



HOW INDIVIDUAL POWER USE AFFECTS TEAM PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POWERHOLDER

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Even within teams of peers, certain individuals have more power than others. Individual members may have essential skills and experience, networks outside the team, or status within the organization that give them more power than the average team member (French & Raven, 1959; Hollander, 1958). How these powerholders use their power may vary from team to team. For example, consider a task force whose purpose is to solve a problem in the organization's ability to attract new members. One member of the team is especially expert in member-engagement practices and root cause analysis, upon which the team is dependent to complete its task well. This dependency gives her power (Emerson, 1964). She might use her power solely to influence the team's task approach in the areas most relevant to her particular skill. Or she may use her special influence to dominate a range of team functions, from managing relations with senior leaders, to controlling the conflict-management processes within the group. Or she might exert no special influence at all, acting as an average team member in all domains. What consequences might her choices have for the effectiveness of this team?

“Our central question here is not about how influence is enacted, but rather, to what extent it matters who takes on key team functions.”

In our research we focused on the issue of how—if at all—individuals use their power in teams, and the impact of their choices on team effectiveness. Certainly the tactics individuals employ to exert influence will affect their ability to alter the team's course. However, our central question here is not about how influence is enacted, but rather, to what extent it matters who takes on key team functions—particular powerful individuals, or the group as a whole. What we find provides some insight into the tensions powerholders face in teams and why they might choose not to exercise the power they do have to influence team functioning.

Why might it matter just who in the team fulfills certain group functions? Following Hackman and Morris (1975), we expect that team performance effectiveness is a joint function of three performance processes: (a) the level of effort group members collectively expend carrying out task work, (b) the appropriateness to the task of the performance strategies the group uses in its work, and (c) the amount of knowledge and skill members bring to bear on the team task. Any group that brings high levels of effort to bear on its work, develops good-quality and well-coordinated performance strategies, and brings broad knowledge and skill to bear on the work is quite likely to perform well. By the same token, groups that behave in ways that undermine effort, choose inappropriate strategies, or underuse group knowledge and skill are likely to perform relatively poorly.

We argue that individual domination vs. collective participation in managing key team functions may impact team effectiveness by enhancing or undermining the degree to which teams engage high levels of effort, make high-quality choices about task strategies and/or deploy the full range of knowledge and skill in the team. Thus, while we acknowledge that all teams are likely to be better off when basic team functions are accomplished, we also argue that teams will be most effective when particular functions are decided upon and performed by the team-as-a-whole, while others are better accomplished by a powerful individual team member.

TEAM PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE

Most of the models of how group behavior influences group performance address task functions and external and internal relational functions (e.g., Hackman, 1987; Goodman, Ravlin & Schminke, 1987; Wageman & Mannix, 1998). In the following sections we focus on these three categories of behavioral

functions teams must perform (e.g., task, internal relations, and external relations), and we examine the relationship between individual power use, this set of functions, and team effectiveness. We limit our discussion to teams with high task interdependence that must solve complex problems as well as implement their solutions, and we examine these phenomena in such teams in a field setting.

Task Functions. The effective performance of task functions is the reason-for-being for most organizational teams. A number of behaviors fall into this category, such as the development of task-appropriate work strategies, setting team agendas and plans, arriving at decision rules, and making project decisions (Gladstein, 1984; Levine & Moreland, 1990; Wageman & Mannix, 1998).

Several theorists have argued that team members should have authority to develop their own strategic processes to achieve their ultimate goals (cf., Hackman, 1987; Wageman, 1995; Zander, 1979). Of course, it is possible to formally assign team control over strategic task processes, but also for that control to emerge in the hands of one powerful team member. Single decision-makers can provide an advantage in that they can reduce ambiguity for the team, decrease conflict, and speed decision-making (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, the evidence for the superiority of collective strategic decision-making is more compelling (cf., Maier, 1970; Maier & Solem, 1952; Lippitt, 1940; Janis, 1982). For example, recent work on self-managed teams (Wageman, 2001) has demonstrated the importance of multiple sources of influence on the design of task strategies. In this study, groups in which the team-as-a-whole determined strategic changes outperformed those in which the informal team leader did so. Because greater collective knowledge was brought to bear on strategy and individual team members were more committed to implementing that strategy when all members were involved, team performance suffered by contrast when powerful individuals dominated task strategy. Two benefits thus may result from collective control over task processes: (1) higher quality strategies based on the full use of the range of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of team members, and (2) stronger effort from the team based on a higher level of engagement, responsibility, and understanding (Jehn & Shah, 1997; Barry, 1991). When powerholders elect to dominate task strategy, therefore, the team is damaged by that choice.

Ironically for powerholders, teams may nevertheless be more satisfied when a powerful individual determines the strategy than when they are collectively engaged in such decisions. Although the increased level of engagement, responsibility and authority of team involvement in strategizing heightens motivation (Hackman & Morris, 1975; Naylor, Pritchard, & Ilgen, 1980), the burdens of building consensus around task approaches and strategic decisions are non-trivial. Research findings have shown that in some teams the stress of conflict and the added responsibility of strategic decision-making results in low satisfaction for team members. Relational conflict in particular is especially likely to reduce satisfaction, but even constructive task conflict has been shown to decrease satisfaction and increase frustration and unhappiness, even when it improves outcomes (Jehn, 1995; Ross, 1989). Consequently, we expect that:

Hypothesis 1: Teams in which task strategies and team decisions are determined by the team-as-a-whole will perform more effectively but be less satisfied than teams in which they are determined by a single, powerful individual.

A second task function that contributes to the performance of teams is the evaluation of team assumptions and strategies (Allison, 1971; Cosier & Schwenk, 1990; Hoffman, 1979; Janis, 1982; Mason & Mitroff, 1981). For example, techniques such as dialectical inquiry and devil's advocacy have been shown to improve team performance both in the laboratory and in the field (e.g., Schwenk, 1990). One important characteristic of these techniques when used experimentally is that these teams are given formal, structured ways of engaging in team evaluation. In such settings, group members understand that

skeptical evaluation of the team’s choices is an essential part of the task assignment, and that process is structured rather than chaotic. In naturally occurring teams, this is not necessarily the case. Evaluation, if it occurs, is an emergent process. In some cases, it might not occur at all, as teams are contexts in which the questioning of assumptions or ideas often is resisted (Hoffman, 1979; Janis, 1982). In other cases, if the group-as-a-whole is involved in questioning itself, the result may be a group that is paralyzed by uncertainty and indecision (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, a powerful individual who uses his or her power to take on the role of team critic may facilitate team performance. Restricting this role to one individual allows the group to retain its focus on implementing its chosen strategies, while at the same time incorporating alternative views and perspectives to make them of better quality.

For the powerholder, the choice to become team critic is not cost-free. While team evaluation is a necessary function for team performance, it also causes frustration and stress among team members (Guzzo, 1982; Jehn, 1995). When one individual plays the role of devil’s advocate, even when that behavior results in better team performance, that individual can create negative affect, and cause group members to be less willing to continue working as a team (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986). When the team-as-a-whole is engaged in questioning and self-doubt, it can seriously delay decision-making, causing frustration and uncertainty (Eisenhardt, 1989). By contrast, teams in which no one raises doubts or questions may become more confident in their position, and as a result, be more satisfied than teams in which decisions and underlying assumptions have been questioned (Janis, 1982; Harvey, 1996).

Hypothesis 2a: Teams in which a powerful individual critiques team functioning will perform more effectively than teams in which the group-as-a-whole does so.

Hypothesis 2b: Teams in which a powerful individual critiques team functioning will be less satisfied than teams in which no one does so.

Internal Relationship Functions. Teams also must find ways to work together without undue tension and to keep up their collective commitment to the task (O’Reilly & Caldwell, 1985; Hackman, 1987; Shah & Jehn, 1997). Several recent studies have demonstrated the performance benefits of friendships within teams (e.g., Valley, Neale & Mannix, 1995). For example, Gruenfeld, Mannix, Williams & Neale (1996) found that teams with friendly relations were more likely to share important task information and outperform teams without friendship ties. The broader use of knowledge and skill that comes with friendship may enhance performance of complex tasks. By contrast, when group members are embroiled in

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interpersonal friction, they may become distracted from the task, withdrawing their efforts (Argyris, 1962; Kelley, 1979; Roseman, Wiest & Swartz, 1994; Staw, Sandelands & Dutton, 1981).

But is a team better off if a powerful individual manages internal relations, or if this function is one in which the entire group participates? Some theorists have argued that an individual with special influence in the group is especially well-suited to manage interpersonal conflicts, both because groups tend to avoid con-

fronting relational conflict and need active intervention to do so, and because special skills are needed to do so effectively (Hollander, 1958; Schwarz, 1994). However, members of the team collectively are more likely to have knowledge of problematic relationship processes, as well as knowledge of the causes of any existing underlying conflicts than any one individual in the team. Further, the essential skill involved in managing internal relations effectively does not necessarily reside in a particularly powerful member, whose special influence may be based on factors unrelated to the abil-

ity to maintain good working relations in the team. The collective, rather than individual, management of relations may thus be a better use of team member knowledge and skill.

The collective management of intra-group relations also can impact team member satisfaction with the group. Certainly, a powerful individual team member can have special influence in persuading the team to confront rather than avoid discussing relationship problems. However, team-wide involvement in actually solving those problems may heighten team member connection to and identification with the team. Studies of process intervention—involving the group in examining and improving the quality of working relationships in the team—have generally shown that members find participating in such activities highly engaging and fulfilling (Kaplan, 1979; Schein, 1988). Moreover, the greater likelihood of shared values arising from collective management of internal relations – versus an individual intervening to solve relational problems—increases group perceptions of smooth functioning and reduces emotional distress (Bar-Tal, 1989, Schein, 1988). Thus, we predict:

Hypothesis 3: Teams in which internal relations are managed by the group-as-a-whole will perform more effectively and be more satisfied than teams in which they are managed by a single, powerful individual.

External Relationship Functions. Evidence for the importance of external activities to team performance is mounting (Gladstein, 1984; Ancona, 1987; Ancona, 1990). One important external activity involves managing the perceptions and support of outside authority. This external-relations activity typically involves presenting team capabilities and needs to authorities in the larger organization in order to persuade them that the team deserves and will use effectively additional resources. In addition, teams often must manage relationships with peer teams, with external clients, and with other individuals with whom they are interdependent.

As discussed earlier in this paper, persons with high power within the team may have that power for a variety of reasons, including status in the organizational hierarchy, special competence or expertise, or even extraordinary verbal ability. Just as these power sources allow the individual to have special influence over the actions of team members, they also can enhance the credibility of that individual with external authorities. Further, they enhance the range of access that the individual has to organizational members with the authority to provide needed resources to the team. Sharing this function broadly among multiple group members thus may misalign the talents of group members with key team functions.

At the same time, exclusive contact between a powerful team member and key external constituencies might be detrimental to group satisfaction in two ways. First, direct contact with users of the team's product or service is known to be an important source of task-based motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). If team members lose touch with clients or peer groups, they may feel less committed to the team's purpose. In addition, interaction with outsiders often is an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skill. Such relationships offer members the opportunity to network and to improve their status in the organization. When powerful individuals monopolize contact with external clients or authorities, team-level engagement and satisfaction may be compromised. Thus, we predict:

Hypothesis 4: Teams in which external relations are managed by a single powerful individual will perform more effectively but be less satisfied than teams in which those functions are managed by the group-as-a-whole.

METHOD

Research Strategy

We explored these hypotheses in a field study of teams in an international organization that perform highly complex analytic and coordination tasks. The groups had a lifetime of at least 12 months, and in some cases up to 3 years. To develop context-specific lists of key team functions in the task, internal-relations, and external-relations domains, we first drew on qualitative descriptions of the work from interviewees in multiple teams. We then used systematic surveys to ask all team members in a different set of teams to identify (1) those individuals within the team who had more power than the average team member (2) whether each function we described was dominated by a powerful individual or was performed by the team as a whole. Finally, we collected independent quantitative measures of team performance effectiveness, and survey measures of team member satisfaction.

Sample and Procedure

Twenty three task-performing teams in a large multi-national financial development organization participated in the research. We began by holding structured interviews with members of eight teams that were not included in the final sample. This preliminary process allowed us to develop measures of specific task functions relevant to these teams. These interviews addressed three main questions: (1) Who are the especially powerful individuals in your team? (2) What makes them especially powerful? and (3) What kinds of decisions does the team have to make in the course of its work? The first two questions allowed us to develop context-specific language for our survey questions identifying powerful individuals and their sources of power. The last question allowed us to develop measures of particular team functions expressed in language that was specific to these teams' tasks and organization.

Following our interviews, we selected a sample of 40 teams for participation in our survey. We sampled teams that performed each of the three generic kinds of tasks accomplished in this organization to increase the generalizability of our findings, and we chose teams that had few members in common in order to avoid overburdening any respondent with multiple surveys. We included in the study only those teams for which we had at least three respondents. Our final sample included 23 teams that varied in size from four to twelve. All teams in the sample reported to one of two managers; we obtained their assessments of the performance effectiveness of all participating teams.

Research Context

Task. The participating teams were responsible for either (1) the analysis of potential large engineering projects; (2) planning of approved projects; or (3) the implementation and assessment of approved projects. Teams performing the analysis task met with potential external clients, assessed the financial and material needs of the project, explored its political and social impact, and prepared a proposal to the home organization for the funding of the project. Teams performing the project planning stage were responsible for garnering and organizing material and human resources for the implementation of the project. Teams performing the implementation and assessment task managed the on-site building of the projects and assessed the quality of their outcomes. All three kinds of tasks were multi-month, high-stress tasks demanding a range of team member capabilities, complex coordination of information, and active debate about the feasibility of different ideas and approaches.

Power. We asked subjects to identify the most powerful and the second most powerful individuals in the team by their initials. Although individual respondents did not always agree which of the two was more powerful, a large majority of team members (in 88% of cases all respondents from a team) identified the same two people as most powerful. In all cases, one individual was the designated team leader and the other was either a task expert or the most senior member. These individuals themselves were no less likely to identify themselves as powerful than were other team members. Thus, powerholders in these teams knew they had power.

MEASURES

Team Functions. We operationalized team functions by drawing both on our theoretical outline and on our exploratory interviews. We attempted to determine, through open-ended questions, observation, and analysis a full list of specific task, internal-relations and external-relations functions that were performed by participating teams. The final list of 20 functions appears in Table 1.

Power Uses. We asked all individual team members to indicate who in the team—a powerful individual, the team-as-a-whole, or no one—fulfilled each of the 20 different team functions. When respondents indicated that a particular individual dominated a function, they were asked to identify that individual by initials. We therefore were able to test agreement among team members not only as to whether the function was fulfilled by the group as a whole vs. a particular individual, but also whether they agreed about the identity of the individual. In order to ensure valid measures of power use, we included in the analyses only those cases in which a majority of team members identified the same individual. Similarly, when team members disagreed whether an individual or the whole group fulfilled a particular function, we included only those cases in which a majority of members gave the same response.

TABLE 1 TEAM FUNCTIONS

TASK FUNCTIONS
1 Determining team meeting agendas
2 Deciding how often to meet as a whole team
3 Defining team objectives
4 Determining team performance standards
5 Determining timing and deadlines of parts of the project
6 Deciding solutions to technical problems
7 Deciding solutions to client-related problems
8 Managing the team budget
9 Determining assignments to team members
10 Deciding who goes on field assignments
11 Deciding when to go on field assignments
12 Selecting or adding other team members
EVALUATION FUNCTIONS
13 Obtaining performance feedback for the team
14 Establishing norms/acceptable standards of behavior
INTERNAL RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS
15 Addressing interpersonal conflicts in the team
16 Coordinating communications among team members
EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS
17 Managing relations with senior management
18 Managing relations with peers in other parts of the firm
19 Managing relations with the external client
20 Managing relations with external consultants

Team Task Processes. Team effort was assessed using a four-item Likert-type scale (e.g., “My own feelings are not much affected by the way this team performs,” reverse-scored). Quality of team strategy was assessed using a two-item Likert-type scale (e.g., “Our team has difficulty developing plans for how we will proceed with the task”.) Team use of knowledge and skill was measured using a three-item Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree (e.g., “This team made good use of all our talents.”). Cronbach’s alpha was acceptable for all three scales (.92, .76, and .83, respectively). Intra-class correlations for these scales all were significant, indicating that they could reasonably be aggregated and treated as team-level measures.

These survey items were intermixed with each other and with the member satisfaction scale, as well as with several other scales not described in this report, and all scales contained at least one reverse-scored item to minimize response bias. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for measures are presented in Table 1.

Outcome Measures. Teams’ managers provided ratings of team effectiveness in terms of the degree to which teams met or exceeded their clients’ needs. These items asked managers to rate the teams’ effectiveness on a 5-point scale (see Appendix A). Member satisfaction with the team was assessed via a three-item Likert-type survey scale that asked respondents to rate each item on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree (e.g., “I frequently think of leaving this team,” reverse-scored). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .91, and the intraclass correlation was significant.

RESULTS

Analytic Strategy

All analyses were conducted at the team level. We assessed the effects of power use on team effectiveness by conducting ANOVAs in which power use (team function fulfilled by a powerful individual, the group, or no one) served as the independent variable, and performance and member satisfaction as the dependent variables. We conducted separate analyses on each of the team functions because we had no theoretical reason to expect items that represented different task functions to be intercorrelated. For example, “defining team objectives” certainly could be fulfilled by a powerful individual in a team, while “deciding who goes on field assignments” (also a task function) might be done by the whole team. Means for

“Teams in which no individual dominates agendas are more engaged in the task and make better use of member knowledge and skill.”

performance and satisfaction levels as influenced by who fulfilled each function are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Because all our hypotheses specify the impact of power use on team effort, team strategy and team use of knowledge and skill, we also conducted a three-stage mediation analysis process as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). We first tested, as described above, the effects of power uses on the dependent variables, as described above. Second, we assessed whether our proposed mediators were significant predictors

of the dependent variables. As can be seen in Table 2, all three proposed mediators were significantly related to team performance, and none of the three processes was significantly related to team member satisfaction. We therefore conducted mediation analyses only on team performance effects. For the final stage of the mediation analysis, we used a general linear model in which all three proposed mediators were included in the analysis for each group function for which there was a significant effect of power use.

TABLE 2 MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS

CORRELATIONS								
	MEAN	(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
OUTCOMES								
1 Performance	3.17	(1.15)	--					
2 Quality of process	3.73	(1.05)	.49*	--				
3 Satisfaction	3.99	(.60)	.44*	-.36	--			
MEDIATORS								
4 Effort	4.14	(.31)	.50*	.26	.03	--		
5 Strategy	3.41	(1.02)	.72*	.66*	.01	.23	--	
6 Use of talent	3.96	(.65)	.50*	.62*	-.25	.25	.58*	--

TABLE 3 EFFECTS OF POWER USE ON TEAM PERFORMANCE

TEAM FUNCTION	INDIVIDUAL (n)	GROUP (n)	NO ONE (n)	F	p
1 determining team meeting agendas	2.00 ^a (6)	3.59 ^b (17)	(0)	12.11	<.05
2 deciding solutions to technical problems	2.67 ^a (9)	3.50 ^b (14)	(0)	3.13	<.05
3 deciding solutions to client-related problems	2.33 ^a (9)	3.71 ^b (14)	(0)	11.63	<.05
4 getting performance feedback for the team	3.50 ^a (16)	3.00 ^b (5)	2.20 ^c (2)	3.19	<.05
5 managing relations with senior management	3.50 ^a (12)	3.10 ^b (7)	2.61 ^c (4)	3.14	<.05
6 managing relations with other departments	3.45 ^a (17)	3.00 ^b (4)	1.00 ^c (2)	6.07	<.05
7 managing relations with external consultants	3.15 ^a (15)	4.00 ^b (4)	2.50 ^c (4)	5.79	<.05

Means that do not share a superscript are significantly different according to Tukey's HSD at p<.05

Task Functions and Team Effectiveness

Hypothesis 1 predicted that teams in which task strategies and key team decisions were determined by the team-as-a-whole would perform more effectively than teams in which they were determined by one powerful individual. For all three task functions for which there was a significant performance difference (determining meeting agendas, deciding solutions to technical problems, and deciding solutions to client-problems), teams in which the group-as-a-whole determined these functions performed significantly better than teams in which one individual performed these functions.

We next conducted mediation tests for these effects. For establishing meeting agendas, the effect of power use on team performance became non-significant when the three proposed mediators were included in the analysis ($F=1.61, p>.05$), whereas effort ($F=5.20, p<.05$) and use of team knowledge and skill ($F=4.61, p<.05$) remained significant. That is, teams in which no individual dominates agendas are more engaged in the task and make better use of member knowledge and skill.

For deciding solutions to technical problems, the effect of power use on team performance became non-significant when the proposed mediators were included in the analysis ($F=.89, p > .05$), whereas quality of team strategies was significant ($F=2.99, p<.05$), indicating that quality of team strategy mediates the effect of power use on performance for this team function. That is, teams in which no individual dictates solutions to technical problems generate better task strategies. For deciding solutions to client-related problems, the effect of power use on team performance became non-significant when the proposed mediators were included in the analysis ($F=1.12, p > .05$), and all three mediators were significant, indicating that effort ($F=3.23, p<.05$), quality of strategy ($F=3.69, p<.05$), and use of knowledge and skill ($F=3.11, p<.05$) all mediate the effect of power use on performance for this team function. That is, teams in which no individual dominates solutions to client problems are more motivated, make better use of team knowledge and skill, and devise better task strategies than teams in which an individual determines how the team handles its clients.

Hypotheses 1 also predicted that teams in which one powerful individual determines the task strategies for the group and makes key team decisions would be more satisfied than teams in which task strategies and key decisions were collectively determined. The hypothesis also was supported. Specifically, team members were significantly more satisfied when a powerful individual decided how often to meet, defined team objectives, determined team performance standards, managed the team budget, decided when to travel to a field site and who would travel, and selected new team members. We note that these are different task functions than those for which there were significant performance effects, and return to this issue in our discussion.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that teams in which a powerful individual provided evaluation of the team would perform more effectively than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so. Two measures of evaluation of the team were assessed: providing performance feedback to the team, and enforcing internal norms of behavior. Teams in which one powerful individual obtained performance feedback for the team performed significantly better than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so, and these teams were, in turn, higher performers than teams in which no one did so. Because no significant results were obtained for enforcing internal norms on performance, Hypothesis 2 received only partial support. Mediation analysis for providing feedback to the team showed that the effect of power use on team performance remained significant when the three proposed mediators were included in the analysis but was reduced in size ($F=2.89, p < .05$), and quality of team strategies also was significant ($F=3.23, p<.05$). That is, teams in which an individual member provides feedback to the team devise better strategies than those in which the group-as-a-whole are engaged in team evaluation.

Hypothesis 2 also predicted that teams in which either a powerful individual or the team-as-a-whole provides evaluation would be less satisfied than teams in which no one did so. This hypothesis was not supported. Teams in which a powerful individual obtained feedback were significantly more satisfied than team members in which the group-as-a-whole did so, who were in turn significantly more satisfied than team members in which no one performed this function. In addition, teams in which a powerful individual enforced norms of behavior were significantly more satisfied than team members in which the group-as-a-whole did so, who were in turn significantly more satisfied than team members in which no one performed this function.

TABLE 4 EFFECTS OF POWER USE ON MEMBER SATISFACTION

TEAM FUNCTION	INDIVIDUAL (n)	GROUP (n)	NO ONE (n)	F	p
1 defining team objectives	4.13 ^a (13)	3.76 ^b (9)	2.50 ^c (1)	4.46	<.05
2 determining team performance standards	4.21 ^a (16)	3.17 ^b (3)	3.00 ^b (4)	14.68	<.05
3 deciding how often to meet	4.36 ^a (12)	3.50 ^b (9)	4.00 ^c (2)	9.05	<.05
4 allocating assignments to team members	4.20 ^a (9)	4.20 ^a (10)	3.00 ^b (4)	14.66	<.05
5 deciding when/whether to travel to field sites	4.24 ^a (14)	3.61 ^b (9)	(0)	7.70	<.05
6 deciding who travels to field sites	4.23 ^a (17)	3.33 ^b (6)	(0)	16.49	<.05
7 managing the team budget	4.23 ^a (14)	3.63 ^b (9)	(0)	6.74	<.05
8 selecting new members	4.28 ^a (17)	3.50 ^b (4)	2.50 ^c (2)	59.58	<.05
9 obtaining performance feedback	4.23 ^a (16)	3.75 ^b (5)	3.00 ^c (2)	15.37	<.05
10 coordinating comm. among team members	4.29 ^a (9)	3.68 ^b (14)	(0)	4.43	<.05
11 establishing norms	4.38 ^a (16)	4.17 ^b (4)	3.50 ^c (3)	2.75	<.05
12 managing relations with senior management	4.31 ^a (12)	3.85 ^b (7)	3.31 ^c (4)	4.57	<.05
13 managing relations with other departments	4.21 ^a (17)	3.65 ^b (4)	2.85 ^c (2)	5.88	<.05
14 managing relations with the client	4.19 ^a (15)	3.63 ^b (8)	(0)	5.47	<.05

Means that do not share a superscript are significantly different according to Tukey's HSD at $p < .05$

Relationship Functions and Team Effectiveness

Hypothesis 3 predicted that teams in which the group-as-a-whole managed internal team relationships would perform more effectively than teams in which a powerful individual did so. We operationalized the internal team relationship functions as addressing interpersonal conflicts in the team, and coordinating communications among team members. Neither function had any significant effect on performance. Hypothesis 3 also predicted that teams in which the group-as-a-whole managed internal team relationships would be more satisfied than teams in which a powerful individual did so. However, teams in which a powerful individual coordinated communication among team members were significantly more satisfied than teams in which the group-as-a-whole was involved in doing so. Because who addressed interpersonal conflicts had no significant effect on satisfaction Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that teams in which a powerful individual managed relations with external constituencies would perform more effectively than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so. In support of this hypotheses, groups in which one individual managed relations with senior management and with other departments performed significantly better than teams in which the group-as-a-whole performed these functions. However, groups in which a single individual managed relationships with external consultants performed less effectively than groups in which these relationships were managed by the group-as-a-whole.

The external-relations functions included managing relations with senior management, with other departments, and with external consultants. For managing relations with senior management, the effect of power use on team performance became non-significant when the proposed mediators were included in the analysis ($F=.19$, $p > .05$), whereas effort remained significant ($F=3.09$, $p<.05$), indicating that teams in which a powerful member managed relations with senior management worked harder at their tasks than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so. For managing relations with other departments, the effect of power use on team performance remained significant at about the same level when the proposed mediators were included in the analysis as without the proposed mediators ($F=5.97$, $p < .05$), and none of the mediators was significant. For managing relations with external consultants, when the three proposed mediators were included in the analysis, the effect of power use on team performance became non-significant ($F=2.02$, $p>.05$), and effort remained significant ($F=3.77$, $p<.05$). This suggests that teams in which a powerful individual managed relations with external consultants were less motivated than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so.

Hypothesis 4 also predicted that teams in which a powerful individual managed relationships with external individuals and teams would be less satisfied than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so. The opposite effect was found, as teams in which a power individual managed relations with senior management, with other departments, and with the client were significantly more satisfied than teams in which the group-as-a-whole did so.

In fact, satisfaction with the group was significantly influenced by power use on 14 of 20 items. The trend for this effect was similar across all significant items, such that members were more satisfied with teams in which a powerful individual fulfilled each function than teams in which that function was fulfilled by the group-as-a-whole.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that it does indeed matter to team effectiveness how a powerful team member uses his or her power. We found that for some task and relationship functions, team effectiveness is enhanced when a powerful group member determines what the group should do. For other functions, we have shown that a powerful member enacting a particular function on behalf of the group is no better than if no one in the team did it at all. Our findings provide new insights about how individuals who share in the leadership of their teams should exercise influence, and the consequences of their choices for the team—and for themselves.

Powerholders can be helpful to their teams by controlling certain team functions. For example, when powerful members used their special influence to critique the team's performance strategy or to identify problems in the team's approach, performance was enhanced relative to teams in which the group-as-a-whole or no one fulfilled this function. That the team is better off when anyone engages in this activity seems straightforward: without doing so, teams may overlook errors and misconceptions in their

approach. Why is it more useful, though, for a powerful individual to take on this function than for the team-as-a-whole to engage in it? We hypothesized that two processes might underlie this finding: the potential for action paralysis in teams that excessively engage in self-evaluation, and the usefulness of a focused “devil’s advocate” for thoroughness of strategic review.

Our exploratory analysis of the task processes mediating this effect provides some support for both explanations. We saw that the effort levels of team members, when the team-as-a-whole engaged in team review, were lower relative to teams that had a powerful individual review the team’s strategic approach. This finding suggests that some teams may have suffered the kind of disengagement from action that may occur with a whole-team focus on critique. Similarly, we found that teams in which a powerful individual engaged in team evaluation developed higher-quality strategies than teams in which the whole group did so. This finding may provide some support for the special effectiveness of a single “devil’s advocate” focusing his or her attention on catching potential errors in the team approach (Gruenfeld, 1995; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1983; Nemeth & Kwan, 1987; Smith, Tindale, & Dugoni, 1993).

We also saw that certain external-relations management functions were particularly well-performed by powerful individuals. As expected, when powerful individuals managed relationships with senior management and with other departments, teams performed better than when these functions were fulfilled by the group-as-a-whole. None of our key task process mediators fully accounted for these effects, though team-level effort partially mediated these effects in the field sample. That is, having a powerful team member manage these external relations led to members working somewhat harder on the task, but not necessarily making better strategic choices, or making better use of team member talents. We suspect, given this pattern of findings, that powerful members taking on these functions allowed for a more organized and efficient set of interactions with external constituencies, allowing the rest of members to focus more attention on other aspects of the team’s work. These findings elaborate the team external-relations literature (Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Goodman, Ravlin, & Schminke, 1987) by suggesting that while some functions are indeed essential to team effectiveness, they are not necessarily team functions and may be enacted by individual members.

Our findings make it clear that the influence of team functioning is a deeply tricky process for powerholders. They need to choose carefully the domains in which they exercise influence, as evidenced by the negative effects of power use on certain aspects of performance. It is not in a group’s best interest for powerful members to exert special influence broadly and without distinction among different team functions. Nor is it in a team’s best interest for powerholders to abdicate their special influence and behave as an average team member in all domains. We saw that the quality of team performance was undermined when a powerful individual dominated certain task functions. These findings are, of course, consistent with the most basic reason teams are created in the first place—that multiple heads are better than one. We also saw, however, that certain misuses of individual power not only underutilized the talent in the team, but also caused a general reduction in effort among team members—the more task functions were dominated by powerful individuals, the less effort displayed by the average team member. The demotivational effect of the dominance of task functions by a powerful member may arise because members feel no need to engage in certain activities when someone else is doing so. On the other hand, we may have been observing a general tendency to feel less personally responsible for the outcomes of the team’s work—a sense that when a powerful individual dominates task functions, the work is no longer “their” work (Hackman & Morris, 1975; Naylor, Pritchard & Ilgen, 1980). Powerholders thus may build dependency and disengagement in the team even as they exercise influence for the sake of team performance.

“Powerholders thus may build dependency and disengagement in the team even as they exercise influence for the sake of team performance.”

Our findings about team member satisfaction present a serious challenge for powerholders, because team performance and team member emotional responses to the group experience can be driven in different directions by the same behaviors from a powerholder. Although sometimes power use undermined team performance, members were almost universally more satisfied when a powerful member dominated team functions—regardless of the negative performance consequences. Because satisfaction effects were not mediated by anything that we measured, we can only speculate as to why these effects occurred here. We gain some possible insight into this question by examining certain special characteristics of the organizational context where this research was conducted.

Teams in this organization complete highly complex, demanding, and stressful tasks. Members of these teams also are assigned to multiple teams. In our interviews, numerous members spoke of being nearly overwhelmed by the demands placed on them. As a consequence, efficiency of team interactions is highly prized in this setting, and efficiency may well be enhanced by an individual dominating many team functions. It can be enormously comforting to these team members for someone to exercise authority and remove certain burdens from the remaining team members.

For the thoughtful powerholder wishing to exercise leadership effectively, this tension poses a painful dilemma: he or she may choose to elicit from the group collective involvement in devising meeting agendas and in solving technical problems for the sake of team performance—and encounter increasing resistance and unpopularity from team members. For powerholders to “shape up” their teams and teach them the advantages of collective involvement in certain team activities, uncomfortable as it may be for members, is surely ideal—and surely risky. Powerholders may find themselves, instead, shaped by the social pressures within their teams into dominating and directing more team activities than is appropriate in the longer term.

It may be that the social pressures on powerholders to do more on behalf of the team can explain both the tendency for some powerholders to dominate most aspects of team functioning and the tendency for some powerholders to abdicate power and exercise no special influence at all. It is easy to see how a powerful individual might be seduced into dominating many aspects of team functioning by the increasing popularity he or she experiences from a needy group. But experienced powerholders may recognize this tendency for teams to become dependent on a leader over time and to offer seductive positive reinforcement and popular approval to those who are willing to take over team functioning. Abdication of responsibility is one way that a powerholder can pull the team back into fulfilling necessary functions and thereby avoid extreme dependency on a single individual. Abdication is not the most thoughtful choice for a powerholder, however. Indeed, one might instead be explicit about the particular functions, such as establishing agendas and managing external relations, that one will fulfill and the others for which one expects the team to take responsibility. But that kind of thoughtfulness is enormously cognitively and emotionally demanding relative to a general choice to fulfill all or fulfill none of a team’s task and relationship functions.

In sum, our analysis suggests that autocratic (“dominate everything”) and laissez-faire (“abdicate”) tendencies may be driven as much—if not more—by the behavior of group members as by the characteristics of individual powerholders. For those seeking to develop their capacities to exercise influence effectively in collective enterprises, the lessons of this research suggest a focus not on developing participative or dominating styles of influence. It suggests instead the importance of developing tolerance for unpopularity, conceptual understanding of the kinds of functions teams must fulfill for their own performance, and the ability to exercise influence on the tasks and contexts of teams to give them the room to manage their own work and relational processes.

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APPENDIX

Team Effectiveness Measure

Consider the main customers or clients of the team's work – the people inside or outside the organization who are most affected by what the team produces. From **their** perspective, how satisfactory is the team's product or service?

From clients' perspective, the team's product or service...

- ___ ...is truly exceptional
- ___ ...exceeds expectations by a good margin
- ___ ...is fully acceptable
- ___ ...falls somewhat below expectations
- ___ ...is significantly flawed

