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Conflict in Teams

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Introduction

Conflict is inevitable when groups of people work together. Different opinions may arise about the goals and means of task accomplishment, interpersonal tensions may escalate, and struggles over leadership and power may derail team collaboration. Understanding where such conflicts come from, how they impact team outcomes, and how they may be best managed has been a central focus within the literature on small groups and teams for the last 20 years. Since the seminal work in the mid-1990s on task versus relational conflicts in teams (e.g., Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Pelled, 1996), interest in conflict research has soared.

In this chapter we provide an integrative overview of the large and growing body of research on conflict in teams. We begin with an overview of the largest body of work in this area – on the effects, moderators, and antecedents of the different types of conflict in teams. We highlight work on traditional distinctions between task conflicts over the ideas and goals of task work, and relationship conflicts about personalities and interpersonal issues, and we also give attention to work on two additional types of conflict in teams: process conflicts about the logistics of task accomplishment, and status conflicts about disagreements over prestige and hierarchy within the team (e.g., Jehn, 1997; Bendersky & Hayes, 2012). We review and discuss meta-analytic conclusions (e.g., De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; O'Neill, Allen, & Hastings, 2013) about the general effects of conflict on team outcomes, and then we delve into depth in reviewing and organizing the emerging plethora of work that has arisen on the moderators and antecedents of the different types of conflict in teams. We systematically review and draw conclusions on how three key facets of the team environment (team composition, team conflict management style, and team atmosphere) determine when each of the different conflict types arise and whether they help or hurt team performance.

Secondly, we identify and review what we see as promising emergent areas of research on conflict in teams, which do not necessarily rely on traditional distinctions between the conflict types. We highlight three emergent research areas which we feel may be especially critical in understanding the role of conflict in teams: the work on conflict transformation (when one type of conflict is likely to cause another type of conflict; e.g., Arazy, Yeo, & Nov, 2013; Simons & Peterson, 2000), multilevel models that integrate individual conflict behaviors with team level processes over time (e.g., Jehn, Rispens, Jonsen, & Greer, 2013; Korsgaard, Jeong, Mahony, & Pitariu 2008), and research on compositional models of team conflicts (which investigate the possibility that not all members in the team may perceive, experience, or engage in conflicts in the same manner; e.g., Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010; Sinha, Sirvanathan, Greer, Conlon, & Edwards, 2014). We review the key theories and findings that have emerged in each of these three areas, and then we move on to our general discussion.

Finally, we conclude our review with a discussion section in which we highlight what we view as being the key conclusions in the team conflict literature at this point in time. We posit that many findings on team conflict, whether in regards to the effects of the conflict types or even to findings in the new emergent models of conflict in teams, can be tied back to two essential factors in teams – team norms (particularly concerning safety, participation, and emotionality) and team status concerns. When team norms can direct group behavior towards work-focused task conflicts and fewer emotional and personal debates in teams, conflicts are likely to be more beneficial for team performance (e.g., Bradley, Klotz, Postlethwaite, & Brown, 2013; Curşeu, Boros, & Oerlemans, 2012; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008). In contrast, we suggest that status and power disagreements may often be underlying drivers of the negative effects of conflict in teams (Greer, 2014), and that learning how to disentangle status issues from other forms of expressed conflict in teams is critical for research in this area. In sum, we aim with this chapter to provide a state-of-the-art review of the past and present research on intragroup conflict, and we hope by extracting key conclusions from this large and varied literature to refocus conflict research going forward to get at the essence of what's driving conflict in teams – team norms surrounding emotions and participation and underlying status concerns.

Intragroup Conflict

Intragroup conflict is defined as the degree to which members have real or perceived incompatible goals or interests (De Wit et al., 2012; Korsgaard et al., 2008). The last 20 years of research on conflict in teams focused mainly on understanding how different types of conflicts, or conflicts about different topics, may differentially affect team outcomes. Four key types of conflict have arisen in the literature: Task, relationship, process, and status conflicts. The two most researched types – task and relationship conflict – stem from the classic distinctions of personal versus work-related conflicts, as made famous by a set of classic studies in the late 1990s (i.e. Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1995; Pelled, 1996). Task conflicts are defined as disagreements about task content, while relationship conflicts are defined as interpersonal incompatibilities and tensions (De Wit et al., 2012; Jehn, 1995). Because this dichotomy did not adequately capture the range of conflicts that can occur in teams, in 1997, Jehn introduced a third type of conflict in teams – process conflict, defined as disagreements about the logistics of task completion, including roles, responsibilities, and work arrangements. In 2012, Bendersky and Hays added the fourth type of conflict, status conflict, which they defined as disputes over members' relative positions of respect in the team's social hierarchy.

In the following sections, we provide a high-level overview of current conclusions in the literature on how each of these conflict types impacts team outcomes. For each type of conflict, we review the moderators of the relationship between the conflict type and team outcomes, as well as the antecedents of each conflict type. We group the moderators and antecedents into three primary categories, reflecting member composition (e.g., demographic traits, personalities), member behaviors (e.g., conflict management strategies, emotional coping styles), and team atmosphere (e.g., intrateam trust, respect). For each conflict type, we conclude by providing a summary of what we feel are the key underlying issues, and as well as discussing possible solutions and research directions, in order to truly unpack and understand the nature and effects of each conflict type.

Task Conflict

The most researched form of intragroup conflict is task conflict (De Wit et al., 2012). The debate on the functionality of task conflict has been one of the more vigorous and contested debates in the teams' literature. Early work by Jehn (1994; 1995) suggested that task conflict could improve team performance. The debates and exchange of information that accompanies task conflict can improve member understanding of the task at hand (Amason, 1996; Choi & Sy, 2010), and lead to higher quality and more creative team outcomes (Matsuo, 2006). However, task conflicts can also become emotional and thus can distract members from the task at hand (Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanksi, 2008) and resolving such escalated task conflicts can consume considerable time (Jehn et al., 2013). In the first meta-analysis of this literature, De Dreu and Weingart (2003) found support for the negative side of task conflicts: all forms of team conflict, including task conflict, negatively impacted all forms of team outcomes, including team performance. However, emerging research on task conflict complicates this somewhat simplistic picture of the effects of conflict. Interestingly, in the meta-analysis by De Wit and colleagues (2012), task conflict had neither a positive nor negative effect on team performance – rather, it was entirely dependent on the context and, more specifically, on the degree to which task conflicts co-occurred with relationship conflicts. In a subsequent analysis, in which the authors only examined studies containing both conflict types and conflict management behaviors, the authors actually even find a significant positive effect of task conflict on performance, and even satisfaction (DeChurch, Mesmer-Magnus, & Doty, 2013). Rather than continuing to examine the main effect of task conflict in teams, this research suggests that it is prudent to consider factors that may moderate task conflict's relationship with team outcomes.

Moderators of the effects of task conflict

In an effort to understand the exact conditions under which task conflict is likely to help or hurt team performance, a number of studies have begun to examine moderators of the relationship between task conflict and performance. At the meta-analytic level, De Wit and colleagues (2012) found that a primary moderator of the task conflict–team outcome relationship (including both satisfaction and team performance) was the degree to which relationship conflicts co-occurred with task conflicts. When task conflicts did not become personal, they found that task conflicts had the potential to be more positive for team performance. Similarly, Shaw and colleagues (2011), examining work teams in Taiwan and Indonesia, found that relationship conflict moderated the effects of task conflict on performance, such that task conflict linearly harmed performance when relationship

conflict was high, but had a curvilinear relationship with performance when relationship conflict is low, such that very low and very high levels of task conflict harmed team performance at low levels of relationship conflict. Their results provided some suggestion that these effects would also hold for team member satisfaction as well.

Why might the co-occurrence of task and relationship conflicts nullify the benefits of task conflicts? De Wit, Jehn, and Scheepers (2013) found that when relationship conflicts were present during task conflicts, members were more rigid in holding onto suboptimal decision processes and engaged in more biased usage of information. This shift in team processes in turn led to negative effects on team decision outcomes. Taken together, the effects of task conflict on team outcomes are highly dependent on the degree to which relationship conflicts are present and task conflicts become personal. The benefits of task conflict seem to be only found in situations where personal, relationship concerns can be kept completely outside the conflict.

To identify when task conflicts become inflamed and personal, researchers have looked at several aspects of teams, including the team composition, team behaviors, and the team atmosphere. In terms of team composition and behaviors, both member personalities and coping styles matter in determining the effects of task conflict and team outcomes. Curşeu, Boros, & Oerlemans (2012) find that the personalization of task conflicts can be reduced in teams that are effective at emotion regulation, and that employ problem-focused coping strategies (Pluut & Curşeu, 2013). Similarly, task conflicts are also more likely to be productive for team performance when members have a high average level of emotional stability and openness, as Bradley et al. (2013) demonstrated in a study 117 student teams.

Conflict management strategies are also relevant. Task conflicts are best for team performance when teams let the task conflict play out and do not engage in high levels of conflict management (Tekleab, Quigley, & Tesluk, 2009). These teams show improved group cohesion and, indirectly, thus show improved group outcomes. However, other research suggests that task conflicts are more positive for group outcomes when task conflicts are actively managed and members engage in agreeable behaviors (DeChurch & Marks, 2001).

There has also been much research on the role of team atmosphere in moderating the effects of task conflict on group outcomes. For example, when team interests in the task conflict are high – such as when the issue is of high importance to the team (Rispens, 2012), or when intrateam trust is high (Choi & Cho, 2011; Simons & Peterson, 2001), conflicts are less likely to become emotional and personalized (Rispens, 2012). Members are then more likely to focus on the task at hand and prioritize team needs above individual emotional concerns. This increases the likelihood that task conflicts can be decoupled from relationship conflicts, and thereby makes task conflict more beneficial to team performance. Interestingly, De Clercq, Thongpapani, and Dimov (2009) find that while trust may reduce the emotionality associated with task conflict, it can also reduce the expression of wilder ideas and thus may reduce group creativity. Finally, the task type has been shown to matter – Jehn (1995) found that task conflicts were more positive for performance on nonroutine, rather than routine, tasks in her classic study of manufacturing teams. Similarly, Puck and Pregernig (2014) found that task conflicts were more useful (less negative) on nonroutine, creative brainstorming tasks than on decision-making tasks.

Task conflicts are also of more benefit to groups when groups have norms that encourage open communication (Jehn, 1995; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008) and positive social interactions (De Clercq et al., 2009). Fairchild and Hunter (2014) found in a field study of 55 design teams that when participative safety is high, task conflicts are most likely to promote team creativity. Similarly, Bradley and colleagues (2012) found task conflict most benefited group performance when psychological safety was high. Lastly, Bendersky

and Hays (2012) found that task conflicts were more likely to benefit performance in the absence of status conflicts. When status conflicts co-occurred with task conflict, task debates escalated and became personal, owing to the higher personal stakes involved for members. However, when members could separate ego and reputation concerns from their task debates, task conflicts had the potential to improve team functioning.

Antecedents of task conflict Given the potentially performance enhancing effects of task conflict, a number of researchers have sought to identify when task conflicts are most likely to occur. Informational (sometimes called functional) diversity is positively related to task conflict (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1994; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Mooney, Holahan, & Amason, 2007; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). Ayub and Jehn (2014) found national variety to positively relate to task conflict, and in earlier work in 2010, they also found national diversity, particular when members had nationalistic attitudes, to positively relate to task conflict. Vodosek (2007) found cultural diversity to be positively related to task conflict, as did Elron (1998). And Jehn (1994) found value diversity to be positively related to task conflict (note that this effect did not hold in later work, such as Jehn et al., 1999).

Chun and Choi (2014) found that teams in which members have a high need for achievement were more likely to have task conflicts. Bono, Boles, Judge, and Lauver (2002) found that teams that had differences in members' level of extraversion were more likely to have task conflicts. And Barsade, Ward, Turner, and Sonnenfeld (2000) found that the mean level of trait negative affect in a team was positively related to the level of task conflict in the team. Finally, Mooney et al. (2007) found that group size was positively associated with task conflict in teams.

Other forms of team composition have also been examined as antecedents of task conflicts. For example, demographic faultlines, or the simultaneous alignment of multiple member demographic characteristics in such a way that clearly demarcated subgroups form, have been linked to task conflict. Some have found faultlines to be positively related to task conflict (e.g., Choi & Sy, 2010; Li & Hambrick, 2005), while others have shown faultlines to negatively relate to task conflict (e.g., Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003). Thatcher and Patel (2011) conclude in their meta-analysis that, on average, demographic faultlines are most likely to positively relate to the occurrence of task conflict in teams.

Further research examines the role of team atmosphere in provoking task conflict. For example, Spell, Bezrukova, Haar and Spell (2011) find an association between distributive injustice and task conflict, and Mooney et al. (2007) find an association between team goal uncertainty and task conflict. Teams with more positive group states, such as trust, respect and cohesion (Jehn & Mannix, 2001) or group identification (Mooney et al., 2007), are also associated with lower levels of task conflict in teams.

In terms of the team and organizational context, in a study of 193 sales departments in Japanese firms, Matsuo (2006) found customer orientation to be positively related to the likelihood of task conflicts occurring in the groups. In a study comparing virtual teams to co-located teams, Hinds and Mortensen (2005) found more task conflicts in distributed rather than collocated teams, and that shared context and spontaneous communication reduced task conflicts, particularly in distributed settings. Chen (2006) found that task conflicts were more common (and more positive for performance) in technology-driven project teams than in service-driven project teams.

Conclusions on task conflict Task conflicts remain an interesting venue for future research. Of all the conflict types, task conflicts continue to show the strongest possibility to benefit team outcomes (De Wit et al., 2012), particularly team performance. However,

the conditions under which task conflicts are able to live up their potential are admittedly narrow (De Dreu, 2008). Solving this mystery – of identifying exactly when task conflicts may benefit performance – has sparked an enormous sure of research in the last few years. Across this growing body of work, a key conclusion seems to be that in order to achieve the benefits of task conflict, the effective management of task conflict is critical: task conflicts are most positive for teams when they are less personal and emotional (e.g., Bradley et al., 2013; Choi & Cho, 2011; Curşeu et al., 2012) and when teams have open, psychologically safe norms surrounding communication (Bradley et al., 2012; Fairchild & Hunter, 2014; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008). In future research on task conflict, continuing to pinpoint the exact situations and conditions where task conflict may benefit team outcomes is important. Additionally, theoretical and empirical work on the multilevel dynamics of how task conflicts are expressed, and how this impacts team outcomes is promising. For example, Jehn et al. (2013) propose that task conflicts are most likely to benefit performance when they are resolved when only members who authentically disagree with the task strategy are involved. Once members join in the task conflict because of heightened emotions or for political siding, the benefits of task conflict are lost. As such, this suggests that multilevel, temporal views of task conflict may provide valuable insight into extracting the benefits of task conflict moving forward.

Relationship Conflict

The second most commonly studied form of conflict is relationship conflict (De Wit et al., 2012). In general, the vast majority of the literature has proposed and found that relationship conflicts harm team outcomes. Relationship conflicts are often highly emotional (Chen & Ayoko, 2012) and damage ongoing relationships and cohesion within the team (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), which in turn can harm team outcomes (Greer, 2012). Relationship conflicts can worsen individual mood and can even have physiological consequences, such as increases in somatic complaints (Meier, Gross, Spector, & Semmer, 2013).

Moderators of the effects of relationship conflict   Given that a key reason why relationship conflicts can harm group outcomes is the emotionality associated with relationship conflicts, Jehn, Greer, Levine, and Szulanski (2008), examined what would happen when relationship conflicts varied in their emotionality. They found in a study of student teams that relationship conflicts were only negative for group climate and viability when emotionality in the team was high. When relationship conflicts were not surrounding by a high level of negative emotions, they no longer harmed the group.

What makes relationship conflict more or less harmful for team outcomes? In terms of team composition, Duffy, Shaw, and Stark (2000) found that in interdependent student groups, low self-esteem made the effects of relationship conflict on individual performance and absenteeism worse. In terms of member behaviors, De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) looked at the role of conflict management behaviors in reducing the negative effect of relationship conflict on group outcomes – they found in a study of 27 organizational teams that avoiding responses were the best way to manage relationship conflicts. Collaborating or contending during relationship conflicts only served to derail teams more from effective task accomplishment (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Similarly, Jehn (1995) found that when teams had conflict-avoidant norms, the negative effects of relationship conflict on group satisfaction and member liking were reduced. This may explain why employing the emotion regulation strategy of distraction can reduce the negative outcomes associated with relationship conflicts (Griffith, Connelly, & Thiel, 2014).

In contrast to these findings on the benefits of avoiding relationship conflicts, Auh, Spyropoulou, Menguc, and Uslu (2014) found that the negative effects of relationship conflict were actually improved when teams used a collaborative conflict management approach, as relationship conflicts were less likely to impair information processing in the team. Tekleab and colleagues (2009) similarly found relationship conflict was less harmful in teams that were more effective at conflict resolution because those teams experienced improved team cohesion. Lastly, in terms of team atmosphere, De Clercq and colleagues (2009) found that high levels of positive social interactions in 232 Canadian firms buffered teams from the negative effects of relationship conflict allowing teams to maintain their levels of innovation.

Antecedents of relationship conflict   A growing line of research has sought to identify when relationship conflicts are most likely to occur. One line of research focuses the effects of team composition on relationship conflict. Given the close link between relationship conflicts and emotionality, it is unsurprising that groups with high trait negative affect are more likely to have relationship conflicts (Barsade et al., 2000). Similarly, teams with high emotion recognition along with low mean levels of agreeableness and extraversion are more likely to appraise conflicts as relationship conflicts (Bechtoldt, Beersma, Rohrmann, & Sanchez-Burks, 2013). In another set of studies on individual differences in personality and demographics, Bono and colleagues (2002) found that differences in neuroticism in the team, and high mean levels of extraversion and conscientiousness were more likely to predict relationship conflicts. Relationship conflict is similarly more likely when members have a lower need for affiliation (Chun & Choi, 2014). However, Ensley and Pearson (2005) found that familial top management teams, which one would expect to have a higher need for affiliation, had more relationship conflicts than non-familial top management teams. This suggests that the need for affiliation deserves further research, as research has shown that it can both increase and decrease relationship conflicts. In other research on team compositions, other needs and motivations have been shown to predict relationship conflict. For example, both Greer, Caruso, & Jehn (2011) and Buchholtz, Amason, and Rutherford (2005) found high-power teams, in which both the team and its members, had high levels of power in the organization (and ostensibly higher levels of power motivation), had more relationship conflicts than low power teams. Lastly, as a final indicator of group composition, group size has been positively related to relationship conflict in teams (Mooney et al., 2007).

Further research explores the role of diversity in provoking relationship conflicts. Mohammed and Angell (2004) found in a study of student teams that gender-diversity predicted relationship conflict, particularly when team orientation was low and in the early phases of team life. Jehn et al. (1997) found sex and age diversity to positively relate to relationship conflict, and found value congruence to decrease relationship conflict. Similarly, Jehn et al. (1999) found social category diversity (sex and age) and value diversity to increase relationship conflict (the relationship between value diversity and relationship conflict was also shown by Jehn, 1997). In contrast to the Jehn findings on age diversity and conflict, Pelled et al. (1999) actually found age diversity to decrease relationship conflict. They did find race and tenure diversity to increased relationship conflict. Related to the race findings of Pelled and colleagues, Ayub and Jehn (2010) found in a study of teams in the information technology industry in Pakistan that national diversity, particularly when members had nationalistic attitudes, positively related to relationship conflict. Similarly, Vodosek (2007) found cultural diversity to be positively related to relationship conflict. Interestingly, Ayub and Jehn (2014) found when national diversity was conceptualized in terms of variety, rather than separation, relationship conflict decreased.

In addition to looking at specific characteristics in determining conflict, research has also looked at the aggregate effects of member composition. For example, research on demographic faultlines has shown faultlines to be negatively related to relationship conflict (e.g., Choi & Sy, 2010; Lau & Murnighan, 2005; Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003), but research has also shown faultlines to be positively related to relationship conflict (e.g., Chen, Wang, and Lee, 2009; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Pearsall, Ellis, & Evans, 2008; Polzer, Crisp, Jarvenpaa, & Kim, 2006). On average, Thatcher and Patel (2011) conclude in their meta-analysis that faultlines are most likely to be positive related to relationship conflict.

Team atmosphere and behavioral processes can also impact relationship conflict. For example, Peterson and Behfar (2003) found that early negative performance feedback in teams increased the likelihood of relationship conflict, particularly in teams lacking trust, and Amason and Mooney (1999) found that prior poor performance was associated with relationship conflicts in top management teams. Trust, respect, and cohesion in teams can all decrease the occurrence of relationship conflict, while intrateam competition often increases it (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). This may explain why, in a classic field intervention, when 15 medical teams received a training on perspective taking, they were less likely to see conflict as people-oriented as compared with teams that received a control training session (Sessa, 1993). Time urgency and previously established effective team interactions can also help to decrease relationship conflict in teams (Mohammed & Angell, 2004). Hinds and Mortensen (2005) found that shared identity, shared context, and spontaneous communication helped to reduce relationship conflicts, particularly in distributed teams who otherwise had higher levels of relationship conflicts than collocated teams. Hobman Bordia, Irmer, and Chang (2002) similarly found that computer-mediated groups, compared with face-to-face groups, expressed more relationship conflicts, especially in the early stages of team interaction. Chen (2006) also found that relationship conflicts were more likely to occur in service-driven project teams than technology-driven project teams.

Finally, as previously discussed relationship conflicts are highly associated with task conflicts that have become personal and emotional. Task conflicts can frequently give rise to relationship conflicts in teams, particularly when task conflicts occur in teams with low trust (Kerwin & Doherty, 2012; Peterson & Behfar, 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000; Tidd, McIntyre, & Friedman, 2004), high performance (as opposed to learning) orientation (Huang, 2010), negative diversity climates, including perceived subgroups and ingroup–outgroup distinctions (Xie & Luean, 2014), competitive conflict management behaviors (DeChurch, Hamilton, & Haas, 2007), where members interact face to face and emotions are visible (Martínez-Moreno, Zornoza, Gonzáles-Navarro, & Thompson, 2012), and where members have high emotion recognition and low agreeableness and/or extraversion (van den Berg, Curşeu, & Meeus, 2014). The nature of the conflict also matters – relationship conflicts are more likely to arise during tasks conflicts over issues with low importance for members (Rispens, 2012), high emotionality (Yang & Mossholder, 2004) and low resolution potential (Greer et al., 2008). Additionally, process conflicts have also been shown to be direct predictors of relationship conflicts (Greer, Jehn, & Mannix, 2008; Martínez-Moreno et al., 2012; van den Berg et al., 2014) – the emotional and heated nature of process conflicts likely carry relational concerns that quickly escalate relationship tensions and spark relationship conflicts in teams.

Conclusions on relationship conflict   In contrast to task conflicts, relationship conflicts exhibit a more stable negative effect on team outcomes. As such, research has largely focused on how to mitigate or prevent relationship conflicts. In terms of mitigation, avoidance may be a useful strategy for managing relationship conflicts (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001).

Reducing emotionality can also help to mitigate the negative effects of relationship conflict on team outcomes (Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008). In contrast to task conflict, where much research has focused on the moderators of task conflict, relationship conflict research has focused more on the antecedents than the moderators: how can a team prevent relationship conflict before it begins? Diverse teams, particularly teams with faultlines (Thatcher & Patel, 2011), are likely more susceptible to relationship conflicts (Jehn, Greer & Rupert, 2008). Additionally, teams with a history of conflict (even task conflicts) and negative events, such as negative performance feedback, are likely to be at risk of developing performance-detracting relationship conflicts (e.g., Amason & Mooney, 1999; Greer et al., 2008; Kerwin & Doherty, 2012; Martínez-Moreno et al., 2012; Peterson & Behfar, 2003; van den Berg et al., 2014). Future research on relationship conflict moving forward could examine, for example, how in difficult situations in teams, teams can take steps to make sure that conflicts and performance setbacks do not directly have to translate into escalated relationship conflicts in teams. Additionally, relationship conflicts could offer teams valuable insights into ways of interacting. Future research could focus on finding moderators for when teams might extract such insights from relationship conflicts. Research could also shift focus to more nuanced dependent variables, beyond team performance, such as social learning.

Process Conflict

While process conflict is a more recently introduced type of conflict than task and relationship conflicts, there is already a large body of work surrounding it. A potential reason for this interest may be the huge effects of process conflict on teams – effects often much larger than either task or relationship conflict. In their meta-analysis, De Wit and colleagues (2012) found process conflict to explain more variance in team outcomes than any of the other conflict types, and to be, by far, the most negative form of conflict for team performance. These large and negative impacts of process conflict were echoed by work by Greer and colleagues (2008) who found process conflicts to be the most long lasting form of conflict in teams. In a study of student teams, process conflicts at the start of the semester, particularly when unresolved, predicted all other types of conflict for the duration of the team, but the effects of initial task or relationship conflicts were not nearly as long lasting (Greer et al., 2008).

Process conflicts are thought to be so strong and detrimental teams for several reasons. First, they are central to feelings of justice and equity, and thereby also strongly tied to negative emotions (Greer & Jehn, 2007), such as guilt (Chen & Ayoko, 2012). Indeed, Kerwin and Doherty (2012) found that process conflict was the only type of conflict (compared with relationship and task conflicts) to significantly correlate with negative affect in teams. Second, they are tied to power and resource control, as process conflicts are often bout the delegation of valued resources and responsibilities (Greer et al., 2011). And three, they often are not transparent – what people are verbalizing as the main issue is often not the real issue (Greer al., 2011).

Process conflict is reliably harmful for teams – as noted in the De Wit et al. (2012) meta-analysis, all studies they included on process conflict showed a negative effect of process conflict on group outcomes. For example, work by Behfar and co-authors (2011) shows that process conflict is negative for group coordination, group performance, and member satisfaction. This relationship also holds for different subtypes of process conflicts – both conflicts about logistics as well as conflicts about contributions were negative for all forms of group outcomes. Process conflicts have also been linked to lower quality group

climate (trust, respect, cohesion; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008), lower decision quality (Passos & Caetano, 2005), lower group creativity and innovation (Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005; Matsuo, 2006), worse group productivity (Jehn et al., 1997), and reduced group viability (Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008).

Despite these negative findings on process conflict, a few studies have identified a certain contexts in which positive effects of process conflict might be beneficial for groups – namely, during the early phases of group life. Goncalo, Polman, and Maslach (2010) proposed and found that process conflict that emerged within teams whom were not overly confident in the beginning phases of task work benefitted group outcomes. Similarly, Martínez-Moreno, González-Navarro, Zornoza, & Ripoll (2009) found process conflict in computer-mediated teams, also in the early phases of group life, benefitted group performance, as did Jehn and Mannix (2001) in their study of Master of Business Administration (MBA) student teams. And Jehn (1997), in her classic qualitative piece that introduced the notion of process conflict, noted that small amounts of process conflict, which promoted effective role assignment, could benefit group outcomes.

Moderators of the effects of process conflict

In an effort to understand when process conflicts can be minimized, a number of studies have investigated moderators of the relationship between process conflict and team outcomes. For example, research suggests that subgroups within teams can exacerbate the negative effects of process conflicts (Greer & Jehn, 2007). Research has also looked at the role of member behaviors in moderating the relationship between process conflict and group outcomes. Greer and Jehn (2007) posited that process conflict harms team outcomes because of its effects on team emotionality. They find that process conflicts become less emotional when key emotional triggers in the team are reduced or managed – members are given high levels of voice, members do not perceive one another to be obstructing their goals, and members see themselves as a team rather than polarized subgroups.

Other work also points to the importance of effectively managing and resolving process conflicts. Greer et al. (2008) find that conflict resolution efficacy can reduce the long-lasting negative effects of process conflict, and Jehn, Greer, Szulanski, and Levine (2008) also find conflict resolution efficacy to reduce the negative effects of process conflict on group emergent states (trust, respect, cohesion) and group viability. Lastly, group atmosphere has also been examined. One important part of group atmosphere comes from the setting in which interactions take place. Martínez-Moreno and coauthors (2009) found both time and form of media usage to moderate the effects of process conflict – namely, they found process conflicts to be positive in face-to-face teams, and in computer-mediated teams, they found process conflict to benefit performance in early stages, but to hurt performance when occurring in later team stages.

Antecedents of process conflict

Several antecedents of process conflict have been identified. In terms of team composition, the most research has linked diversity to process conflict. Teams with value diversity (Jehn et al., 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001) or cultural diversity (Vodosek, 2007) tend to have higher levels of process conflict. In contrast, Ayub and Jehn (2014) found national variety (categorical differences in number of nationalities, as opposed to national distance or separation) to decrease process conflict. In investigations of other types of team composition, Greer, and colleagues (2011) found teams composed of all high-power individuals

to have more process conflicts than teams composed of lower-power individuals. This was especially likely when members did not have congruent perceptions about the intrateam hierarchy.

In terms of team atmosphere and context, several aspects of the team environment have been shown to predict process conflict. Matsuo (2006) found that low customer orientation was associated with high levels of process conflict in sales departments in Japan, and Hobman et al. (2002) found that computer-mediated groups, compared with face-to-face groups, expressed more process conflicts, especially in the early stages of team interaction. Jehn and Mannix (2001) found process conflicts to be lower when groups had higher levels of trust, respect, and cohesion, and higher when groups had high levels of competition.

Conclusions on process conflict

Process conflict can be the most important form of conflict to manage in teams. As shown in meta-analyses, process conflicts are the most detrimental form of conflict for team outcomes. They are also one of the most difficult to manage. Namely, process conflicts often arise because of underlying issues in the team members do not feel able to speak about. Frequently, process conflicts are a venue in which value disagreements or leadership contests play out, as members may express their frustrations or make their plays for power in more day-to-day discussions of logistical agreements, rather than in open discussions of deep and difficult issues. For example, debates over role allocations may often signify a lack of consensus about hierarchical roles in the team, and disagreements over work arrangements may stem from underlying differences in value sets. In a first initial study of this idea, van den Berg et al. (2014) find that process conflicts mediate the relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict. As task conflicts become emotional, members start to use process conflicts as a way to express their negative emotions and frustrations with the team, and this in turn gives rise to relational tensions in the team. In such situations, true, authentic disagreement with the process was not there – rather, process issues provided a venue where members could express their frustration and challenge team norms and structures. As such, process conflicts are often conflicts in disguise – the expressed content of process conflicts often does not reflect the real, underlying issues. Effectively managing such highly loaded conflicts, and unpacking the conflicts to resolve the real underlying issue, be it status concerns, equity, or spillover emotions from other conflicts, is critical.

Status Conflict

Status conflict, conceptualized as a fourth type to add to Jehn's (1997) tripartite typology, is defined as disputes over the relative status positions in a team's social hierarchy (Bendersky & Hays, 2012). Although a later addition to the typology, disputes over positions in the social hierarchy have long been a fundamental part of our understanding of teams. Status is unique from other forms of hierarchical rank in that it is socially conferred and thus an individual's relative ranking relies upon consensus (Goldhamer & Shils, 1939; Emerson, 1962). Status hierarchies are thus simultaneously complex negotiated social orders (Owens & Sutton, 2001; Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlich, Bucher, & Sabshin, 1963) and yet ubiquitous to team interactions (Gould 2003; Tiedens, Unzueta, & Young, 2007). Given the comparable benefits of high status (e.g. influence, information and resource access, work recognition; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Foschi, 2000; Friedkin, 1999; Ridgeway and Correll, 2006), it seems only logical that when individuals perceive

the hierarchy as in flux, challenges to relative positions ensue (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & van Kleef, 2010; Groysberg, Polzer, & Elfenbein, 2011; Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Owens & Sutton, 2001; Porath, Overbeck, & Pearson, 2008).

While research on the effects of status conflict is still emerging, several studies have documented the effects of status and power conflicts on team outcomes, finding highly consistent negative effects on team outcomes. For example, Chun and Choi (2014) found, in a study of 145 Korean work teams, that status in conflict was negatively related to team performance. Greer and Van Kleef (2010) found that power conflicts impaired conflict resolution in organizational teams as well as negotiating dyads. Relatedly, Tiedens and Fragale (2003) found that dominance competition heightened team emotionality. Taken together, these studies exhibit remarkable consistency in showing that status and power conflicts have adverse effects on team outcomes. Lastly, in the foundational piece on status conflicts, Bendersky and Hays (2012) demonstrated the discriminant validity of status conflict from the traditional tripartite typology of task, process and relationship conflict across a series of studies, and found that status conflicts were negative for team performance – in their case, the grades MBA student teams received in their course.

Moderators of the effects of status conflicts

Several moderators have been investigated for the effects of status conflict on performance. Early work on status competition demonstrates that while status obtained via political maneuvering harmed team performance, while status perceived as meritocratic served as an incentive (Loch, Huberman, & Stout, 2000). Sutton and Hargadon (1996) similarly found that status auctions served as an incentive for IDEO employees to generate more creative ideas during brainstorming sessions. IDEO's status auctions may be more successful not only because they are perceived as more democratic and legitimated but also because the behavior status is used to reward is prosocial and task oriented. Individuals compete for status not only by asserting dominance, as captured in the status conflict scale, but also by demonstrating their competence, ingroup generosity and task commitment (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009), which suggests that the normative status striving strategy might act as a powerful moderator for the relationship between rank-infused conflicts and team performance.

Antecedents of status conflicts

Conflicts over power and status have been posited to be most likely to arise when members are motivated to protect or obtain positions of power and status (Greer, 2014). For example, Chun and Choi (2014) found that mean level of need for power was positively associated with status conflict in teams. Similarly, research on top management teams suggests that having too many high power individuals can generate more conflicts (Greer et al., 2011; Ronay, Greenaway, Anicich, & Galinsky, 2012), as individuals are more motivated to protect their valued high-power positions. These conflicts are especially likely when there are subtle power differences among high-power teams, such as management teams, where the combination of motivation (high-power holders) and opportunity (a hierarchy in which people can advance) exists. Greer and Van Kleef (2010) indeed found in a combination of field and in-lab negotiation studies that high power teams with hierarchies had particularly high levels of intrateam power struggles.

In dyadic interactions, when an individual has higher power but lower status, he or she is more likely to debase their partner when given the option, as compared to partners with both power and status or status alone but no power (Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012).

This suggests that status differences can lead to greater interpersonal friction than power differences alone and that power without status is particularly damaging. This perhaps explains why, when a team member claims leadership, an assertion of high power, but this claim is not reciprocated via a grant from other team members, thus indicating the claimant's low status, teams are theorized to similarly descend into conflict (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Furthermore, the loss of status can be as instigatory as the absence of it. High-status baseball players who lose in salary negotiations tend to perform worse in the season after the arbitration decision, even compared to lower status players with comparable negotiation losses (Marr & Thau, 2013). Similarly, when high-status individuals are randomly subjected to lose their team's respect in the laboratory, they perform worse than low-status individuals losing similar amounts of respect (Marr & Thau, 2013).

Conclusion on status conflicts

Although status conflict is a comparatively new form of conflict, it builds on a strong literature on the intersection of hierarchy and conflict in organizational contexts. Salient and contended status differences seem to be particularly problematic for team performance. Because status can fill fundamental individual motivations for esteem, standing, and belonging in a group (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001), conflicts over status are likely to be highly personal (indeed, Bendersky & Hays, 2012, note a particularly high correlation between relationship and status conflicts). Status conflicts may, similarly to relationship conflicts, be best avoided or prevented. Research into how exactly status conflicts can be avoided or mitigated would be an important future direction for this research area. Additionally, more research is also needed into how status conflict fuels and feeds into other forms of conflict in teams. As Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spatarao, and Chatman (2006) show, overt claims to status are often avoided in groups, for fear of retributive punishment. Instead, status conflicts may instead be waged more indirectly, such as through conflicts over visible roles in the team or the control of valued resources, suggested that status conflicts may be a key driver and escalator of process conflicts in teams. This may explain in part why process conflicts are so difficult to resolve – the real issue, status, is not what is being explicitly discussed. Thus, future research into how status conflicts promote and escalate other forms of conflict, and how these root status conflicts can be successfully prevented or resolved would be a key important research direction for this area.

Alternative Perspectives on the Study of Intragroup Conflict

While much has been written about the conflict types, there are also critiques of the types, including their close correlations, their focus on perception rather than behavior, and various measurement issues (e.g., whether the group mean of perceived conflict is meaningful; see Bendersky et al., 2014; Hamilton, Shih, Tesler, & Mohammed, 2014; Speakman & Ryals, 2010). A large body of research has emerged which investigates alternative approaches to the study of the conflicts in teams that go beyond simply looking at the effects of the level of a conflict type on team outcomes. Instead, this alternative body of work examines the inter-relationships among the conflict types and the implications of individual-level differences in behaviors and perceptions for the development and consequences of team-level conflicts.

Conflict transformation

One of the most frequently discussed and researched problems with the conflict types is their high inter-correlations (i.e., Bendersky et al., 2014; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000). As a result, the effects of one conflict type on a particular outcome are hard to distinguish from the effects of other conflict types on team outcomes. For example, the effects of task conflict are contingent on the presence of relationship conflict, with task conflict being positive for performance when relationship conflict is low (see the meta-analysis by De Wit et al., 2012; also see an interesting study of conflicts over Wikipedia articles, which similarly shows task conflicts to become negative for performance at the point that they transform to relationship, or also process conflict – Arazy et al., 2013), and negative when relationship conflict is high. Similarly, the effects of relationship conflict on group outcomes are also contingent on the presence of task conflict – relationship conflicts are worst for member affective outcomes when they occurred in isolation from task conflicts. When relationship conflicts co-occurred with task conflicts, team members actually judged them as less upsetting, and experienced fewer physiological consequences for members (Meier et al., 2013).

A growing body of research has begun to examine the situations in which the types are more or less likely to co-occur. For example, task conflict has been shown to be less likely to co-occur with relationship conflict in teams with high intragroup trust (Kerwin & Doherty, 2012; Peterson & Behfar, 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000; Tidd et al., 2004), or when individual conflict episodes can be easily resolved (Greer et al., 2008), the conditions in which a 'pure' conflict exists, where there is only a single, clearly identifiable issue at hand being discussed are very narrow.

Individual behavior and the development of team conflicts

Another key critique of the literature on the conflict types has been the lack of attention to the role of actual member behavior in conflicts in teams, and a too extreme focus on conflict types (i.e., Bendersky et al., 2014; Speakman & Ryals, 2010). In support of this standpoint, DeChurch and colleagues (2013), in a meta-analysis, found that conflict behaviors explain important variance in team outcomes above and beyond the conflict types. They conclude that the conflict process – how teams fight – is just as, if not, as we argue, more, important, than the topic over which teams fight. They find that the effects of team conflict on team outcomes is highly determined by whether team members engage in collectivistic or individualistic behaviors during disagreements. When individuals manage conflicts in a collectivistic fashion, this appears to help team performance while individualistic conflict management strategies harm team performance.

Several other articles have made similar points – team conflicts can be best understood by not just the content, but also the format of interaction during the conflict (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008; Weingart, Behfar, Bendersky, Todorova, & Jehn, 2014). Given this, a growing line of research has begun to focus on theory and research on the role of individual behaviors and emergent patterns of interactions in understanding group conflicts. By better focusing on how individuals think, feel, and behave when disagreements occur within their team and how these individuals processes compile into dyadic and eventually group-level processes over time, researchers hope to gain more fine-grained and predictive insights than is gleaned by only studying the content of conflict via the conflict typology.

One of the first theoretical frameworks to emerge in this line of work is the process-state model proposed by Korsgaard and colleagues (2008). They posit that group conflicts

reflect a compilation process of individual differences, states, and behavior, interpersonal context, interaction, and sense-making, and group-level context, interaction, and sense-making. Their theoretical article was one of the first to suggest that intragroup conflicts are inherently multilevel processes, rather than just purely group phenomena. In their ensuing work, authors have begun to embrace this more multilevel perspective on the emergence of group conflicts, both theoretically and empirically. For example, in a theoretical article, Jehn and colleagues (2013) develop a model of conflict contagion in teams – the authors posit that dyadic conflicts spread to other members and come to 'infect' all team members through processes of emotional contagion, siding, and coalition formation. They propose that conflicts are most easily resolved and most likely to benefit performance when they are confined to the initial individuals with authentic disagreement, and before other members are swept up into the conflict because of spreading emotions or defending friends and allies. In related empirical work to this, Paletz, Schunn, and Kim (2011) suggest that microconflicts – short-term, behavioral disagreements within a larger conversation – have less emotion and are more easily to resolve than full-blown, long-lasting team conflicts.

Speakman and Ryals (2010) also speak to the multilevel nature of conflict in their theoretical paper describing how individual behavioral strategies impact conflict episodes over time in a team, and how these interactions are in turn impact by environmental conditions. In related empirical work, Jamieson, Valdesolo, and Peters (2014) find that when an individual expresses a dissenting task opinion – initiates a task conflict – the group members being disagreed with feel threatened and have avoidance cardiovascular responses. This suggests one mechanism by which conflicts may spread in teams, as well as a reason why task conflicts may also become personal. In related empirical work, Paletz, Schunn, and Kim (2013) examine the words used by individuals during group conflict episodes. They found that when individuals used within-domain analogies when referencing their work, this highlighted representational gaps in multidisciplinary teamwork and sparked intrateam conflicts. In an interesting line of work linking the minority dissent literature with the team conflict literature, Jamieson et al. (2014) find that when one person engages in a task conflict in a team, this makes other group members feel more threatened and makes them exhibit restrictive, avoidant cardiovascular responses, showing support for the idea of Jehn et al. (2013) that conflicts may spread to the group level, and transform into other forms of conflict, through the spread of emotions after an initial conflict is expressed.

Compositional views of conflict

A third critique of past studies of the conflict types has been that not all conflicts are experienced by all team members equally (Jehn et al., 2010), and that conflicts instead may emerge over time, spreading from dyadic disagreements to team-wide conflicts (Jehn et al., 2013; Korsgaard et al., 2008). This suggests that both compositional and temporal perspectives are useful in understanding conflict in teams, and as the DeChurch et al. (2013) meta-analysis points out, individual behavioral choices may play a key role in determining not only how conflicts impact team outcomes, but how conflicts develop over time and come to be perceived, experienced, and engaged in by all team members.

These emerging multilevel views on conflict raise the possibility that not all members in a team may experience a conflict equally – in fact, different compositions of conflict perceptions may exist in a group at any given point (Korsgaard, Ployhart, & Ulrich, 2014). A new and growing line of research has begun to explicitly examine this possibility, and its repercussions for team performance. Jehn and colleagues (2010) look at the effects of

variance in perceptions of intragroup conflict on team outcomes in a study of MBA student teams. They find that asymmetric conflict perceptions within the team were associated with lower levels of team creativity and performance. They suggest that this is because when groups have asymmetric conflict perceptions, they are unable to resolve conflicts and thus, in order for conflicts to be resolved, perceptions of conflict in the team must first be symmetric. Similarly, Jehn and Chatman (2000) also find variance in within-team conflict perceptions to negatively impact team outcomes in two organizational samples.

Sinha and colleagues (2014) take the notion of asymmetric conflict perceptions a step further and introduce the notion of 'skewed' conflict, in which a minority of group members perceive much more conflict than the other group members. They find that such skewed task conflicts are actually positive for group performance in field studies conducted both in India and in the Netherlands. Namely, they theorize and find that when only a minority of members, or even a single member sees a conflict in a team – a positively skewed conflict – the member(s), due to the minority position, are forced to express their dissenting opinion in a careful and sensitive manner. This situation – in which there is carefully expressed minority dissent – they show may be the optimal form of task conflict in teams to achieve higher performance outcomes. In addition to looking at variance and skew, researchers could also examine the idea of kurtosis in conflict perceptions and behaviors (Sinha, et al., 2014). Kurtosis could provide information on the degree to which subgroups exist in terms of conflict perceptions in the teams, which may also be a potentially interesting form of conflict composition to study in the team.

Meta-themes in the study of team conflicts

Research on team conflict has a rich history. Few topics in the organizational behavior literature have generated as much research interest as intragroup conflict. We have considerable insight into the nature and dynamics of conflict in teams, and its effects on team outcomes. Conflict of all forms harms team affective outcomes (for meta-analytic reviews, see De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; De Wit et al., 2012). When considering performance outcomes, task conflict has the potential to be helpful under certain conditions, while process and status conflicts are more likely than not to harm all forms of team performance, across most types of teams and situations (for meta-analytic reviews; see De Wit et al., 2012; O'Neill et al., 2013). This research provides important insights for the teams literature, and suggests that researchers should focus on how to extract value from task debates, and minimize the co-occurrence of other forms of conflict.

In the past few years, a number of researchers began to address this question: how can teams bring out the benefits of conflict and avoid its pitfalls? Two key streams of research seek to answer this question. One line of research seeks to understand the moderators of conflict and team outcomes, including identifying the conditions under which the relationship between task and relationship conflict is likely to be reduced and task conflict is most likely to benefit team outcomes. Another related line of research seeks to identify the antecedent conditions of each types of conflict, with the guiding goal to find situations in which task conflicts are most likely to arise and other forms of conflict are less likely to occur. In this chapter, we have built on key conclusions from meta-analyses of team conflict (e.g., De Wit et al., 2012; O'Neill et al., 2013) in order to review both the growing literature on conflict's moderators and antecedents, as well as the new and emerging research directions.

Two key themes emerged from our review of the work on the antecedents and moderators of the conflict types. First, research suggests that removing the personal and emotional components from team conflicts, can take the sting out of conflict's

effects on team outcomes. When conflicts, especially task conflicts, can be discussed without engaging personal feelings, and thus remaining less emotional, conflicts are more likely to benefit team outcomes (e.g., Bradley et al., 2013; Curşeu et al., 2012; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008). Relatedly, conflicts that are inherently personal and emotional in nature, such as relationship conflicts, will always harm team outcomes (e.g., see the De Wit et al., 2012 meta-analysis), and they should be avoided if possible in teams (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). A key theme that emerges then across this growing body of research is the role of team norms in promoting work-focused task conflicts and reducing emotional and personal debates in teams. We discuss the role of conflict norms in more depth below.

A second key theme that we identify based on our review of the moderators and antecedents of conflict in teams is the underlying role of status disagreements and power struggles in giving rise to and moderating the effects of conflict on team outcomes. The meta-analysis by De Wit et al. (2012) finds that process conflicts are more negative for team outcomes than other forms of conflict, such as task and relationship conflicts. One reason process conflicts may be so harmful to team outcomes is that process conflicts can serve as a venue for expressing other underlying issues in the team, such as status disagreements (Greer, 2014). Given the fundamental role of power and status concerns in social interactions (Greer, 2014) and in conflict in particular (Greer & Benderer, 2013), we argue here that power and status concerns often instigate and guide conflict in teams. Research has already begun to identify and investigate exactly how power and status guide conflicts, including work by Bendersky and Hays (2012) on the role of status conflicts in teams, but more attention to the critical role of power and status in team conflicts is needed. We highlight the key directions surrounding this theme below.

The role of norms: Encouraging task debates and minimizing relationship conflicts

The first key theme we focus on as emerging from our review of the moderators and antecedents of team conflicts is the role of team conflict norms, and particularly, norms which encourage work-related conflicts and discourage behaviors or topics which could lead conflicts to become emotional and personal. Several research streams have touched on the importance of a team's normative climate in situations of team conflict. In particular, research has focused on the effects of whether the team environment allows for open conflict expression (e.g. Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, Greer, Levine & Szulanski, 2008), and the cultural framing of the conflict (Gelfand et al., 2001), as well as looking at the effects of team conflict processes and behaviors rather than states alone (DeChurch et al., 2013). However, much of intrateam conflict research often uses a team's normative climate as an unspoken actor in the research context. Intrateam conflict research relies on teams holding relatively unified perceptions of what constitutes a conflict and how to correctly express conflict in the team setting. Learning about these team norms could help to better understand how conflict perceptions affect team outcomes.

One team member's intense argument can be another's lively discussion. Team members must try to learn and adapt to each other's schemas of "conflict" in order to share perceptions of team dynamics. For example, imagine a group meeting in which a disagreement takes place between two group members. This disagreement could be somewhat ambiguous to other group members and could be encoded in each member's memory differently depending on the team member's conflict schema. One team member might have a conflict schema that requires raised voices in order for a conflict to have occurred, while another might be so sensitive to conflict that anything other than full agreement qualifies as a conflict-laden meeting. Research has begun to investigate asymmetries in

conflict perception (Sinha et al., 2014) but research could further explore how different schemas of conflict interact in affecting team member performance and satisfaction. For example, future research could examine whether teams that are less conflict sensitive, which is to say, have a schema that sets a high bar for what disagreements constitute a conflict, perform better, due more open expression of conflict, or whether they perform worse, due to a likely higher instance of expressed disagreements.

In addition, little research has examined how new team members learn the existing teams' schema for conflict and how successfully new group members learn to find the correct style of expressing disagreement. When one team member disagrees with another, he or she has a variety of ways of expressing (or censoring) that disagreement, some of which will be more normatively acceptable to the team. Research has shown, for example, conflicts framed as based on concern for the team (collectivistic) have better outcomes than those framed in a more self-oriented fashion (individualistic; DeChurch et al., 2013). Future research could examine further normative differences in conflict expression. For instance, it is an open question whether more direct expression of disagreement is helpful to group performance. On the one hand, groups that judge direct expression of disagreement as valuable may benefit from more clarity and authenticity during discussions. On the other hand, groups that value more polite and indirect expressions of disagreements, (e.g. Asking "Isn't that expensive?" rather than saying the more direct, "I think that's too costly an option.") could have better affective relations between members because they express disagreement less confrontationally.

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The role of status concerns: Understanding
the heart of process and status conflicts

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A second key theme that emerges from our review of the moderators and antecedents of team conflict is the omnipresent role of status concerns in teams. Research findings indicate that process conflicts are potentially even more negative for team performance than other conflict types (De Wit et al., 2012), and potentially the most difficult to manage and contain (Greer et al., 2008). We build here upon empirical evidence to argue that this is because process conflicts are often a venue in which underlying status concerns are expressed in teams. Process conflicts about role assignments and meeting times often are about issues that are symptomatic of larger concerns of equality and equity in the team (Greer & Jehn, 2007), and as such provide a work-related topic in which members can vie for better position in the team or make clear their dissatisfaction with the team hierarchy. In order for such process conflicts to be resolved, the nature, role, and dynamics of these underlying status concerns in teams needs to be understood.

However, the large literature on status and status hierarchies is only just starting to be integrated into research on team conflict (Greer & Bendersky, 2013). The most notable examination of the interplay between status hierarchies and team conflict comes from Bendersky and Hays' (2012) conceptualization of status conflict. Status conflict in teams might arise for two different and distinct reasons: status competition or status misperception. Given that both determinants would lead to a decline in team performance, it would be tempting to disregard the distinctions in determinants so long as we can accurately capture the downstream consequences in the form of conflict, but this impulse would seriously hamper efforts at ameliorating team dynamics. A team with a status misperception problem would need a very different intervention from one with a status competition problem; the first might simply need clarity about the order of command, while the second needs to deal with questions of ambition and the basis for eventual advancement within the team. An interesting research question for future research

on team conflicts might therefore be how well individuals within the team perceive the intrateam status hierarchy.

Previous research has suggested that people often self-aggrandize on a variety of dimensions, including their intelligence (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), physical abilities (Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989), and physical attractiveness (Heine & Lehman, 1997). In evaluating one's position in the hierarchy, an individual must read social cues from their team members indicating how much the team likes the individual interpersonally and how much the team perceives the individual to have contributed to the valued goals of the team (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). For example, when an individual is placed in charge of a team project, this serves as a positive social signal that one is of high status. Similarly, if one is frequently interrupted when speaking, this could serve as a negative social signal that one is of lower social status. In addition, in order to perceive the full status hierarchy, individuals need to not only perceive signals relevant to themselves, but also signals given and received by other team members. But empirical correlations between objective measures such as rank in an organization or positional power in a negotiation, has only shown small, albeit significant, correlations with subjective ratings of self-perceived rank (Anderson & Spataro, 2005).

This suggests that status misperception, or the incorrect aggregation of status signals, can occur in along two orthogonal dimensions. The first dimension describes whether the misperception is one of one's own position or the position of other members in the network. The second dimension captures whether the misperception was an under or overestimation. Self-effacement thus describes misperception in which the focal actor believes he or she is lower in the team status hierarchy than he or she actually is. Self-enhancement describes the opposite extreme, a misperception in which the focal actor believes that he or she is higher in the team status hierarchy than he or she actually is. Other-effacement or other-enhancement describes the parallel processes of misperception of a third party (or parties) by the focal actor.

Previous research however has only focused on self-enhancement misperception. When an individual oversteps his or her position, other team members send negative social cues to punish individuals the team believes act immodestly or rudely (Anderson et al., 2006). But self-effacement and other-based misperception might be equally as damaging. Research suggests that status perception is linked with confidence and self-esteem (Anderson & Spataro, 2005) and as such it is possible that those who underestimate their status will be less-productive team members because they will not take on sufficient leadership duties. In addition, third-party misperception could hinder coordination tasks because team members who misperceive others' status will fail to employ their team members effectively. Status misperception along both dimensions can lead to incidents of team conflict and lowered task performance. Understanding status perception in teams and its relationship to team conflict, particularly the strongly negative form of process conflict, is an important future direction for research on intrateam conflicts.

Future Research

While substantial progress has been made in understanding intragroup conflict in teams, there remains much to learn. Namely, as our understanding of conflict has expanded, new avenues of research have opened up. We highlight here several such fruitful avenues for future investigations of intra-team conflict, including multilevel models, conflict asymmetry, conflict norms and the role of status in team conflict.

One key area of research on intragroup conflict that is opening up involves multi-level conceptualizations of conflict. Research has only just started to harness new methods of examining perceptions and structures of conflict in groups. Increasing our knowledge in this area is critical as team conflicts take place within multilevel systems, yet they have frequently been only examined as a team-level construct in isolation from individual-level variables and firm-level structures. Future research can expand the nascent literature on multilevel modeling of team conflict in order to facilitate a broader, multisystem understanding of conflict in teams.

Relatedly, perceptions of conflict are rarely uniform within teams. Often, individual perceptions of conflict in teams may be asymmetric, such that individual members within a team perceive the same conflict differently. Research has begun to examine how varied perceptions of conflict (i.e. high variance in individual-level perceptions) or skewed perceptions of conflict (i.e. high skew in individual-level perceptions) can influence teams' outcomes. By better understanding different perceptions of conflict and the forms and patterns these distributions of individual perceptions can take a the team-level, research can gain insight into how to best address these different perspectives for improved team functioning.

In addition to these multilevel perspectives on conflict, we also strongly advocate for what we see as two key emerging directions for the study of team conflict at the conceptual level: namely, the role of social norms and status in understanding the nature, causes, and effects of conflict in teams. Research has only begun to examine how norms around conflict are created within teams, but research does suggest that norms encouraging open expression of conflict can be beneficial to team performance, such as by improving how conflicts are expressed and thereby impact team dynamics (e.g., Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008). However, norms may also play a role in determining the types and nature of conflict that arises in teams in the first place, and may also have implications for the degree to which conflict types transform to other types during group discussions. By examining how norms around conflict take shape and evolve over time, research can shed light on how teams can most productively handle naturally occurring disagreements and avoid the arise of unproductive disagreements, such as process and relationship conflicts. Social norms are powerful forces in social interactions and thus a better understanding of their dynamics can help to positively shape relationships within teams.

Finally, research on the role of status in team conflicts could greatly benefit our understanding of conflict in teams. A better understanding of status in teams could help us understand the emergent construct of status-conflicts, including understanding how status structures and perceptions and teams can give rise to status conflicts, and how status structures may exacerbate or ameliorate disagreements over status in teams. Additionally, a better of understanding of status in teams can also help to understand conflicts on a variety of other topics as well. For example, status can exacerbate otherwise minor disagreements or cause conflicts of other forms to arise (i.e., process conflicts) as a venue to joust over status. Understanding how status can give rise to such conflicts may help give insight into how to ultimately resolve the traditionally most destructive and most difficult to resolve conflicts in teams.

Conclusion

Intragroup conflict is arguably one of the most important behavioral processes in teams. A large and prospering body of research has consistently shown that conflict can explain important variance in team outcomes. While conflicts about personal tensions or underlying status concerns can harm team outcomes, debates over work-related matters can improve

team outcomes. In our chapter, we reviewed the proliferation of articles that have aimed to understand the moderators and antecedents of team conflicts, with the hopes of understanding the conditions that give rise to productive team conflicts and minimize destructive team conflicts. We find two key themes to have emerged in the literature. Firstly, teams which have evolved norms, either stemming from the composition of individual members, member behaviors in conflicts, or the team atmosphere, which encourage the expression of open, cooperative, non-emotional task debates are more likely to be reap the benefits of conflict in teams. Secondly, status concerns are an insidious challenge to teams, and often may explain why more destructive conflict forms arise in teams, such as process conflicts. Teams that can identify and manage such status concerns are also more likely to successfully navigate the perils and opportunities of conflict in teams. As research in this area moves forward, with more attention to the development of such conflicts from individual motivations to group level processes (with potentially varying levels of member involvement), the role of individual conflict behaviors, and the inter-relation among the conflict types, we hope that researchers will continue to build on the key themes we have identified here, and that we as a field can reach consensus on the understanding and management of conflict in teams.

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