DISTINGUISHING TASK CONFLICTS DURING DIVERGENT AND CONVERGENT GROUP PROCESSES
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Past research has shown that task conflict (i.e., opinion disagreement over ideas and opinions related to the group task) can increase or decrease group performance. Scholars have identified boundary conditions to reconcile the conflicting results of the relationship between task conflict and group performance. For instance, task conflict can increase group performance when tasks require intellectual input from others, such as a brainstorming task. By contrast, task conflict can decrease group performance when tasks are routine, such as an assembly task. However, research has demonstrated that the types of task are empirically non-significant when they serve as the boundary conditions of the associations between task conflicts and group performance.

To overcome the limitations of the boundary conditions, I will present a new approach to address the issue of the ambiguous effects of task conflict on group performance by examining task conflict in different group decision-making processes. Specifically, task conflict in groups has different effects if it occurs during divergent decision-making processes in which ideas are being generated, or convergent decision-making processes in which decisions are being made. Thus, divergent task conflict refers to debate and disagreement about ideas and opinions that occur during group task work whereas convergent task conflict refers to opinion disagreement over the ultimate solution and/or the common goal of the group task. I will present the studies of the distinction between divergent and convergent task conflicts on group processes and outcomes. The findings offer a novel resolution to the paradoxical effects of task conflicts on group processes and outcomes.