarching identity that connects a team with the newcomer, or as a result of newcomer (assertive) behavior that signals his or her interests in the team. In the next section, we will review the literature that has examined the more psychological responses of teams to newcomers by focusing on newcomer acceptance.

Newcomer Acceptance

Assessment. There were 28 articles on team receptivity to newcomers that investigated the extent to which teams interpersonally accepted newcomers as full members. The studies presented in these articles measured newcomer acceptance, either directly or indirectly, in one of the following four ways; (1) through team social attitudes toward newcomers, (2) through team ratings of newcomer attributes, (3) through social team dynamics and emergent states affected by newcomer arrival, or (4) through newcomers’ ratings of perceived team acceptance (i.e. the extent to which he or she felt socially validated by the oldtimers).

Most studies in the first category developed perceptual measures to assess acceptance of the newcomer directly or indirectly via relatively general social attitudes toward the newcomer, such as commitment to newcomers (Arrow & Crosson, 2003; Burke, Kraut & Joyce, 2010; Cini et al., 1993; Fromkin, et al., 1972; Haunschild, Moreland, & Murrell, 1994; Joardar et al., 2007; Joardar & Matthews, 2010; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Perretti & Negro, 2006; Pinto et al., 2010; Schwieren & Glunk, 2008).
Studies in the second category rated perceived newcomer pleasantness (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961, 1962), open mindedness (Craig, 1996) and competencies (e.g. social emotional and/or task competencies; Chen, 2005; Chen & Klimoski, 2003; Hansen & Levine, 2009; Moreland, 1985).

The third category examined newcomer acceptance by measuring social team dynamics and team states presumably resulting from newcomer arrival, such as the experience of team conflict (O’Connor, Gruenfeld, & Mcgrath, 1993), team cohesiveness (Arrow & McGrath, 1993), team comfort (Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007), the quality of team interactions (Phillips et al., 2009), and team social integration (Van der Vegt et al., 2010).

Finally, two studies falling into the fourth category measured newcomer acceptance indirectly, through the eyes of the newcomer (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Smith et al., 2012). These studies are presented here because their measures clearly relate to newcomer approval by fellow team members and team inclusion. An example of one of the items used is; “My co-workers seem to accept me as one of them” (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

**Research findings.** The two studies that examined newcomer acceptance as a team-level predictor of other newcomer behaviors suggest that newcomers are more motivated to invest in a team when the oldtimers socially validate their presence (Smith et al., 2012) and perform better when teams have developed positive expectations about them (Chen, 2005). Yet unfortunately, the large bulk of studies that treated newcomer acceptance as an outcome demonstrate that full team membership is not granted to newcomers immediately. As a consequence, newcomers frequently experience assimilation pressure, which deters them from sharing their unique perspectives. There was just one study that reported positive team social dynamics as a direct result of newcomer entry in the form of reduced team conflict (O’Connor et al., 1993). But this is precisely the type of team dynamic that is likely to deter the sharing of unique perspectives. Corroborating the central tenet in Moreland and Levine’s socialization model (1982), the other research findings highlight that teams do not interpersonally accept newcomers, at least not initially.

Again, we first return to the seminal work of Ziller and colleagues, who took into account social team responses to newcomers in their classic studies (Ziller & Behringer, 1960; Ziller et al., 1960, 1961, 1962). In their study of team reflection (Ziller et al., 1962), they found that although newcomers had enhanced idea generation, teams were not necessarily positive about the newcomer’s arrival. Teams, for example, experienced significantly less “fun” working with a newcomer who joined their team as an additional member (Ziller et al., 1962). In another study (Ziller et al., 1961), open teams found it more
pleasant to work with a newcomer than did closed teams, yet both teams preferred working with oldtimers.

Three decades later, Arrow and McGrath (1993) confirmed that membership change tends to negatively influence team cohesiveness, particularly when these membership changes take place on a regular basis. Most of the recent studies also demonstrate that, on average, newcomer entry lowers perceptions of team comfort, team friendliness and team social integration (Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007; Van der Vegt et al., 2010).

A recent series of experiments by Pinto et al. (2010) nicely illustrates the challenge that newcomers face in gaining team acceptance. Their level of acceptance was far lower than that of full members and equal to the acceptance of marginalized team members, regardless of how much they had conformed to team norms. Only full team members were able to enhance their position in and acceptance from the team by conforming to team norms. In fact, all behaviors (including norm deviations) of the full team members were monitored more closely, illustrating that team social dynamics are not as centered on the actions of newcomers or marginal members as they are on full team members.

One of the other studies—that employed a unique task, a social card game in which teams formed hands to earn money (Arrow & Crosson, 2003)—further demonstrates the reluctance of teams to socially include newcomers. Here, teams only included newcomers (at some cost to the team’s earning) when it was clearly unfair not to do so (i.e. when the potential newcomer who was not part of any other team and had no other source of monetary pay-off). This welcoming attitude and willingness to incur a cost to onboarding the new member dissappeared, however, as soon as the newcomer could earn a nominal amount alone.

Together, these findings converge with earlier work done by Moreland (1985) showing that merely being categorized as a newcomer (versus oldtimer) dampens team expectations about a person, not only in terms of task performance, also in terms of liking and social competencies. Yet, as is the case with team reflection and team knowledge utilization, there are several team characteristics and newcomer characteristics and/or behaviors that can help to overcome this resistance to accept newcomers and mitigate some of the interpersonal tensions that teams experience toward newcomers.

**Moderating factors.** One way to create newcomer acceptance in teams is to use extensive socialization practices (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). As was previously discussed in the general introduction, however, the downside of using these practices is that newcomers are placed in the role of knowledge recipients rather than in the role of potential knowledge providers with unique, valuable ideas.
Other research suggests that newcomer acceptance, just like team reflection and the team’s adoption of newcomer knowledge, is greater under challenging team circumstances. Consistent with the effect of team performance history on knowledge utilization, Ziller and Behringer (1960) found that poorly performing teams rated newcomers as more pleasant than did their more successful counterparts. More recent work also demonstrated that understaffed (Cini et al., 1993) and poorly performing teams indeed seem to be more welcoming of new additions to the team, and accept newcomers relatively easily (Haunschild et al., 1994; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Ziller et al., 1960). For instance, in the study of Haunschild et al. (1994), successful work teams displayed a strong out-group bias toward newcomers with whom they were to be merged. By contrast, less successful teams did not display these biases, arguably because the oldtimers were no longer strongly identified with the collective. In a similar vein, teams that are not optimistic about their future performance (Hansen & Levine, 2009) or teams that cannot attribute their performance to team efforts (Schwieren & Glunk, 2008) also display higher levels of newcomer acceptance.

Interestingly, one study suggests that newcomer acceptance may be less dependent on team performance when, within a team, oldtimers feel that they are of high status (Perretti & Negro, 2006). Other studies have suggested that several newcomer characteristics can overrule the influence of team performance on newcomer acceptance. When newcomers clearly possess required task competencies, their acceptance is also less dependent on prior team performance. Oldtimers tend to develop positive expectations about the newcomer’s contributions on the basis of their experience or competencies, which makes them more willing to engage in social exchanges (Chen & Klimoski, 2003), independently of prior team success (Fromkin et al., 1972).

Finally, the social distinctiveness of a newcomer also predicts the extent to which a newcomer is accepted as a full team member. One study reported greater team acceptance of a socially distinctive newcomer than a socially similar newcomer, but explained this by arguing for a “generosity error” as oldtimers did not like it when one of them was socially distinct. Accordingly, teams were thought to over-adjust to newcomers in this experiment (Craig, 1996).

Other studies mostly found that newcomers were more likely to be accepted when they were socially similar to, rather than socially distinct from the oldtimers (Joardar et al., 2007; Ziller et al., 1960). For instance, in one of their first studies, Ziller et al. (1960) showed that socially distinct newcomers first had to gain acceptance in order for teams to utilize their knowledge. This was not the case for socially similar newcomers. Likewise, all of the more recent experiments on socially distinct newcomers find that their presence lowers the quality of team interactions and reduces overall levels of team identification (Phillips et al., 2009; Rink & Ellemers, 2009b; see also Schwieren & Glunk, 2008). This evidence suggests that the positive influence that such
newcomers can have on team reflection and team knowledge utilization may be short-lived, and calls for caution when introducing socially distinct newcomers as a way to boost overall team functioning.

Joardar et al. (2007) propose that the acceptance of a socially distinct newcomer can be positively influenced by the traits and behaviors of these newcomers. They distinguished between relationship-based and task-based acceptance of newcomers, and found positive associations between the relationship-based acceptance and, for example, newcomers’ cultural intelligence. In subsequent work, Joardar and Matthews (2010) found that task-based newcomer acceptance was positively correlated with newcomer conscientiousness, openness to experience, and extraversion. In other studies too, teams are more willing to accept newcomers who display a pro-active, open and/or agreeable personality, regardless of their social distinctiveness (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

As for the behavior of newcomers, Hansen and Levine (2009) found that newcomers who were assertive not only wielded greater team knowledge adoption, they also gained more acceptance—at least when it was relatively unclear how the team would perform (Hansen & Levine, 2009). Similar findings were obtained when the newcomer showed involvement in team processes (Myers & McPhee, 2006) and actively requested information about the collective and its activities (Burke et al., 2010).

In conclusion, our review of the research conducted on this third psychological component of team receptivity highlights the reluctance of teams to immediately accept newcomers as full team members. As is the case with team knowledge utilization, it seems that newcomers are accepted more easily when teams have a history of failure, or when newcomers clearly signal that they are at least in some ways socially similar to or willing to adapt to the oldtimers. Although newcomers can again signal their similarity by emphasizing shared categorical features, research results suggest that even stronger effects may be obtained when newcomers display socially desirable behaviors. The danger of this strategy, however, is that when newcomers are too much focused on getting accepted and start to assimilate to the team, their mere presence may no longer elicit team reflection, and they are unlikely to share their unique knowledge and perspectives—a key predecessor to knowledge utilization. In the next section, we will review the literature that taps into this issue by discussing the research that has examined more than one team receptivity component.

Research Incorporating Multiple Team Receptivity Components

Our literature review so far has revealed a fair amount of convergence in the research findings obtained for each of the components of team receptivity. Newcomer entry appears to have a more a positive effect on team reflection
processes than on team responses targeted at the newcomer, that is, knowledge utilization and newcomer acceptance. When considering how the different components interact with each other, however, there seems to be a trade-off in that factors that facilitate social acceptance of the newcomer may undermine the newcomer’s ability to enhance team reflection and team knowledge utilization. In the next section, we will provide a more detailed comparison of the three team receptivity components, by discussing the studies that have examined more than one component of team receptivity, see Figure 4.

Again, the early experiments of Ziller and colleagues stand out here, as of all the research that examined team receptivity to newcomers, this work is part of the limited number of studies that has examined more than one receptivity component at the same time.

Starting with team reflection and team knowledge utilization, this combination has only been examined by Gruenfeld et al. (2000). They, however, only obtained results for team reflection, supporting our contention that the arrival of newcomers motivates teams to reflect on their existing work practices, but does not automatically stimulate teams to integrate their knowledge into the team decision-making processes.

Figure 4  Publications as a Function of the Team Receptivity Component(s).
A few more studies examined team reflection in combination with newcomer acceptance. Ziller et al. (1962), for example, provided the first evidence suggesting that these two team receptivity components may be higher in open teams than in closed teams, particularly when the teams received the newcomers through replacements rather than additions. Arrow and McGrath (1993) also found that newcomers can positively influence team reflection as well as team cohesion, but only when teams do not experience membership change too frequently. Recently, Van der Vegt et al. (2010), demonstrated in a field setting that high levels of team membership change decreased social integration processes as well as team learning behavior and task flexibility. Note however, that studies by Nemeth and Ormiston (2007) as well as Phillips et al. (2009) yielded different effects for these team receptivity components: their results revealed that the introduction of newcomers had a positive influence on team reflection, but a negative influence on newcomer acceptance. As discussed previously, this negative influence on team social dynamics was even more pronounced for socially distinct newcomers.

The remaining research that has included more than one team receptivity component examined newcomer acceptance in combination with team knowledge utilization. In one study, Ziller et al. (1960) found that these two team receptivity components were positively associated in the case of socially distinct newcomers, but not in the case of newcomers who were socially similar to the team. In another study, Ziller and Behringer (1960) found that knowledge utilization and newcomer acceptance coincided after teams had just received negative performance feedback, a finding later largely replicated by Hansen and Levine (2009) under the condition that the newcomer behaved assertively. Yet again, other studies were unable to show alignment between newcomer acceptance and knowledge utilization. In their second study on open versus closed teams, Ziller et al. (1961) also examined both components, but only found evidence of newcomer acceptance. No corresponding objective evidence was found for knowledge utilization. Likewise, Cini et al. (1993) found that understaffed teams were willing to accept newcomers, but did not make an effort to utilize their knowledge. Finally, in the case of temporary newcomers, a reversal effect was obtained, such that teams were willing to utilize the knowledge of temporary newcomers, but felt that their presence was so disruptive as to lower their overall attachment to and identification with the team (Rink & Ellemers, 2009b).

In sum, the available evidence on factors that determine the interplay between these different components is not conclusive. Indeed, all three components of team receptivity have yet to be examined together. What is clear from research to date is that different components of team receptivity do not necessarily align, and that optimizing one aspect of the team’s receptivity to newcomers (e.g. team reflection) while neglecting other concerns (e.g.
newcomer acceptance or team cohesiveness) may well have deleterious effects on overall team performance. In the final section of our literature review, we therefore discuss studies that document the relationship between newcomer entry and team performance.

From Team Receptivity to Team Performance

Several studies have examined the effects of newcomer entry and membership change on team performance. Some studies assessed external perceptions of team performance, such as customer ratings of team service quality (Hausknecht, Trevor, & Howard, 2009) or leader ratings of team performance (Chandler et al., 2005; Chen, 2005; Van der Vegt et al., 2010), but the majority of these studies measured team performance as the quality of objective team task outcomes, such as team problem solving (Hirst, 2010; Hollingshead, McGrath, & O’Connor, 1993; Huckman, Staats, & Upton, 2009; Lewis et al., 2007; Naylor & Briggs, 1965; O’Connor et al., 1993; Summers, Humphrey, & Ferris, 2012; Trow, 1960), team productivity (Mathiyalakan, 2002), commercial performance (i.e. movie box-office sales, Ferriani, Cattani, & Baden-Fuller, 2009), citations of the team’s scientific output (Guimerà et al., 2005), and the execution speed of computer simulation tasks (Zoethout, Jager, & Molleman, 2010). Note that two studies in this category utilized computational modeling. They simulated lengthy time spans of behavior (e.g. 1000 time periods, Guimerà et al., 2005), considered various newcomer characteristics (e.g. generalist/specialist newcomers, Zoethout, et al., 2010) and employed multiple performance measures. Guimerà et al., (2005) also drew on archival data from actual scientific teams to estimate key model parameters and related them to their performance. However, several other studies assessed external perceptions of team performance, such as customer ratings of team service quality (Hausknecht et al., 2009) or leader ratings of team performance (Chandler et al., 2005; Chen, 2005).

The findings of these studies are mixed. Some demonstrate a direct positive effect of newcomer entry on team performance (Ferriani et al., 2009; Guimerà et al., 2005; Zoethout, et al., 2010). Other studies, however, report a negative direct relationship between newcomer entry and team performance (Huckman et al., 2009; Mathiyalakan, 2002). All remaining studies examined whether and how newcomer effects on team performance were moderated by team characteristics or newcomer behaviors. The classic study by Trow (1960), for example, indicates that the frequency of membership change negatively impacts on the relationship between newcomer entry and team performance. Teams frequently experiencing membership change benefit less from newcomers than teams that are less frequently disrupted by replacements or additional members. Relatedly, Hausknecht et al. (2009) found that the greater the number of newcomers entering a team, the more
pronounced the detrimental effects of newcomer entry on team customer service quality.

Several studies have revealed conditions under which newcomer disruptions may enhance overall team performance. Chandler et al. (2005), for instance, found that newcomer entry was associated with performance gains for teams in environments with a high degree of technological and product change. Additionally, Naylor and Briggs (1965) established that team performance could benefit from newcomers in the team when these newcomers introduced relevant experiences (see also Fromkin et al., 1972 for a similar effect of competence on acceptance). This effect was recently replicated by Summers et al. (2012), but they at the same time also found that teams perform better, at least initially, when they place a newcomer in a strategically unimportant team role.

Altogether the above studies suggest that the relationship between newcomer entry and team performance depends on the extent of disruption caused by onboarding newcomers and the degree to which the newcomers introduce relevant skills, competencies, or experiences that may actually help teams to innovate. Unfortunately though, these studies did not examine whether any of the team receptivity components were related to eventual team performance. Van der Vegt et al. (2010) did assess team performance and related this to team reflection as well as (a proxy for) newcomer acceptance. Their findings suggest that lack of receptiveness—at least in terms of team reflection—can explain the negative performance of teams with high membership change rates. Team reflection also predicted team performance in two other membership change studies that addressed these outcomes simultaneously (Lewis et al., 2007), at least this was the case when teams themselves were relatively newly formed (Hirst, 2010).

Finally, two studies jointly examined newcomer acceptance and team performance. As also indicated above, the study by O’Connor et al. (1993) stands out among newcomer acceptance studies, as this study found that membership changes can reduce (rather than elicit) team conflict. Importantly, the results of this study also demonstrate a link between reduced levels of conflict and team performance, signaling that newcomer acceptance may be an important prerequisite for teams to be able to benefit from newcomers in task-related ways. In this context, it is also relevant to note the previously discussed study of Chen (2005) demonstrating that positive team expectations about a newcomer predicted initial newcomer performance, which subsequently predicted team performance.

There is only one study that directly examined whether the utilization of unique newcomer information eventually enhances team performance (Kane et al., 2005). This study revealed that teams that shared a superordinate identity with their newcomer utilized his/her valuable knowledge more often and performed better than teams that received a newcomer with whom they shared no
such overarching categorical feature. Given the paucity of studies on newcomer entry and team performance—particularly ones that include measures of the team receptivity components—research to date raises more questions than that it yields conclusions regarding the relationships among newcomer entry, team performance, and team receptivity. For example, how important is an alignment among the three receptivity components for teams to yield performance benefits from newcomers? How can we best examine these complex and interactive relationships? In the following section of our contribution, we draw on the insights obtained in the above review with the aim to answer questions such as these.

**Conceptual Framework**

In this section, we argue that the limited evidence on the effects of newcomer entry on team performance is—at least to some extent—due to the fact that teams are often not fully receptive to the newcomers that arrive. Our central proposition is that the team’s performance is most likely to benefit from newcomers with unique knowledge and skills when the behavioral components of receptivity (team reflection, knowledge utilization, or both), go hand in hand with the third, psychological component of team receptivity: newcomer acceptance.

**The Importance of Alignment**

We build our reasoning on prior studies on team knowledge utilization, suggesting that a certain level of newcomer acceptance can help to make teams more receptive to newcomer influence. Given that teams were found to utilize newcomer knowledge more often when newcomers shared an important social feature with the oldtimers (i.e. superordinate identity; Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005) or when newcomers publicly denounced their attachment to a previous identity (Hornsey et al., 2007), one can assume that teams rely, in part, on social considerations in deliberating how to respond to a newcomer. Moreover, other studies that treated newcomer acceptance as a predictor of other newcomer behaviors yielded suggestive evidence in this direction as well. Chen (2005), for example, found that newcomer performance contributed to team performance, but this was only the case when the team held positive expectations of the newcomer. The fact that this link is strongest when teams have a positive impression of the newcomer is in line with the notion that newcomer acceptance is important for teams to effectively utilize newcomers’ task contributions.

Third, as most of the positive effects on behavioral indicators of the team’s responsiveness to the newcomer (team reflection and knowledge utilization) were obtained in short-lived experiments, it remains unclear whether these
responses will sustain over time, past the initial disruptive phases (Arrow, McGrath, & Berdahl, 2000; Gruenfeld et al., 2000). Recall that the organizational learning literature suggests that the unique knowledge brought by newcomers is particularly important for the long-term adaptation of teams to their external environment (March, 1991). Based on the finding that teams are more relationship focused when a newcomer’s position is permanent rather than temporary (Rink & Ellemers, 2009b), we argue that for such long-term receptivity and concomitant performance benefits, it may be more important that the team interpersonally accepts a newcomer who contributes unique opinions and can be an agent of change.

In the introduction to our article, we pointed out that teams tend to have a strong preference for familiarity and similarity, one reason being that these enhance mutual trust among team members (Liang et al., 1995). This notion highlights another theoretical reason why newcomer acceptance may be an important prerequisite for team reflection, knowledge utilization, and ultimately enhanced team performance. Given that changes affecting the achievement of team goals and other deviations from team norms are relatively threatening to a team (Levine et al., 2003), Hornsey et al. (2007) argued that teams should be highly attuned to the motives of critics, or the instigators of change. Their research demonstrates that teams are better able to deal with criticism when they trust that the one providing or causing it is really devoted to the team. In the case of criticism voiced by an oldtimer, concerns about motives and intent are likely to be less relevant as the individual has already demonstrated his or her loyalty to the team. However, it is arguably more difficult for teams to assess the intentions of an unfamiliar newcomer who often is socially distinct from at least some of the team members (see also the intergroup sensitivity effect, Hornsey & Imani, 2004). As long as it is unclear to what extent the newcomer wants to be included in the team, the team will be more apprehensive of any novel ideas or criticism communicated by the newcomer (see also Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). To conclude, there is sufficient empirical evidence and theoretical ground to suggest that an alignment of the behavioral team receptivity components with the psychological acceptance of a newcomer, indicating complete team receptivity, is needed in order to obtain lasting team performance improvements as a result of a newcomer entry.

We now turn to some methodological suggestions elucidating how one might examine the alignment of the three team receptivity components simultaneously. With these suggestions, we aim to point toward some concrete possibilities to integrate and advance newcomer research conducted from different disciplinary perspectives. We will then identify directions for future research that are likely to illuminate when teams will truly benefit from newcomers, in terms of complete receptivity and enhanced team performance. We conclude this section by considering the implications of our analysis for management practices regarding newcomer entry in organizations.
Future Research Approaches

The above review of the literature suggests several methodological issues that may, in part, be responsible for the mixed performance effects obtained so far. The different views on the performance benefits of newcomer entry across research disciplines may simply be due to the fact that the studies focusing on newcomer acceptance are either conducted in field settings by management scholars or executed in highly controlled settings by psychologists, whereas behavioral team reflection and team knowledge utilization outcomes are usually examined in interactive team experiments. So, not only are different methods used to assess the components, they are also studied in isolation from each other in very different research settings.

We want to emphasize the importance of using multiple research approaches to examine team receptivity to newcomers, including archival, ethnographic, and computational modeling studies. With computational modeling, for example, one may in fact, be able to create an agent-based simulation that explores the interrelation among the three components of team receptivity longitudinally under different circumstances (cf. Guimerà et al. 2005; March 1991; Zoethout et al., 2010). However, because the vast majority of studies that have examined more than one component of team receptivity to newcomers employed experimental studies of interacting work groups or quantitative field studies of work teams in organizations, we will focus our recommendations on how to improve these two approaches.

Recommended experimental approaches. Our analysis clarifies that there is added value in designing experimental studies that go beyond the examination of newcomer acceptance in ways that preclude interpersonal interaction. Despite the more complex and messy nature of such naturalistic exchanges, it is worthwhile to create experimental conditions that allow for interaction between newcomers and teams, to enable the assessment of behavioral components of team receptivity in addition to attitudinal indicators of receptivity. We acknowledge that a number of experiments discussed in this review actually allowed for such interactions, and examined behavioral indicators such as team reflection or team knowledge utilization (Kane, 2010; Phillips et al., 2009; Rink & Ellemers, 2009b). However, our review and analysis makes clear the added value of a tripartite approach in which such behavioral indicators of team receptivity are examined conjointly with newcomer acceptance and team performance. Moreover, ideally such experiments should not merely assess initial expectations or immediate results, but might aim to examine how these develop over time across multiple rounds of collaboration (Kane, 2010; Rink & Ellemers, 2009b), or follow real groups over a longer period of time (e.g. student groups during the course of a semester; for the JEMCO studies exemplar, see McGrath, 1993). Newcomer acceptance could then be assessed at different points in time, enabling researchers to establish whether
the psychological component of team receptivity indeed precedes or coincides with the other receptivity components, as we anticipate, or, can eventually result from the two behavioral team responses, as teams may be willing to include a newcomer who has proven his or her worth to the team.

Although we are keenly aware of the logistic and methodological difficulties (e.g. participant attrition) incurred with such study designs, we think the state of the art in this field of research both requires this type of work and makes it possible. That is, the evidence that is available to date on the one hand clearly indicates which variables and measures hold most promise and merit further investigation. On the other hand, it also conveys the limits of knowledge that can be achieved by sticking to these types of methodologies.

Another issue in experimental research is that most previous studies examined team receptivity to naïve newcomers, making it difficult to discern whether the effects on team reflection and knowledge utilization are indeed truly driven by team responses to the newcomer, or, vice versa, by the ways in which the newcomers responded to their team position. This problem exists, for example, in the study where teams utilized more knowledge from temporary than from permanent newcomers (Rink & Ellemers, 2009b). Although teams seemed less concerned with the socialization process and adopted a task focus when a temporary newcomer arrived, we cannot rule out the possibility that the temporary newcomers themselves felt less pressure to conform to the team’s social norms and behaved differently as a result. We do know that newcomers may behave differently depending on how they perceive their own position in relation to the team. For instance, newcomers who are aware that they are socially distinct from the team have the tendency to express their unique ideas in order to show their worth to the team (Phillips et al., 2009).

One obvious way to disentangle the team’s receptivity to the newcomer in experiments is to use confederate newcomers who can be instructed to behave in a particular way. This also allows researchers to endow the newcomer with pre-set unique knowledge (Choi & Levine, 2004; Ziller & Behringer, 1960), as a way to establish the extent to which the team actually incorporates and benefits from the knowledge introduced by the newcomer. Even if this is not possible, experimental paradigms might employ procedures or instructions that systematically induce or require newcomers to share unique knowledge with their teams, regardless of how they feel about their own position or their relation to other team members (Kane, 2010; Kane et al., 2005).

In a similar vein, we note that the vast majority of interactive experiments on team reflection and knowledge utilization moved away from newcomer addition (Ziller & Behringer, 1960) toward newcomer replacement. Indeed there are obvious benefits to this latter type of design, as it controls for team size, and facilitates comparisons of pre-newcomer and post-newcomer team performance (Baer et al., 2010; Choi & Thompson, 2005; Gorman & Cooke,
2011; Gruenfeld et al., 2000; Kane et al., 2005; Lewis et al., 2007; Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007). Yet despite this design benefit, an important drawback resulting from this pursuit of methodological rigor is that we know very little about situations in which a newcomer is added to an existing team, except that different processes are likely to come into play (Ziller et al., 1962). Yet at the same time, this is a situation that occurs quite frequently in organizational practice, for instance due to organizational expansion or restructuring. Additionally, replacement makes it difficult for a researcher to isolate true team receptivity to the newcomer from team responses to the loss of an oldtimer. Indeed, Summers et al. (2012) found that the relative cognitive ability of newcomers compared to departing members is what predicted team performance after newcomer entry. Although this problem may exist to a greater extent for team reflection than for knowledge utilization or acceptance (the latter two components are more directly related to a newcomer), recent findings suggest that even these last two components can be influenced by the team’s feelings about the departing member (Bunderson, Van der Vegt, & Sparrowe, 2013).

A more thorough empirical comparison between team receptivity after newcomer addition versus newcomer replacement could significantly advance our understanding of what determines team receptivity and performance in each case. It is noteworthy that our call for research into replacements versus additions echoes similar adhortations made nearly five decades ago by Ziller (1965). Our review of the research since that time, suggests that team receptivity to a newcomer is likely to differ as a function of these entry patterns and can thus potentially explain some of the mixed findings obtained so far. We believe that when a newcomer replaces an oldtimer, the team is confronted with the loss of an experienced team member and the uncertainty this entails, while having to integrate a newcomer in the team. Although a newcomer may be more needed in the case of replacements versus additions, the disruption this causes may impede acceptance of the newcomer and his or her unique knowledge as the team in the first place seeks to restore stability and to substitute the knowledge and expertise that has been lost. When, however, a newcomer is simply added to an existing team, he or she arrives in a settled environment where other team members are less likely to have such concerns for continued team functioning. This might enable them to be more open to the unique characteristics of the newcomer and appreciative of their added value for the attainment of the task at hand, fostering newcomer acceptance and knowledge utilization as well as team reflection.

While we may speculate on such differential effects of newcomer introduction through replacement or addition on the basis of prior findings, research that systematically compares these two is lacking. The issue of disentangling the effects of oldtimers leaving the team (i.e. turnover), newcomer replacement, and newcomer addition is particularly challenging in field settings. In most
standing work teams, team turnover and member additions are generally highly correlated. As a result, it is difficult, if not impossible, in such settings to disentangle the independent effects of one versus the other. In settings where departures and arrivals are loosely coupled, however, it may be very informative to examine the independent effects of these distinct change events (Arrow & McGrath, 1995). If the goal is to isolate the independent process effects of additions and replacements, samples in which teams experience just one or just the other type of membership change are needed. This can be more easily accomplished in controlled laboratory than in real-life field settings. Comparative experimental research could thus complement insights on the effects of newcomer entry patterns in ways that would significantly advance theoretical insights as well as having very direct and highly practical implications.

**Recommended field approaches.** When examining team receptivity to newcomers in the field, we would recommend that researchers aim to collect responses on all three components, incorporating the perspective of the oldtimers as well as the perspective of the newcomer, ideally on multiple rounds. This can be realized by employing a round robin study design, in which every team member rates him- or herself and all of the other team members on the variables of interest. Furthermore, researchers could complement their quantitative team data with ethnographic methods, such as direct team observations and qualitative interviews with oldtimers and newcomers. These additional methods can give more in-depth information on the full range of behaviors associated with the three receptivity components. Moreover, it enables researchers to disentangle the extent to which the newcomer’s or the oldtimer’s attitudes and behavior are driving the team receptivity effects, or whether it is a combination of the two. Again, while it is more laborious and time consuming to collect and analyze data in this way, documenting and observing the interactions between different parties is the only way forward to move beyond the disparate findings that are available in the literature to date.

Finally, it is of course important that researchers using a field approach start examining team receptivity longitudinally, so that it becomes clear whether—and if so how—it exactly determines team performance. In this respect, it would be worthwhile to combine quantitative team data with archival materials, such as publicly available team records and documents in organizations (Van der Vegt et al., 2010). The combined use of these two approaches would yield objective and independent measures of team receptivity and allow to investigate changes in the link between newcomer entry and objective team performance at multiple points in time. This would not only yield highly valuable data about team receptivity to newcomers in real-life settings, it would also inform us of the consequences of micro-level processes that can only be studied in experimental settings for more macro-level and often highly consequential team and organizational outcomes.
Future Research Directions

The research reviewed here illustrates that the initial disruption that teams tend to experience due to newcomer entry does not necessarily hinder team reflection or short-term knowledge utilization. However, it often makes newcomer acceptance difficult, and the repeated introduction of newcomers may well undermine team performance in the long run. Accordingly, more often than not, teams are only partially receptive to newcomers. Thus, an important challenge for future research is to uncover conditions under which teams may enjoy the benefits of newcomer entry, without suffering the disadvantages. On the basis of our analysis of the available literature, we propose that this may be achieved when measures are taken to ensure that teams are receptive to newcomers on a behavioral level as well as on a psychological level. We argue that teams that succeed in being behaviorally as well as psychologically receptive to newcomers are most likely to enhance their performance as a result. We will now present an illustration of how these issues may be addressed in future research.

Despite the newcomer often being the sole focus of organizational socialization research, the research we reviewed on team receptivity to newcomers clearly demonstrates that team responses to newcomers are not determined by the newcomer alone. Team receptivity is also determined by characteristics of the team itself (Choi & Levine, 2004; Ziller & Behringer, 1960). Moreover, there is emerging evidence that the individual positions of oldtimers within their team also play a role in this process (Perretti & Negro, 2006). We will therefore illustrate our reasoning by identifying one factor at the team, oldtimer, and newcomer level of analysis that is likely to promote complete receptivity to newcomers and enhance team performance. To further increase the practical applicability of our analysis, in selecting these factors we add as an additional constraint that they are also amenable to managerial intervention. For a visual representation of this analysis, see Figure 5.

Status hierarchies in teams. One important team-level characteristic (see Box I, Figure 5) that we expect to influence the alignment of the three team receptivity components is the shape of a team’s status hierarchy. A large body of research demonstrates that status inequalities are inevitable in teams. Not all team positions are ranked equally in terms of the prestige, influence, and respect attached to them, meaning that there are team members with higher social status in the team than others (Anderson & Brown, 2010). Such hierarchical differentiations within teams are often related to differences in formal power accrued to individuals from the roles they hold (Galinsky, Magee, & Gruenfeld, 2003). However, even when such roles are less clear, status hierarchies tend to arise because team members hold implicit assumptions about the social status of others (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek & Norman, 1998; Berger, Rosenthalz & Zelditch, 1980). It is well known that the possession
of certain attributes, such as demographic features or task competencies, can serve as a diffuse cue on the basis of which people grant others influence or respect (Berger et al., 1980).

Although status differences constitute an integral part of team life, practice tells us that there are great variations in the magnitude of intra-team status differences, with some teams having a steeper status distribution among members than others (Harrison & Klein, 2007). There is good reason to expect the gradient or slope of a team’s hierarchy to affect the three team receptivity components, and thus, team performance under membership change. In teams with steeper hierarchies, there are generally clear guidelines for the task behaviors that members need to demonstrate based on their relative ranks (see also Torrance, 1955). Accordingly, high status members generally can exert a great deal of influence on group decisions, whereas lower status members experience conformity pressure and yield to their input (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Oosterhof, 2006). Such deference can be functional, as it can help teams to perform well under time pressure, or when confronted with simple task requirements (Cantimur, Rink, & Van der Vegt, 2013). However, steep status hierarchies also make low status members often feel that it is very difficult to stand out or to change anything about their personal position. Even when they feel committed to the team and realize they may personally benefit from its successes, they do not feel personally responsible for the team’s outcomes (Ellemers et al., 2004). They are therefore generally not highly motivated to self-reflect on their task contributions, nor will they go out of their way to make an effort to adopt novel task strategies or to engage in new relationships with other team members, even if this may facilitate the achievement of team goals (Bunderson et al., 2013; Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995). In such circumstances, it is less likely that the voices of newcomers will be heard, and that their contributions to the team task will be valued.
By contrast, when teams have relatively flat status hierarchies, such that there are fewer differences in status among members, each individual is expected to participate in team decision-making and there is more room for debate about competing perspectives (Brooks, 1994; Edmonson, 1992). There is suggestive evidence that this is particularly important when teams feel threatened (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003), as is often the case with newcomer entry and membership change. Thus, when a newcomer arrives, a flat status hierarchy may stimulate oldtimers to reflect on their collective performance.

The above reasoning also relates to some of the mixed effects obtained for team receptivity to newcomers. For example, while some studies have found that open teams are relatively receptive to newcomers, our literature review suggests that there may be boundaries to this effect. Flexibility in team composition is attractive from a management point of view, but it can also be a source of stress and instability when changes in team composition occur too often. As the status literature suggests that teams with steep status hierarchies are particularly resistant to change (Bunderson et al., 2013), their members may lack the motivation to deal with the disruption that a continuous flux of new members brings along. But teams that endorse egalitarian hierarchies may be more successful in handling frequent membership changes. Within these teams, newcomers are less threatening to the status positions of the existing members, which are more or less equal to begin with. Moreover, these existing members all bear equal responsibility for welcoming new persons into the team and are used to dissent in group discussions. We therefore expect that open teams may only be able to handle their regular membership changes well (i.e. better than closed teams) when there are little status differences among the members. That is, with an egalitarian status hierarchy, open teams are more likely to become completely receptive to newcomers and thus more likely to benefit from them in terms of sustained performance improvements.

Notably, we elaborate on the effect of status hierarchies in teams primarily to illustrate the type of processes and relevant concerns that are likely to play a role at this level. This is by no means the only team-level variable of relevance in this respect. Other team-level variables that elicit similar concerns (e.g. an “open” versus “closed” communication culture) may be equally consequential for the team’s ability to benefit from the inclusion of newcomers.

The security of an oldtimer’s position. Next, we feel that it is important to take into account that oldtimers might respond differently to newcomers depending on their own position in the team. A focal concern at this level of analysis is how secure oldtimers personally feel about their own position in the team. For example, although teams with a history of poor performance are generally more open to newcomers than teams that perform well, research has also documented that not all oldtimers necessarily attach equal importance to the achievement of collective team performance. The motivation of
members to work for their team also depends on self-related concerns (Ilgen & Sheppard, 2001). Indeed, dominant organizational practices tend to employ individual performance assessment and reward systems in personnel management, even when these individuals have to work together in teams (Ellemers et al., 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). This causes team members in most organizations to be primarily concerned with improving, or at least maintaining, their own personal standing within the team, as well as with personal career progression and gaining formal power (Galinsky et al., 2003). These self-related concerns become particularly salient for oldtimers who have reason to doubt the necessity of their own position in the team (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Van den Heuvel, 1998). Such insecurity about one’s own position can be seen as indicating a threat to how much an oldtimer is valued by other members in the team or organization (Ellemers et al., 2004; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Tyler & Blader, 2000).

Previous research on task motivation in work contexts assumes that a certain level of security about one’s position in a team is needed for members to perform well, particularly under crisis circumstances. For example, individuals are more likely to increase their efforts on difficult team tasks when they are highly respected by their fellow team members (conveying that their position in the team is secure; Sleebos, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 2006a, 2006b). By contrast, individual employees who are insecure about their own position are generally less willing to help their co-workers (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006), and tend to see others around them as potential competitors for their future position (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Barnett & Miner, 1992; Pearce, 1998; Uzzi & Barsness, 1998). Such concerns are likely to be heightened in the presence of newcomers whose intentions are not easy to read. We thus propose that feelings of position insecurity may cause oldtimers to become preoccupied with displaying their own efforts that help secure their position in the team. We have collected data suggesting that this may lead to self-reflective task behaviors that can initially seem desirable to a team (see also Sleebos et al., 2006b), but the downside is that these oldtimers are relatively unwilling to utilize valuable knowledge from newcomers (Rink & Ellemers, 2013).

The above findings have important implications for some of team receptivity effects obtained so far. For example, team receptivity to newcomers may only depend on collective team performance when this performance is unrelated to the longevity of the positions that the oldtimers hold within the team. When, however, oldtimers are personally held responsible for collective team failure, they may be less open to newcomers, even when they can help achieve collective team goals. This means that it may be crucial that oldtimers are reassured of their own position during difficult times and membership changes, so that newcomers are truly effective as a source of innovation in work teams.
Again, while we propose that position insecurity is a central concern that may lead oldtimers to accept or resist the influence of newcomers to their team, here too we emphasize that other variables that impact upon such feelings may have comparable effects. For instance, the distinction between situations in which newcomers replace a departing team member or are added to an existing team may be relevant precisely because it impacts on oldtimer’s perceived security about their own position.

Newcomer’s use of identity strategies. Finally, we propose that newcomers themselves can become active agents who calibrate their behavior toward the team to increase team receptivity. Although research has increasingly recognized that newcomers can proactively shape the socialization process, prior work has focused on what newcomers can do to improve their own role performance and assimilation (Harrison, Sluss, & Ashforth, 2011; Morrison, 1993). Little empirical attention has been directed toward understanding how newcomers can proactively shape team-level outcomes (cf. Hansen & Levine, 2009). Yet, we argue that newcomers can be aware of the fact that they are a potential source of influence in the team. Specifically, we suggest that the alignment of team receptivity components and hence impact of the newcomer on the team’s performance can be facilitated when newcomers use an *identity strategy* that underscores their willingness to be included in and belong to the team (see Box III, Figure 5).

As indicated above, in order for teams to be open to the potentially disturbing forces of criticism, they need to feel assured that the person providing unique input acts with the team’s interests in mind. This is why critical comments from out-group members and newcomers tend to be judged more negatively than similar comments from in-group oldtimers—the former have not yet proven their loyalty to, and willingness to invest in the team (Hornsey et al., 2007; Hornsey, Trembath, & Gunthorpe, 2004). As a possible solution for newcomers to increase their chances of getting accepted by their new team, Hornsey and colleagues have suggested that they might publicly denounce their previous team membership (Hornsey et al., 2007). However, this may not always be viable in work settings, if only because such explicit statements may raise doubts about the performance of the previous team or the reasons for leaving that team, undermining perceptions of a newcomer’s expertise or overall loyalty.

In practice, a frequently employed identity strategy among peripheral members, such as newcomers, is to emphasize their own uniqueness and/or individual task contributions that merit acceptance by the team (Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimme, 2003; Phillips et al., 2009). As long as newcomers are in a marginal position they may find it difficult to feel attached to the team or to enact the team’s identity. Instead, they tend to attach greater importance to their personal identity (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Rink & Ellemers,
2011). This differentiating strategy might—unintentionally—emphasize their social distinctiveness, which will do little to increase newcomer acceptance. Moreover, team reflection and knowledge utilization are also likely to be hindered to the extent that a differentiating strategy causes the team to question the newcomer’s concern for team goals. In other words, although this strategy may clarify the newcomer’s potential worth to the team, it may at the same time undermine the team’s willingness to accept and include this knowledge. In line with the analysis we made above, this precludes full team receptivity and thus is not the optimal way to enhance team performance.

We propose that newcomers are most likely to induce full team receptivity when they use an integrating identity strategy that clearly communicates the willingness to invest in the team and to employ their unique knowledge to the benefit of collective team goals. One relatively straightforward and practical way of signaling the importance of the team for the self and to communicate the perceived inclusion of the individual in the team is by using collective language (we, our, us) when indicating the ways in which unique individual knowledge may benefit the achievement of team goals (see also, Burke et al., 2010). Thus, we expect the use of collective language to be a strategy newcomers can use to optimize the likelihood that the team will acknowledge them as a team member and utilize their unique knowledge. In this way, a newcomer can communicate distinct task contributions and relevant expertise while expressing his or her interest in the team and its goals, and without calling into question prior achievements or loyalties. When a newcomer conveys the intention to act as part of the team in this way, this should contribute to acceptance of the newcomer and his or her ideas.

Some of our recent experimental results are consistent with the reasoning that newcomer communications that integrate the self with the team can facilitate team receptivity to their ideas. Interestingly, this was particularly the case when the newcomer was socially distinct from the team. Teams were more likely to accept newcomers who compensated for their social distinctiveness by employing collective level language (indicating an integrating identity strategy) rather than individual language (indicating one’s personal identity), which subsequently increased the team’s consideration of their unique knowledge (Kane & Rink, 2011). These effects were less pronounced for socially similar newcomers.

By demonstrating that newcomers who do not share a salient social category with the team are being evaluated on the basis of their initial behaviors, these findings support some of the earlier work on newcomer social distinctiveness. For the socially similar newcomers who already experience a sense of commonality with the team, it is less important to immediately signal their team concern. As such, the integrative communication style seems a very concrete and practical strategy that the many socially distinct newcomers can employ to increase complete team receptivity. After all, even when socially
distinct newcomers do not possess task-relevant knowledge, this strategy may help them to increase the team’s willingness to reflect upon existing strategies. In the end, such alignment of team receptivity components is likely to yield performance benefits in teams.

Again, our reasoning and initial evidence illustrate that the way the newcomer communicates with the team is another factor that can either facilitate or undermine full team receptivity. Yet, there may of course be different ways for newcomers to convey their willingness to be included in the team that deserve future research attention.

Discussion

Unlike most research on newcomer socialization that focuses on assimilation processes, this article set out to examine the ways in which teams adapt to newcomers. To do so, we reviewed more than fifty studies that have been published on this topic in the fields of management, organizational behavior and psychology over the last five decades. This overview of the empirical research conducted on team receptivity to newcomers has led to two key insights.

First, the literature reveals three distinct forms of team receptivity, two of which are task-related (team reflection and team knowledge utilization) and one of which is psychological (newcomer acceptance). All three components of team receptivity appeared to be contingent on multi-level factors, such as team, oldtimer, as well as newcomer characteristics. This calls for further examination of team receptivity at these different levels of analysis. Across the board, it seems that newcomer entry mainly enhances the first component, team reflection. The mere arrival of newcomers tends to have a positive influence on the willingness of existing team members to consider and improve their task behaviors. The only conditions under which fairly robust patterns of team knowledge utilization emerged was when the team had suffered poor past performance, or when the newcomer was somehow seen to be similar to the oldtimers, and thus, as already one of them (e.g. shared subordinate identity). The results on newcomer acceptance demonstrate a similar pattern. In line with what Levine and Moreland’s classic (1982) socialization model would predict, teams do not automatically accept newcomers and often see them as outsiders. It is, however, easier for teams to accept a new member when this person clearly behaves in socially assimilative ways.

Including all three components of team receptivity to newcomers in this review, led us to the second insight, namely that the three components are in fact rarely examined together, or in combination with team performance. As can be expected given the above outcomes, the studies that did examine more than just one team receptivity component found that the three components often do not co-vary. Along related lines, the few studies that tried to examine the relationship between newcomer entry and actual team
performance obtained mixed results. This is the case, at least in part, because those teams either responded well to a newcomer in terms of task behavior (team reflection and knowledge utilization) but did not accept this person as a valid team member, or the other way around: the newcomer was accepted into the team, but their unique knowledge was neglected. Systematically comparing the existing empirical findings on each receptivity component and combining empirical evidence that was obtained in different disciplines, allowed us to establish that teams tend to be not fully receptive to newcomers, which may account for the sometimes disappointing effects of newcomer entry on team performance.

Implications

A key theoretical implication of our review is that scholars would be advised to push beyond the examination of specific team receptivity components in isolation (or in pairs) to arrive at an understanding of the conditions under which all three components of team receptivity indeed may co-occur. This implication has motivated us to consider novel ways to examine the relationships between newcomer entry, team performance, and the three components of team receptivity simultaneously. Our aim is to provide an interface that fosters the achievement of coherence among results obtained with different research methodologies that are currently used. This will enable future researchers to examine relevant processes across different contexts and help them advance theoretical and practical knowledge of team receptivity to newcomers.

The need for a more overarching research approach that assesses the three receptivity components conjointly also motivated us to identify some circumstances under which newcomers are likely to engender the kind of complete team receptivity most likely to enhance team performance. Our consideration of team-level, oldtimer-level, and newcomer-level moderators illustrates how conditions at each of these levels of analysis may play a role in achieving complete team receptivity. Additionally, these facilitators of team receptivity merit further consideration as they are relatively amenable to organizational interventions, compared to other potential facilitators (e.g. the team’s performance history). The team’s ability to acknowledge and profit from newcomer contributions, and the added value of introducing newcomers may be limited if organizations are unwilling or unable to do this. Any or all of the below measures are likely to make a difference in organizations that do aim to spur team receptivity to newcomers.

First, team receptivity will be enhanced when organizational and team-level structures provide a relatively egalitarian communication and decision-making climate. The more the input of individual team members is encouraged and acknowledged—regardless of their formal position in the team—the more they will be inclined to be open to the input of newcomers. As is the case with
other climate aspects, this depends on informal practices as much as on formal regulations. For instance, it is important that team leaders explicitly invite input from their subordinates, allow for time to discuss alternative views, and accept the possibility that their personal preferences are not always decisive.

Second, the anxiety that is often accompanied with membership change in teams is often not taken seriously by management and disparaged by simply concluding that “people are resistant to change”. There is more scope in acknowledging the role of organizational policies and the way these may lead people to feel insecure about their position in the team or organization. Keeping people “on their toes” may seem an effective way to increase their efforts to display their personal skills and abilities. In the long run, however, this policy may not be worth undermining broader commitment to collective goals that is crucial for the success of most organizations. Thus, organizations that take care to communicate to existing workers that they can feel secure about their own position in times of change, are more likely to profit from the introduction of newcomers. Even if job security cannot be provided, employees are better able to focus on their work when they receive reliable information about their prospects instead of being kept in the dark.

A third way in which managers may foster the team’s ability to profit from newcomer entry is by acknowledging the unique role that they have, and helping them to realize their transformative potential. Preparing newcomers for the possibility that teams regard their intentions with suspicion helps them anticipate on the importance of communicating their desire to be included in and contribute to the team’s goals. Such preparations may take the form of very concrete and practical advice, such as the recommendation to communicate in terms of “us” and “we” instead of “I” and “me”, or to focus on presenting the potential benefits of new ideas instead of merely criticizing current practices. Newcomers should also be encouraged not to relinquish their ideas too quickly, but to be patient for the team to acknowledge and adapt to the suggestions they have to offer. Newcomers may not do this naturally, if they do not yet see themselves as a full team member, but they may also think that the quality of their ideas should be self-evident. It is thus important to make newcomers aware of the ways in which they can best approach teams.

Conclusion

Membership change in organizations inevitably results in the introduction of newcomers, who typically represent a numerical minority in the teams that they join (Choi & Levine, 2004). Theories propose that newcomers, with their different background, are important sources of innovation that facilitate team performance and can thus enhance the long-term survival chances of teams. But our review of over 50 years of research on this topic demonstrates
that this potential is often not realized. We challenge scholars to go beyond studies focusing on isolated team receptivity components as our review suggests that the three team receptivity components—team reflection, knowledge utilization, and newcomer acceptance—depend on each other and jointly influence sustained team performance. In this way, we hope to provide the foundation needed for developing a deeper understanding of when teams will be completely receptive to newcomers.

Acknowledgments
This work is part of a research program (472-04-044) granted to the first and third author by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The second author appreciates the support of the Duquesne University, Presidential Scholarship Award grant. We also thank Jiahui Le for her research assistance.

References
Articles included in our literature review are indicated with *


