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## NEW VENTURE TEAMS' CREATIVITY AND PERFORMANCE: A DEBATE AND CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE (SUMMARY)

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## SUMMARY

### NEW VENTURE TEAMS' CREATIVITY AND PERFORMANCE: A DEBATE AND CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

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#### Principal Topic

Several recent studies have drawn attention to the importance of team composition for the success of new business startups (Delmar & Shane, 2006; Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003). Teams are formed partly to more successfully explore and exploit large arrays of new products and services and potentially applicable business processes. This study extends previous research into new venture teams and focuses on members' interaction processes with one another to exchange and critically assess information about their tasks (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). We propose a model that includes two focal constructs: debate (discussion, Stasser & Titus, 1985) and conflict (disagreement, Jehn, 1995) to explain both creativity and team performance (Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001; West, 2005). Previous research suggests that neither process alone is adequate to explain the group outcomes of interest, but there is some other research suggesting that an interaction may be at play between these two constructs (Crowell, 1986).

#### Method and Hypotheses

We obtained an unusually powerful longitudinal sample of 60 teams with 6 members in each that worked together during the five months from January to June 2007. An analytic strength of this design is that repeated measures of teams to allow them to be used as their own control, and thus, allow causal inferences analogous to laboratory-experiment designs. The student's completed a 100-item survey four times during their projects. The surveys asked students to self-report on their team's functioning on several multiple item scales. Professors also reported on teams' functioning and outcomes using a similar, but shorter, 37-item repeated survey.

#### Results and Implications

Our research shows that both goal setting and creativity mediate the relations between both members' task debates and task conflicts and team performance. We also show that time positively moderates an otherwise statistically insignificant relation between task debate and team performance, but perhaps surprisingly, there are no moderating effects of time on task conflict. The key findings are that: (1) new venture teams can overcome the often deleterious effects of conflict provided they do sufficient goal setting for members to know what a team is trying to achieve; and (2) effects of members' debates their new product, service, and process ideas are cumulative, and therefore, new venture teams can benefit from returning to this process following each round of feedback from their task environment.

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