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The Effects of Expertise and Social Status on Team Member Influence and the Moderating Roles of Intragroup Conflicts

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Abstract

Drawing on expectation states theory and expertise utilization literature, we examine the effects of team members' actual expertise and social status on the degree of influence they exert over team processes via perceived expertise. We also explore the conditions under which teams rely on perceived expertise versus social status in determining influence relationships in teams. To do so, we present a contingency model in which the salience of expertise and social status depends on the types of intragroup conflicts. Using multiwave survey data from 50 student project teams with 320 members at a large national research institute located in South Korea, we found that both actual expertise and social status had direct and indirect effects on member influence through perceived expertise. Furthermore, perceived expertise at the early stage of team projects is driven by social status, whereas perceived expertise at the later stage of a team project is mainly driven by actual expertise. Finally, we found that members who are being perceived as experts are more influential when task conflict is high or when relationship conflict is low. We discuss the implications of these findings for research and practice.

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Keywords

expertise utilization, social status, task conflict, relationship conflict, team member influence

In knowledge-intensive businesses, organizations extensively utilize project teams as a basic unit of structure (Sydow, Lindkvist, & DeFillippi, 2004). Project teams are often composed of unfamiliar members with varying degrees of knowledge in different areas to solve complex problems, and develop innovative products over the short time horizons. To capitalize on the benefits of collective knowledge, teams need to prompt members to identify and utilize available expertise possessed by expert members (Lewis, 2004; Moreland & Myaskovsky, 2000). Along this line of research, many scholars have found that accurate recognition of expert members can increase team performance (Lewis, 2004; Lewis & Herndon, 2011; Moreland & Myaskovsky, 2000). The notion underlying this body of work is that once team members identify the experts on the team, they defer to their views and yield to their influence in team processes. Such alignment between expertise and team member influence improves decision quality and enhances the performance of intellectual tasks (Littlepage & Mueller, 1997; Littlepage, Robison, & Reddington, 1997).

However, teams often fail to recognize and utilize the expertise of their members because of gender stereotypes (Joshi, 2014), group tenure and power structure (Bunderson, 2003), and personality characteristics such as extraversion (Littlepage, Schmidt, Whisler, & Frost, 1995). Based on expectation states theory, which posits that members develop performance expectations about others based on different status characteristics (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003), the perception of team members' expertise may not necessarily be derived from actual expertise—it may also be due to other characteristics, such as social status, which represents the ranking of a person in a status hierarchy based on the amount of respect accorded by others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Member perception on expertise may also change over time, further complicating this process. In this respect, there appears to be a lack of studies that have examined the effects of both actual and perceived expertise on team member influence. Scholars have recommended further studies to understand actual expertise and perceived expertise-based influence, and to investigate how expertise unfolds over the course of group interactions (Bonner, Sillito, & Baumann, 2007). In this article, we refer to team member influence as the extent to which the team decision is swayed by a single member's input on the basis of his or her merit, and we conceptualize expertise utilization as the level of effectiveness with which teams use the knowledge,

skills, and abilities of their members. The current study, to the best of our knowledge, represents the first empirical study to directly link actual expertise, perceived expertise, and social status (i.e., a less-expertise-related trait) of team members with the degree of influence they exert over the team process. We aim to shed light on the mechanism through which actual expertise invokes member influence, which has been rarely studied.

Another objective of our study is to identify the conditions under which teams rely on expertise versus social status in deciding influence relationships within their teams. A team may still rely on less-expert members (e.g., extrovert members) to make team decisions under certain circumstances even when a team can accurately recognize expert members (Bonner et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to understand the team contexts that enhance or reduce the likelihood of expert members exerting greater influence over team functioning. Expectation states theory (Bunderson, 2003; Correll & Ridgeway, 2003), which serves as the theoretical underpinning of the expertise utilization literature, has posited that team contexts play a critical role in triggering the salience of different status cues (defined as personal characteristics that inform the performance expectations that team members hold for one another). Nevertheless, a void exists in our understanding of the conditions under which perceived expertise confers influence. Few empirical studies have tapped into this interesting direction (for an exception, see Bunderson, 2003). Thus, we aim to fill this research gap by considering team conflicts as a contextual contingency that could strengthen or weaken the influence of members' expertise in teams.

Methodologically, we tested our theoretical model using path analysis and hierarchical linear modeling with three waves of survey data from a sample of 320 students on 50 project teams from a national research institute of science and technology located in South Korea. Figure 1 illustrates our theoretical model. We examine the direct effects of actual expertise and social status on member influence. We then test how perceived expertise at early and later stages of team projects can mediate the effects of social status and actual expertise on member influence, respectively. Finally, we examine whether the effects of the social status and perceived expertise of members on member influence depend on team conflicts (e.g., task and relationship conflicts).

Theory and Hypotheses

Social Status and Actual Expertise in Project Teams

We define social status as the standing of an individual in a socially constructed status hierarchy based on the amount of respect accorded by others

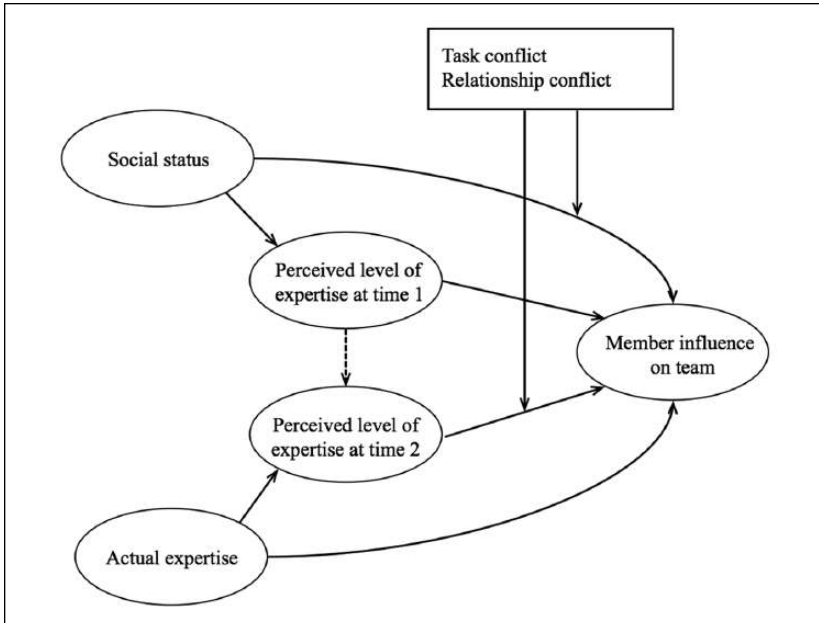


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Note. Variables represented with ovals were measured at the individual level and those within a rectangle at the team level. Dotted arrows are not hypothesized in this study.

(Magee & Galinsky, 2008). For example, women and African Americans are thought to occupy lower social status relative to men and Whites, respectively, in American society (Ibarra, 1993). In Asian societies such as South Korea, seniority is a crucial indicator of social status (Hundley & Kim, 1997). Social status has important implications for social interactions because it determines “how influence within a unit, department, or larger organization is exercised” (Ravlin & Thomas, 2005, p. 969). That is, differences in social status among members persist and continuously confer prestige and power, which regulate social norms and climate (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004; Heilman & Chen, 2005). Specifically, high-status members may dominate social interactions by expressing their private information and opinions freely, whereas lower status members may attempt to enhance or maintain their self-images by conforming to the expectations of high-status members (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002).

The power literature also suggests that social status constitutes a legitimate basis for influencing others (French & Raven, 1959). Legitimate

power may be derived from cultural values or organizational norms that grant high social status members the authority to prescribe the behaviors of low-status members (e.g., Ely, 1995). Indeed, socially constructed status can exert an influence on team processes by imposing expected role behaviors regulated by different attributes of status (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman & Chen, 2005). Therefore, we expect members with high social status to be more influential in team processes than members with low social status.

Hypothesis 1: The social status of a member will be positively related to his or her influence on team processes.

We also expect that expert members will be more influential in their teams because they possess unique knowledge and skills on a given task (Bonner, Baumann, & Dalal, 2002). These skills and knowledge are particularly valuable resources for project teams to accomplish team tasks, which usually require knowledge workers to share their specialized knowledge with one another (Gardner, Gino, & Staats, 2012). Considering that performance in such teams is enhanced through knowledge sharing by expert team members with the less-expert members, expert members should have greater opportunities to influence the team process (Bottger, 1984; Littlepage et al., 1995). This observation is also consistent with past research demonstrating that experts are more influential in their groups than less-expert members when teams work on moderately difficult problems, thereby suggesting that the effect of actual expertise on member influence is independent of explicit expertise recognition in some situations (Bonner et al., 2007).

The power literature also supports the idea that expert members have more influence on team functioning on the basis of expert power (French & Raven, 1959; Van der Veegt, Bunderson, & Oosterhof, 2006). Power refers to the dependence of Person B on Person A for valued resources, and Person A can influence the behavior of Person B in compliance with A's requests (Emerson, 1962). Expertise can be a source of power, as expert members can use their expertise to help other members and provide task-related advice to enhance their task performance (Van der Veegt et al., 2006). For example, if a project team wants to launch a new application that helps users find lawyers in a specific area, members can gain power and influence over team processes by possessing or accumulating basic legal knowledge.

Hypothesis 2: The level of actual expertise of a member will be positively related to his or her influence on team processes.

Effects of Social Status and Actual Expertise on Perceived Expertise

Expectation states theory explains how initial interactions among team members influence the association between social status and perceived expertise via performance expectations (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). Specifically, in the early stage of team formation, members typically do not possess information on each other, nor do they have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and competence. In such situations, team members may deduce the expertise level of each member through easily detectable and socially significant characteristics, forming high-performance expectations for members with high social status characteristics (Wagner & Berger, 1997). For example, Joshi (2014) found that gender status has an effect on the perceived level of member expertise, such that the positive relationship between education level and perceived expertise is discounted for female team members, who tend to possess lower social status than their male counterparts. Bunderson (2003) also found that team members with short tenures use gender and ethnicity as proxies in evaluating the task competence of others. These findings suggest that regardless of their objective levels of expertise, high social status members may be perceived as having higher expertise than low-status members in the early stage of team formation. By the same token, because the identification of true expertise often takes time to emerge in interpersonal interactions (Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991), a true expert may not be accurately recognized initially, and the expertise he or she possesses may be undervalued.

However, the effects of social status and actual expertise on perceived expertise evolve as team members gain more expertise-related information on their colleagues. That is, interactions among members provide opportunities for them to demonstrate their competence and help them develop accurate evaluations of each other's expertise over time. The team diversity literature has provided evidence that employees base initial categorizations on overt social characteristics (e.g., race and gender; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Milliken & Martins, 1996) for performance expectations. However, as information on more job-related characteristics becomes available, people replace or modify their initial categorizations, and use job-related characteristics as a sustainable basis for expertise evaluation (Bunderson, 2003; Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). For example, Harrison et al. (2002) reported that the influence of surface-level diversity (i.e., age, gender, marital status) on team social integration decreases over time, whereas deep-level diversity (i.e., perceived differences in personal values) becomes more important in team processes as members spend more time together. In the expertise recognition

literature, Bunderson (2003) found that easily observable social characteristics (i.e., race, gender) are more salient factors in expertise recognition among members of shorter tenured teams, whereas task-specific cues (i.e., technical certification, educational background) become primary attributes among members of longer tenured teams. Accordingly, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 3: The social status of a member will be positively related to his or her perceived level of expertise at the early stage but not the later stage of a team project.

Hypothesis 4: The level of actual expertise of a member will be positively related to his or her perceived level of expertise at the later stage but not the early stage of a team project.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Expertise

Although expectation states theory suggests that perceived expertise does not necessarily correspond to actual expertise, literature has shown that experts, once explicitly perceived, are more influential within their teams than members perceived as nonexperts (Bonner et al., 2007; Brandon & Hollingshead, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Yuan, Carboni, & Ehrlich, 2010). This line of research has offered compelling evidence to suggest that perceived expertise is the dominant predictor of intragroup influence in teams whose members have a shared goal of accomplishing an interdependent task (Van der Veegt et al., 2006). Thus, expertise apparently does not need to be real to affect group interactions (Sinaceur, Thomas-Hunt, Neale, O'Neill, & Haag, 2010). For example, experts perceived by other members might feel more confident in their abilities, and thus be more motivated to participate in team projects than those whose expertise is not perceived (Littlepage et al., 1995; Thomas-Hunt, Ogden, & Neale, 2003). Nonexpert members also tend to approach members who are perceived as experts to seek assistance and advice so that they can accomplish their assigned personal tasks (Borgatti & Cross, 2003; Hong & Gajendran, 2014). As a result, members thought to possess expertise exert more influence on team processes compared with members perceived as nonexperts.

Hypothesis 5: The perceived expertise of a member at both the early and later stages of a team project will be positively related to his or her influence on team processes.

Building on the hypotheses presented above (Hypotheses 1-5), we expect to find support for a mediated model in which perceived expertise mediates the effects of social status and actual expertise on member influence.

Specifically, if social status is positively related to perceived expertise at the early stage of a team project and the perceived expertise affects member influence, then perceived expertise at the early stage would mediate the relationship between social status and member influence. Furthermore, we expect perceived expertise to be a partial rather than a full mediator because, (a) as we argued in Hypothesis 1, social status is directly related to team member influence, and (b) mechanisms other than perceived expertise may also exist that drive the relationship between social status and member influence. For example, credibility and trustworthiness may also serve as a mediator to account for the relationship between social status and member influence (Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman, & Soutter, 2000). Moreover, because actual expertise is positively related to perceived expertise at the later stage of a team project, which, in turn, affects member influence, we propose a mediated effect of perceived expertise at the later stage on the actual expertise–member influence relationship. However, even when it is not perceived by others, expert members may still directly influence others by providing task-related help and advice (Van der Vegt et al., 2006), and thus we anticipate the relationship between actual expertise and member influence to be partially mediated by perceived expertise.

Hypothesis 6: The perceived expertise of a member at the early stage of a team project will partially mediate the positive relationship between social status and his or her influence on team process.

Hypothesis 7: The perceived expertise of a member at the later stage of a team project will partially mediate the positive relationship between actual expertise and his or her influence on the team process.

Moderating Roles of Task and Relationship Conflict

A number of scholars have emphasized the importance of context on behavior and perceptions in organizations (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Johns, 2006). In line with this stream of research, we expect that the effects of perceived expertise versus social status on member influence may vary depending on team context. According to the expectation states perspective, team contextual factors play a critical role in facilitating the reliance of team members on different individual characteristics for performance expectations. For example, Bunderson (2003) examined two contextual factors: average group tenure and centralization of power in a group. He found that task-relevant cues, that is, individual characteristics that signal the level of expertise, such as technical certification and educational degree, predict attributions of expertise more strongly in decentralized, longer tenured groups, whereas team

members rely more on diffuse status cues (e.g., gender and race/ethnicity) for member influence relationships in centralized, shorter tenured groups. The author argued that decentralization in a group creates an environment in which members are motivated to be effortful and comprehensive in evaluating members' expertise, leading to a greater reliance on task-relevant cues. Similarly, task-relevant cues tend to become increasingly salient as a group's average tenure increases, and members have more opportunities to learn about one another's task-relevant backgrounds.

Bunderson's contingency approach is highly useful, as it helps explain whether and under what conditions team members rely on perceived expertise versus social status in determining influence relationships within their teams. Therefore in the current study, we follow this contingency approach and examine intragroup conflicts as a contextual boundary condition for the relationship between perceived expertise versus social status and member influence.

Because context is defined as a situational setting in which workplace phenomena occur (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991), we argue that intragroup conflict constitutes an important aspect of the contextual environment consciously perceived by team members. Indeed, prior studies in the team diversity literature have considered team conflict as a contextual factor (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Shaw et al., 2011). In line with past research, we suggest two types of conflicts (i.e., task conflict and relationship conflict; Jehn, 1995; Pelled, 1996) as contextual factors because these conflicts have been found to coexist in teams (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Specifically, task or cognitive conflict is the perception of disagreements among team members on the content of the tasks performed, and it includes differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions. Relationship conflict or emotional conflict denotes a perception of interpersonal incompatibility and clashes characterized by tension, animosity, and annoyance among team members. Through the lens of situational context, these two types of conflicts may comprise distinct tension systems that serve as "situational opportunities for and countervailing constraints against organizational behavior" (Johns, 2006, p. 387). Therefore, we propose that the types of conflicts a team experiences may either enhance or mitigate the direct effects of perceived expertise versus social status on the degree of influence each member exerts on team processes.

Although not explicitly stated, past conflict research appears to imply that task- or expertise-related characteristics are more critical when team members experience task conflict than when they experience relationship conflict. That is, task conflict within a team can highlight the importance of expertise for intragroup influence. Empirical evidence supports the view that task conflict

can be beneficial to team performance because it drives team members to scrutinize task issues, and engage in deep and deliberate processing of task-relevant information. This situation fosters greater cognitive understanding of the issue under consideration and stimulates higher decision quality (De Dreu & West, 2001; Jehn, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Therefore, task conflict serves as a situational context that triggers the salience of task-related expertise, resulting in teams relying more on members who are perceived as experts in the decision-making process.

We also expect that social status is less salient when teams experience task conflict. That is, when task conflict is intense, team members tend to focus on task issues, making social status less pertinent to the context. Some indirect evidence supports our contentions. For example, research has shown that team diversity based on highly job-related characteristics (i.e., functional background) is positively related to task conflict, whereas diversity based on social characteristics (i.e., race and tenure) is positively related to emotional/relationship conflict but not to task conflict (Pelled et al., 1999). Jehn et al. (1999) also found that informational diversity increased task conflict and social category diversity increased relationship conflict but not vice versa. Their findings suggest that task conflict is more closely related to task-related expertise than to social status. Therefore, we expect that perceived expertise should take precedence over social status when accomplishing the task is the issue of concern. Accordingly, we posit that social status is less likely to be triggered as a basis for determining intragroup influence relationships when the team undergoes a high level of task conflict.

Notably, we hypothesize a moderated relationship between perceived expertise at the later stage of a team project and member influence but not between actual expertise and member influence. While both actual and perceived expertise predict member influence, perceived expertise is an intervening variable that filters the effect of actual expertise, particularly when team experiences high task conflict. That is, if teams experience disagreements and conflicts over ideas and opinions, they may attend to and defer influence to members who are being perceived as experts. As such, we assert that perceived expertise is a proximal predictor psychologically and behaviorally in influencing team dynamics, and we propose that the relationship between perceived expertise and member influence is moderated by the level of task conflict.

Hypothesis 8a: Task conflict will accentuate the positive relationship between perceived expertise at the later stage of a team project and member influence, such that perceived expertise becomes more influential when task conflict is high than when it is low.

Hypothesis 8b: Task conflict will mitigate the positive relationship between the social status of members and member influence, such that high social status members are less influential when task conflict is high than when it is low.

Next, we turn to the moderating role of relationship conflict. We contend that relationship conflict provides a context that stimulates the salience of social status and masks the importance of the expertise in the team process. Research has demonstrated that relationship or emotional conflict distracts members from performing the task, causing them to waste time in contentious, non-task-related activities (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). In particular, the anxiety and threat associated with relationship conflict are detrimental to the cognitive functioning of project teams because they inhibit the informational processing ability of members (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995). Given such dynamics, we can expect that when relationship conflict is high, team members are likely to draw upon readily detectable social status characteristics as a basis for determining influence relationships. Past research has consistently shown that less-job-related, easily observable social categorizations are more likely to become salient than task-related categorizations because the former imposes lower cognitive load on information processors (Bunderson, 2003; Pelled, 1996; Webber & Donahue, 2001). The interpersonal nature of relationship conflict may also evoke stereotypes, biases, and prejudices that tend to be based on social status (Amason, 1996; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

However, we argue that teams may be less attentive to the expertise of members when they are under high levels of relationship conflict. This proposed role of relationship conflict is consistent with past findings that relationship conflict undermines the cognitive ability of people in processing task-related information (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Research on knowledge sharing has demonstrated that relationship conflict hinders open communication and vital knowledge sharing among team members, ultimately compromising the team's capability for knowledge creation (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2005). Research on group decision making has also suggested that when relationship conflict is high, teams suffer because of two types of process loss related to information processing: failure of expert members to share unique information and failure of the team to adequately integrate unique, shared information (Devine, 1999). Accordingly, we expect that a high level of relationship conflict will restrain the influence of expertise in teams.

Hypothesis 9a: Relationship conflict will accentuate the positive relationship between members' social status and their influence, such that high social status members are more influential when relationship conflict is high than when it is low.

Hypothesis 9b: Relationship conflict will mitigate the positive relationship between the perceived expertise of members and their influence, such that perceived expertise at the later stage of a team project is less influential when relationship conflict is high than when it is low.

Method

Sample and Procedure

We collected data from student project teams in innovation and entrepreneurship classes at a large national research institute of science and technology located in South Korea. The goal of the course was to expose students to the entrepreneurship process, from problem identification to start-up creation. The most important grading component was a team project (30% of the grade) to create plans for a start-up business based on the team members' own ideas. The instructors randomly assigned students to project teams at the beginning of the semester. The team project is an entrepreneurial project that asks students to come up with ideas based on their expertise, usually their majors. When the teams generated their ideas, these ideas were evaluated by the instructor and at least three industry mentors, such as entrepreneurs and venture capitalists. At the end of the semester, each team had to present a whole business model, including the team's idea, customer analysis, industry analysis, marketing channels, and financial projections. The presentation was evaluated by both the instructor and the peer groups, as they played the role of potential customers. The presentation accounted for 50% of the students' final project grade. Also, each team needed to submit its business plan as a paper. The final business model plan was evaluated by the instructor and at least three industry experts who evaluated the ideas in the middle of the semester. The submitted business plan accounted for the remaining 50% of the students' final project grade. Students within teams usually received the same grade, with occasional adjustment based on peer evaluation collected at the end of the semester.

Three waves of paper-and-pencil surveys were administered in multiple sessions throughout the semester. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality, and assured that the data would be used only for research purposes. Survey questionnaires were translated and back-translated from English to Korean by two research assistants based on the recommendations of Brislin

(1980), and the course instructors checked item wording for appropriateness. The first survey (Time 1) was administered during the second week after the project teams were established. The second survey (Time 2) was administered at approximately the midpoint of the semester, and the third survey (Time 3) was administered during the last week of the semester. We targeted 71 teams with 491 students from seven different sections of the course taught by five different instructors in one semester (two instructors taught two sections). However, 29 students dropped the class during the semester, and 68 students did not participate in the survey. A total of 394 students responded to all three surveys. The mean response rate of the 71 teams was 84%, the median was 86%, and the range of response rates was between 40.0% and 100%. Because our study tested the moderating effects of intragroup conflicts at the team level, we only included teams that had response rates more than 80%, resulting in 50 teams with 320 students. The respondents were 20% freshmen, 27% sophomores, 26% juniors, and 26% seniors. Among the 320 participants, 68% were males and 35% were females. The average team size was 6.86 students, with a standard deviation of 1.90; the median was 6, and the range was from 3 to 10, depending on the class size of the sections.

Measures

Member influence at Time 3. At the completion stage of the team project during the final week of the semester, we measured member influence, the dependent variable. We modified Bunderson's (2003) single-item measure of *intragroup influence*. Bunderson (2003) used a dichotomous scale to identify an influential person in the team. He asked the participants to indicate members who "most strongly influence the way your team functions," as many or as few as they felt appropriate. However, we modified the item to measure member influence using a 5-point Likert-type scale because we believe that it can provide richer information. We provided the list of team member names and asked participants to indicate their agreement on the statement "Your team member listed below strongly influences the way your team functions," with answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Because the member influence was evaluated at dyadics and aggregated to individual levels, we assessed intermember reliability ICC(1) (i.e., the reliability of raters toward a target) and ICC(2) (i.e., the reliability of targets' average rating). The results were .33 for ICC(1) and .75 for ICC(2), which are considered sufficient to justify aggregation (Bliese, 2000). The average of intermember agreement for a member's team influence, $r_{wg}(j)$, was .68, and the median $r_{wg}(j)$ was .75, thereby providing support for adequate levels of intermember agreement (a uniform null distribution was used,

and the threshold for a median r_{wg} value is .70; Bliese, 2000; James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). We calculated the average of the ratings of all other team members to determine the member influence level of each member.

Actual expertise. We measured the overall grade point average (GPA) each member had earned during the previous semesters as a proxy for actual expertise. The GPA scores were retrieved from the office of the university registrar. The highest GPA a participant could earn was 4.3, and the average GPA of our sample was 3.33, with a standard deviation of 0.40. We considered overall GPA as a proxy of actual expertise because it reflects the knowledge acquisition of a student in his or her major area, knowledge that is tapped into by the team to find a business solution.

Social status (student seniority). Generally, social status has two properties: (a) it is composed of individual characteristics that can be recognized and categorized by other members, and (b) it signals their relative social standing (Ravlin & Thomas, 2005). Because the sample was composed of student project teams, no official leaders were assigned. Therefore, the students could not be distinguished by hierarchical levels. Furthermore, because our research context is business-oriented innovation and entrepreneurship classes at a national institute in South Korea, gender differences are usually downplayed and race/ethnicity was not a relevant characteristic due to the relatively homogeneous population. Instead, we considered student seniority as an appropriate proxy for social status in our study context, as Korean culture is characterized by a high power distance and collectivism due to the strong influence of Confucian values (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 1997; Kim & Faerman, 2013). Confucianism mainly emphasizes respect for elders, which extends to the relationship dynamics between junior and senior members in any social unit (Yang & Kelly, 2009). Therefore, even in a university setting, junior students typically show respect and deference to senior students. We coded freshmen as 1, sophomores as 2, juniors as 3, and seniors as 4.

Perceived levels of expertise at Times 1 and 2. We measured perceived levels of member expertise at Times 1 and 2 using a single-item measure adapted from Bunderson (2003). Each respondent was provided with a list of team member names, and was asked to indicate his or her agreement with the statement "Your member listed below has the most knowledge and expertise essential for the project in this team" on a scale from 1 to 5. Similar to the member influence measure, perceived expertise at Times 1 and 2 were also evaluated at dyadics and aggregated to individual levels, and we assessed intermember agreement accordingly. The values of $r_{wg}(j)$, ICC(1), and ICC(2), were at levels that

justified aggregation to the individual level ($ICC(1) = .18$, $ICC(2) = .57$, the mean of $r_{wg}(j) = .69$, the median of $r_{wg}(j) = .75$ for perceived expertise at Time 1; $ICC(1) = .34$, $ICC(2) = .76$, the mean of $r_{wg}(j) = .74$, the median of $r_{wg}(j) = .79$ for perceived expertise at Time 2; Bliese, 2000; Glick, 1985; James et al., 1984; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Thus, we used the average expertise level perceived by other members to construct the perceived levels of expertise of each member at Times 1 and 2.

Relationship conflict at Time 2. We assessed relationship conflict using a four-item scale developed by Jehn (1995). Each respondent was asked to indicate the level of relationship conflict in his or her team, with points ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Sample items included “How much emotional conflict is there among members in your project team?” and “How much are personality conflicts evident in your project team?” The scale reliability of the four items was .80. Because relationship conflicts measured team property, we examined whether our data empirically justified aggregation of team relationship conflict. We computed an $ICC(1)$ which resulted in a value of .15 (i.e., reliability of member responses toward a team; McGraw & Wong, 1996; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). We also examined the reliability of mean scores of relationship conflicts, $ICC(2)$, which resulted in a value of .54. These values are comparable with aggregate constructs reported in the literature, and thus justify the aggregation of individual perceptions of relationship conflict as a team-level construct (Bliese, 1998; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000).

Task conflict at Time 2. Task conflict was also measured with a four-item scale from Jehn (1995). Sample items included “How often do people in your project team disagree about opinions regarding the work being done?” and “How much conflict about the work you do is there in your project team?” Each item was measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). The reliability of this measure was .88. We aggregated the responses of team members to team-level task conflict ($ICC(1) = .17$, $ICC(2) = .56$). Although the correlation level between relationship and task conflict ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) is comparable with those found in past studies in conflict literature (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000), we further conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test whether the task and relationship conflicts are distinct constructs. The fit indices for the two-factor model (task and relationship conflicts) are as follows: $\chi^2(19) = 68.10$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .97, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .03, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .08. The majority of the fit indices were within the recommended range, indicating an acceptable model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1989; Hu & Bentler, 1999). We also conducted

a one-factor model of CFA with the measurement items. The overall fit indices were far below the acceptable levels, $\chi^2(20) = 339.85$, CFI = .80, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .19, and the change in chi-square was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 271.75$; $p < .01$. These results indicate that task and relationship conflicts were conceptually distinct from each other.

Control variables. Because past research has shown that *extraversion*, one of the big five personality traits, influences perceived expertise and intragroup influence (e.g., Bonner et al., 2007; Littlepage et al., 1995), we controlled for extraversion by using Goldberg's (1992) 10-item measure. The participants were asked to indicate to what extent the extraversion traits described themselves on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach's alpha was .88. The network literature has evidently shown that central members in a social network can wield power by controlling the flow of information and resources among network contacts (Burt, 1992; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). We adopted Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, and Kraimer's (2001) two-item measure to assess the *network centrality* of each member. The participants were asked to indicate how frequently they turned to other members for help or advice on project matters at Time 2 using a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). We then calculated in-degree network centrality using the UCINET 6 software package. This measure was standardized by team size minus 1, as the members could not request advice from themselves (e.g., Neubert & Taggar, 2004). Average network centrality was 3.46, with a standard deviation of 0.67. In addition, because team size could be a factor affecting the accuracy of expertise perception (Bunderson, 2003), we controlled for *team size*. Finally, we controlled *gender* because past research has suggested that male members are more assertive (Kidder & Parks, 2001) and may be perceived as more influential than female members. We coded males as 1 and females as 0.

Analyses

As our study examines the effects of social status and member expertise on member influence (Level 1) contingent on intragroup conflicts within project teams (Level 2), we cannot assume that each observation is independent across the teams. With the nested structure of our data, we conducted a multilevel mediation path model with team-level random intercept (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010) using STATA13 software to examine the hypothesized mediated paths of our study variables (e.g., GPA, seniority, perceived expertise, and member influence; Hypotheses 1-7). The model fits were determined using established metrics, namely the CFI, RMSEA, and the SRMR. Complementing the path analysis, we conducted a test to determine

the significance of the indirect effect of multiple mediators using STATA macros based on Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008). To ensure robustness of the derived results, we chose the bootstrapping option that calculated the total indirect effects across 1,000 resamplings from the data; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals were used to assess the statistical significance of the indirect effects ($p < .05$).

We analyzed our moderation hypotheses (Hypotheses 8a-9b) using the HLM6 statistical software, as our data are nested with GPA, perceived expertise, seniority, and member influence being the individual variables at Level 1 and intragroup conflicts being the team variables at Level 2. The variance components model using the maximum-likelihood estimates revealed significant Level 2 variances, in that approximately 31% of variances can be explained by between-team variances, confirming the appropriateness of the multilevel model. Given that the GPA and seniority variables (Level 1) are moderated by intragroup conflicts (Level 2), we group mean-centered Level 1 variables and grand-mean-centered Level 2 variables (Enders & Tofighi, 2007; Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). To test the moderating effects, we regressed the intercepts and the Level 1 slope coefficients of GPA and seniority on task and relationship conflict. Finally, although the project teams were nested by the class sections and by the instructors, we found no systematic variances across the sections and the instructors, and thus did not consider them as Level 3 constructs in the analysis.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the study variables. The correlational analysis shows that all independent variables are positively related to member influence. For example, the correlation between members' seniority and member influence is positive and significant ($r = .24, p < .01$). The relationship between GPA and member influence is also positively correlated ($r = .20, p < .01$).

We conducted a path analysis to examine our mediation model with the data. In the hypothesized model, we included the direct paths from seniority, GPA, and perceived expertise at Times 1 and 2 to member influence. We also included a path from seniority to perceived expertise at Time 1 (Hypothesis 3) and a path from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 2 (Hypothesis 4). As Hypothesis 5 states, there are two paths linking perceived expertise at Times 1 and 2 with member influence. We further included paths from the control variables to the two mediators (perceived expertise at Times 1 and 2) and the dependent variable (member influence). Finally, although not explicitly hypothesized, we expected that the earlier perception of expertise (Time 1) would be related to the subsequent perception of expertise (Time 2).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among the Study Variables.

	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1. Team member influence	3.98	0.58	—									
2. Seniority	2.58	1.09	.24**	—								
3. Perceived expertise at Time 1	3.57	0.47	.46**	.26**	—							
4. Perceived expertise at Time 2	3.74	0.56	.55**	.06	.39**	—						
5. Team task conflict ^a	2.42	0.40	.04	.06	.07	-.06	—					
6. Team relationship conflict ^a	1.83	0.44	-.06	.00	-.04	-.08	.46**	—				
7. Extraversion	3.23	0.69	.20**	-.03	.24**	.13*	-.13*	-.05	—			
8. Gender	0.68	0.47	-.03	.04	.04	.01	.03	-.08	-.12*	—		
9. Overall GPA	3.33	0.40	.20**	.21**	.11	.12*	.04	.01	.07	-.07	—	
10. Network centrality	3.46	0.67	.52**	.12*	.31**	.60**	.01	-.06	.11	-.04	.01	—
11. Team size ^a	6.86	1.90	.00	-.04	.14*	.00	.12*	.10	.02	.08	-.04	-.12*

Note. N = 320. GPA = grade point average.

^aMean and standard deviation were calculated at team level with 50 project teams.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Fit Indices for Alternative Models.

Model	Description	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
Model 1	Hypothesized model (Hypotheses 1-7)	5.69	2	.08	.99	.02
Model 2	No mediation model (paths from seniority to perceived expertise at Time 1 and from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 2 restricted to 0)	27.45	4	.14	.94	.06
Model 3	Fully mediated model (paths from seniority to team influence and from GPA to team influence restricted to 0)	22.50	4	.12	.95	.04

Note. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; GPA = grade point average.

Model 1 in Table 2 represents our hypothesized model. Initial path analysis results indicated a suboptimal model fit, $\chi^2(5) = 37.97$, CFI = .92; RMSEA = .14; SRMR = .04, and most coefficients of the paths from three control variables (gender, extraversion, and team size) to the mediators and dependent variables were not significant. Accordingly, we removed these three control variables and reestimated the model. Models are deemed to fit acceptably when the CFI is .90 or higher, the RMSEA is .08 or less, and the SRMR is .06 or less (Browne & Cudeck, 1989; Hu & Bentler, 1999). As shown in Table 2, the model provided an adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2(2) = 5.69$; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .02. We compared the fit of our hypothesized model to two alternative models: The first alternative model estimated nonmediated effects of seniority and GPA, with the path from seniority to perceived expertise at Time 1 and the path from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 2 removed (Model 2). This model resulted in a markedly reduced fit, $\chi^2(4) = 27.45$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .14; SRMR = .06, and the change in chi-square was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 21.76$, $p < .01$, providing support for the hypothesized model. The second alternative model estimated a full mediation model (Model 3), with the path from seniority to member influence and the path from GPA to member influence removed. This model fits the data significantly worse than our hypothesized model, $\chi^2(4) = 22.5$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .04, and the change in chi-square was also significant, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 16.81$; $p < .01$. These results support the relative superiority of our hypothesized model (Model 1).

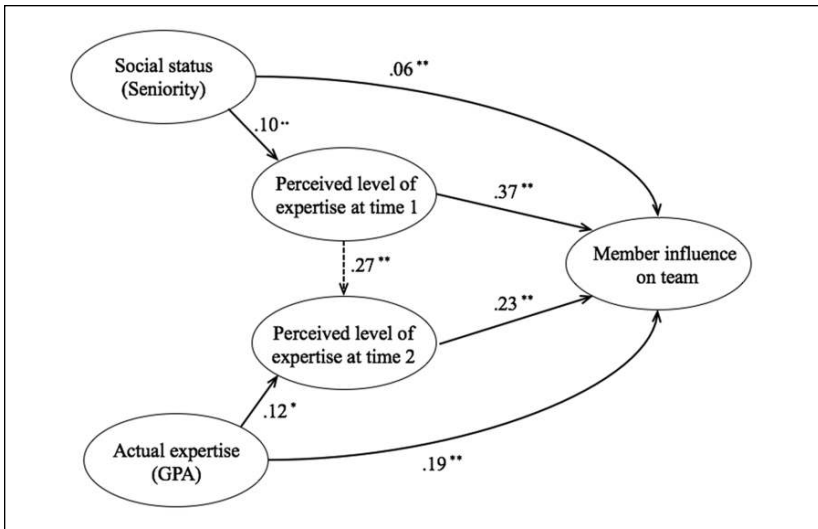


Figure 2. Path analysis results for hypothesized model.

Note. Team-level random intercept was included in the path analysis. GPA = grade point average.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Turning to our study hypotheses, Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that seniority and GPA are positively related to member influence. As shown in Figure 2, the coefficient for the path from seniority to member influence was significant ($\beta = .06, p < .01$), as was the coefficient of the path from GPA to member influence ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), providing support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. To test Hypothesis 3, we examined the hypothesized model with an additional path from social status to perceived expertise at Time 2 that allows effects of social status on perceived expertise at both Times 1 and 2. The results show that the path from social status to perceived expertise at Time 1 was positive and significant ($\beta = .10, p < .01$), and the path from social status to perceived expertise at Time 2 was negative and significant ($\beta = -.05, p < .05$). Similarly, to test Hypothesis 4, stating that actual expertise is positively related to perceived expertise at the later but not early stages of team projects, we reexamined the hypothesized model with an additional path from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 1 (i.e., allowing effects of GPA on perceived expertise at both Times 1 and 2). The results show that the path from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 1 was not significant ($\beta = .07, n.s.$), whereas the path from GPA to perceived expertise at Time 2 was significant ($\beta = .13, p < .05$), which provides support for Hypothesis 4.

Table 3. Bootstrapping Estimation of Direct and Indirect Effects With 1,000 Replications for Mediation Hypotheses.

	Coefficient	Bootstrap SE	95% CI ^a
Seniority			
Indirect effect via perceived expertise at Time 1	.04**	0.01	[0.02, 0.06]
Direct effect	.06**	0.02	[0.02, 0.10]
GPA			
Indirect effect via perceived expertise at Time 2	.03*	0.02	[0.00, 0.07]
Direct effect	.19**	0.06	[0.09, 0.31]

Note. CI = confidence interval; GPA = grade point average.

^aBias-corrected confidence interval.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

In Hypothesis 5, we predicted that perceived expertise at the early and later stages of team projects would be positively related to member influence. The paths from perceived expertise at Times 1 and 2 to member influence were both significant, thereby supporting Hypothesis 5 ($\beta = .37, p < .01; \beta = .23, p < .01$).

To examine the partial mediation hypotheses (Hypotheses 6 and 7), we invoked the bootstrapping estimation of indirect effect with 1,000 replications to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals for the direct and indirect effects of seniority and GPA on team influence (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). The results presented in Table 3 show that the direct and indirect effects of seniority on team influence via perceived expertise at Time 1 were both significant (direct effect = .06, confidence interval [CI] = [0.02, 0.10]; indirect effect = .04, CI = [0.02, 0.06]). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was supported. Table 3 also indicates significant direct and indirect effects of GPA on member influence via perceived expertise at Time 2 (direct effect = .19, CI = [0.09, 0.31]; indirect effect = .03, CI = [0.00, 0.07]), thereby supporting Hypothesis 7.

Hypothesis 8a predicted that the positive effect of the perceived expertise at Time 2 on member influence is moderated by the level of task conflict. Table 4 reports the hierarchical linear modeling results. As Model 7 in Table 4 shows, the two-way interaction between the perceived expertise at Time 2 and task conflict was significant, lending support to Hypothesis 8a ($\gamma_{72} = .33, p < .01$). Figure 3 graphically presents the relationship between the perceived expertise at Time 2 and member influence at high and low levels of task conflict (1 standard deviation above and below the mean). As

Table 4. Results of Hierarchical Linear Model Predicting Member Influence on Team.

	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Level 1 (individual level)								
Intercept, γ_{00}	3.98**	0.05	3.98**	0.05	3.98**	0.05	3.98**	0.32
Extravert, γ_{10}			0.09**	0.02	0.10**	0.02	0.10**	0.02
Network centrality, γ_{20}			0.29**	0.05	0.29**	0.05	0.29**	0.05
Gender, γ_{30}			-0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.04	-0.04	0.04
Seniority, γ_{40}			0.09**	0.02	0.09**	0.02	0.09**	0.13
GPA, γ_{50}			0.10*	0.04	0.10*	0.04	0.11*	0.04
Perceived expertise at Time 1, γ_{60}			0.18**	0.06	0.19**	0.06	0.18**	0.06
Perceived expertise at Time 2, γ_{70}			0.23**	0.05	0.23**	0.05	0.24**	0.05
Level 2 (team level)								
Team size, γ_{01}					0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02
Task conflict, γ_{02}					0.08	0.11	0.09	0.10
Relationship conflict, γ_{03}					-0.30**	0.09	-0.32**	0.08
Cross-level interaction								
Perceived expertise at Time 2 \times Task conflict, γ_{72}							0.33**	0.05
Seniority \times Task conflict, γ_{42}							-0.04	0.05
Perceived expertise at Time 2 \times Relationship conflict, γ_{73}							-0.21*	0.10
Seniority \times Relationship conflict, γ_{43}							0.05	0.05
Level 1 residual variance, σ^2	0.229		0.048		0.048		0.048	
Level 2 residual variance, τ^2	0.103		0.132		0.130		0.131	
Level 1 pseudo- R^2			.458		.464		.461	

Note. Members $n = 320$, Project teams $n = 50$. Entries are estimates with robust standard errors.

Estimations of the random variance components are provided in parentheses.

^aLevel 1 pseudo- R^2 was $1 - (\text{Level 1 restricted error} + \text{Level 2 restricted error}) / (\text{Level 1 unrestricted error} + \text{Level 2 unrestricted error})$; Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

predicted, the relationship between the perceived expertise and member influence was more positive when teams experience high levels of task conflict. However, the moderating effect of task conflict on the relationship between social status and member influence stated in Hypothesis 8b is not significant ($\gamma_{42} = -.04$, n.s.). Finally, Hypothesis 9a predicted that the positive relationship between social status and member influence is strengthened by a higher level of relationship conflict. The interaction term coefficient did not reach statistical significance ($\gamma_{43} = .05$, n.s.). However, in support of Hypothesis 9b, we found that the positive relationship between members' perceived expertise at Time 2 and member influence weakens as relationship conflict increases ($\gamma_{73} = -.21$, $p < .05$). As shown in Figure 4, members with high levels of perceived expertise are more influential than

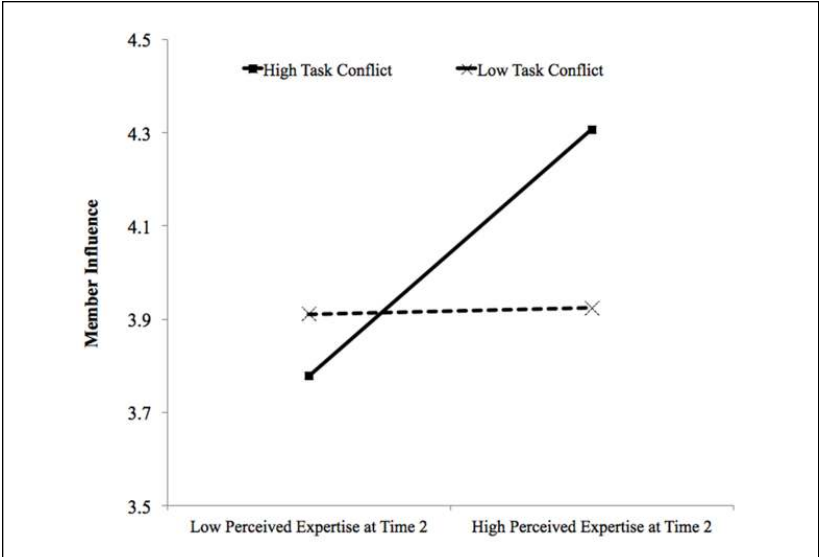


Figure 3. The two-way interaction between perceived expertise at Time 2 and task conflict.

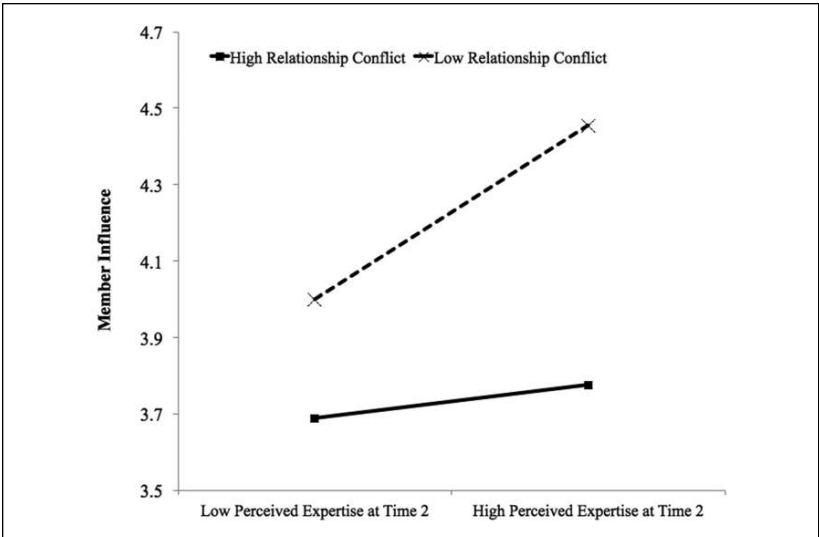


Figure 4. The two-way interaction between perceived expertise at Time 2 and relationship conflict.

members with low levels of perceived expertise under low levels of relationship conflict, whereas the relationship becomes flat under high levels of relationship conflict.

Discussion

In this study, we set out to understand how actual expertise (i.e., GPA) and social status affect member influence through perceptions of expertise and under what conditions team members tend to rely on expertise versus social status to determine influence relationships in teams. Building on the expertise utilization literature and expectation states theory, we found that a member's actual expertise and social status had direct and indirect effects on the degree of his or her influence in the team process via the level of expertise perceived by the other members in the team. Furthermore, we found that a member's perceived level of expertise at the early stages of project teams is positively affected by his or her social status, whereas perceived expertise at the later stage is positively affected by his or her actual expertise. Finally, we found that the relationship between perceived expertise and member influence is contingent on the types of conflicts experienced by the team. Consistent with our expectations, the results revealed that members perceived as experts are more influential when a team experiences a high level of task conflict or when relationship conflict is low.

This study contributes to the literature on expertise utilization. In the past studies, scholars have posited that the perceived expertise of a focal individual evaluated by team members reflects actual expertise and examined expertise perceptions as a key predictor of expertise utilization (Littlepage et al., 1997; Reagans, Argote, & Brooks, 2005). That is, linking expertise utilization and group performance rests on the implicit assumption that expert members, once recognized, acquire more influence and power in the team, and the resulting alignment between perceived expertise and member influence contributes to team performance (Littlepage et al., 1995). The present study broadens the domain of expertise utilization to include actual expertise, perceived expertise, and social status in one theoretical model, and demonstrates that perception of expertise is not only affected by actual expertise but is also influenced by non-expertise-related characteristics (e.g., social status). Measuring perceived expertise at two different points in time enables us to show that easily detectable social status matters more for the perceptions of expertise at the early stages of team projects, whereas actual expertise drives later perceptions of expertise. Our findings also demonstrate that perceived expertise partially mediates the pathway from actual expertise to member influence. In this regard, our study sheds light on the processes through which actual expertise exerts influence on the team process. That is,

experts' influence on the team process appears to be the result of both their true abilities/knowledge and their shared perceptions regarding their competence among the other team members.

Answering calls to consider group contexts that may facilitate or inhibit expertise utilization (Bunderson, 2003), our study also sheds light on the mechanism that drives deference to expertise in teams. As our results illustrate, team conflicts serve as an important contingency for the relationship between perceived expertise and intragroup influence. Specifically, members perceived as experts are more influential when task conflict is high and relationship conflict is low. Thus, our findings provide further empirical evidence on the important role of group contexts in triggering the salience of expertise for intragroup influence. Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution, considering that the moderating effects of intragroup conflicts in the relationship between social status and member influence are not supported by our analysis. A possible explanation is that because our respondents were Korean college students who rank high in terms of power distance and collectivism, seniority differences may have inevitably influenced their social relationships, regardless of intragroup conflict. We acknowledge that we are only offering a speculative explanation, and further investigation is needed in future studies.

Our article also contributes to the intragroup conflict literature by shedding light on the mechanisms underlying the different effects of task and relationship conflict in teams. Research on intragroup conflict has largely focused on the positive effect of task conflict and the negative effect of relationship conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995). Corroborating this literature, the current study provides a new explanatory perspective to understand their opposing effects. Task conflict is conducive to expert members' influence on team processes, whereas relationship conflict will hinder their influence. More specifically, our study demonstrates that teams experiencing task conflict contextualize expertise as a salient cue to enable them to be more attentive to and dependent on members who are perceived as experts. Previous empirical studies have shown that the quality of team outcomes improves when team input from members is weighted by the level of expertise (Libby, Trotman, & Zimmer, 1987; Littlepage & Mueller, 1997). Thus, the extra attention and weighting given to members' expertise may result in positive team performance. However, caution should be exercised when applying this perspective to interpret the positive effect of task conflict on team outcomes. Despite the potential for task conflict to help teams rely on the expertise of members, overdominance by a few expert members may reduce team performance. This phenomenon is particularly true when teams work on creative tasks requiring nonexpert and peripheral members to provide unique knowledge contributions (Thomas-Hunt et al., 2003).

Despite several strengths, including the three-wave data collection process and the use of path analysis and hierarchical linear modeling, this study has several limitations that should be noted: First, considering that the study variables were collected from the same source, common method bias can be a concern. However, to minimize the common method bias issue, we aggregated perceived expertise and member influence rated by other members to construct each individual member's expertise and influence, and used three waves of surveys with temporal gaps. In addition, the significant interaction effects could indicate the robustness of our findings, suggesting that common method bias would not be a critical problem in our study (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012; Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Another limitation of our study relates to the use of student project teams from a national research institute. A majority of the participants did not have full-time work experiences, and their social interactions may differ from the work dynamics of project teams in actual organizations. Although the study context was designed to be a project-based course and the student teams shared similar properties with those in the organizational settings (e.g., possessing collective goals and clear boundaries; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996), we were unable to predict whether similar patterns of results can be found in field research, and therefore, we acknowledge this as a limitation of our study. A related issue also arises from the cultural context. We adopted student seniority as a proxy for social status in the current study. However, because the Korean culture has high power distance and a strong status hierarchy (Hofstede et al., 1997), the effect of social status (e.g., seniority) may have been overestimated.

Practical Implications

The results of this study suggest several important lessons for managers and team leaders who launch new projects. Our results show that the effect of social status on perceived expertise weakens with increased team tenure. Thus, managers or team leaders must help members observe one another's actual task performance during the early phases of projects to enable them to accurately identify and rely on expert members. The current findings also suggest that managers and team leaders should invest in helping teams diagnose conflict types. Our findings indicate that task expertise matters less under high levels of relationship conflict. Managers or team leaders need to be aware of the detrimental effect of relationship conflicts in obtaining expert members' input on team decision making and should attempt to mitigate such negative effects. For example, interventions emphasizing interdependence (e.g., collective goals, shared rewards) and trust may prevent or minimize relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Our findings also reveal that when task conflicts emerge, the influence of perceived expertise on member influence is strong, and thus, strategies that

facilitate task conflict are necessary. However, the act of promoting task conflict must be deliberately supervised, because teams can take advantages of task conflict when its level is moderate (vs. too high; De Dreu, 2006). Although future research is needed to identify the measures that are most effective at managing or encouraging moderate levels of task conflict, several managerial interventions appear to be promising. For example, past research has shown that teams may benefit when task conflict is constructively managed and teams have high levels of openness, psychological safety, and within-team trust (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Thus, strategies fostering these attributes tend to help teams by increasing the salience of expertise cues in task-related disputes.

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