

A Theoretical Model and New Test of Managerial Legitimacy in Work Teams

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This study examines endorsement and authorization as two social mechanisms that can induce perceptions of legitimacy for individuals who manage work teams. *Endorsement* is the support of a manager by one's own team members, whereas *authorization* is the support of a team manager stemming from a higher bureaucratic level. Applying these mechanisms to specific work teams we hypothesize that (1. a team member who observes that other team members endorse a manager and the upper management authorizes the manager will perceive that manager's acts to be more legitimate; (2. in the context of the team environment the effect of endorsement will be greater than that of authorization; and (3. perceived legitimacy will mediate the effects of endorsement and authorization on positive outcomes such as team members' efficacy and commitment. These hypotheses were tested using 320 respondents from 56 Korean work teams. The results provide overall support of these hypotheses. As predicted, endorsement and authorization are key mechanisms significantly enhancing legitimacy. Further, the effect of endorsement on legitimacy is greater than that of authorization, and legitimacy partially mediates the effects of both endorsement and authorization on team efficacy and commitment. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of prevailing theories of legitimacy.

Introduction

Contemporary organizations face an unpredictable and harsh business environment driven by the ebb and flow of the global economy, international competition, rapidly advancing technology, greedy shareholders, tightening environmental regulations and savvy consumers who demand products that are better, faster, bigger/smaller and cheaper. It is unlikely that in this environment modern corporations could survive, in *Weberian* (1968) terms, by relying on a few well-trained bureaucrats to exercise authority within a hierarchical organization or by institutionalizing internal labor markets within organizational boundaries (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Baron and Bielby 1984). Traditional structures such as these are somewhat inflexible and simply do not facilitate the quick communication and decision making needed in today's environment. In light

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of these forces modern organizations have had to essentially reinvent the way business is done. As one of the many initiatives to address these issues corporations have adopted work teams as a new unit of operation, service and production (Hackman 1990; Kazenbach and Smith 1993). Indeed, team-based structures have become the norm on the organizational landscape and are taking hold in corporations around the globe.

The emergence of teams as a dominant feature of work design requires that managers employ a different style of administration relative to a conventional hierarchical organization (Powell 2001; Vallas 2003; Cappelli 2006). As Weber (1968) noted, it is the hierarchy itself in organizations that provides managers with the formal authority to oversee subordinates. In contrast, work team structures distribute power more evenly across team members and managers in order to promote a sense of shared responsibility and encourage creative solutions to problems. Team managers are more prone to “support or collaborate” with members rather than “give orders or monitor” performance. With this shift in the power, the key issue is how managers acquire the legitimacy of power from members and management within a team-based paradigm. Research indicates that team initiatives often fail when organizations emphasize the rational and technical aspects of teams, to the exclusion of the relationship between team members and managers (Vallas 2003).

We offer a theoretical argument that explains how team members come to view and accept their managers as legitimate within the broader organizational context. *Managerial legitimacy* is defined as the degree to which individual team members view the actions and “formal position” of the manager as a taken-for-granted fact and the way things ought to be (Walker 2004). We assert that legitimacy is socially constructed through both tacit and explicit interactions among individuals in the work unit (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek and Norman 1998; Dornbush and Scott 1975; Zelditch and Walker 1984). From this perspective legitimacy emerges and becomes an objectified social reality as individuals monitor not only the team manager, but other entities such as peers, customers and higher levels of management. We assert that legitimacy thrives when the confluence of these interactions collectively and uniformly supports the manager.

To explain how this occurs we employ a theoretical model of legitimacy in team-based organizations. This model highlights the conditions under which the actions and directions of managers in work teams are perceived as legitimate among members and the processes through which perceived legitimacy enhances team efficacy (Bandura 1982; Gibson 1999; Mathieu, Gilson and Ruddy 2006) and commitment (Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982; Bishop and Scott 2000). Inasmuch as legitimacy emerges, managers and team members effectively establish a kind of “micro social order” that organizes and facilitates the goals of the team within the organizational boundaries (Ridgeway 1989; Lawler, Ridgeway and Markovsky 1993; Lawler, Thye and Yoon 2009). Such conditions also foster effective work habits and tend to ease the problems associated with organizational transformation (Vallas 2003; Cappelli 2006). We derive several hypotheses from our theoretical model of legitimacy and test these using data collected from actual work teams in large corporations. To our knowledge, no research

to date has theorized and tested these aspects of legitimacy or authority in actual organizational work teams.

Background

We review and draw upon select aspects of Dornbusch and Scott's (1975) theory of legitimacy in organizations, Berger and Ridgeway's status theory of legitimacy (Ridgeway 1989; Ridgeway and Berger 1986; Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek and Norman 1998), and the theoretical research program of Walker and Zelditch (Zelditch and Walker 1984; Walker, Thomas and Zelditch 1986; Thomas, Walker and Zelditch 1986; Walker, Rogers and Zelditch 1988; Zelditch and Walker 2003; Walker 2004). These programs suggest how group dynamics and social interaction combine to produce legitimacy.

Dornbusch and Scott (1975) focus on how individuals in hierarchical organizations manage the legitimacy of formal positions by mobilizing sanctions and evaluations that are essentially endowed upon those positions. Their theory applies to "traditional" organizations characterized by a hierarchical distribution of power and formal authority, within which members in higher positions evaluate the performance of members in lower positions and allocate positive or negative sanctions. For example, Dornbusch and Scott (1975) describe an ideal type of formal organization in terms of a tripartite power structure (e.g., A, B and C represent hierarchically-ordered positions). With this hypothetical organization in mind A might be a manager, B a focal employee, and C the employee's subordinates or peers. An order of authority develops when sanctions or performance evaluations are transferred across these positions.

Building on this prototype Dornbusch and Scott (1975) propose two mechanisms of legitimacy – authorization and endorsement. *Authorization* is a transfer of resources, such as positive sanctions or favorable evaluations, from a higher to a lower position (e.g., from a manager to an employee or an employee to a subordinate). *Endorsement* is a transfer of resources from a lower to a higher position (from the employee to the manager or the subordinate to the employee) or between similar positions (among peer employees). Dornbusch and Scott (1975) assert that authorization is a stronger source of legitimacy than endorsement in the prototypical organization. This is because managers are generally endowed with more resources for evaluations or sanctions whereas coworkers or subordinates rely on informal resources. In short authorization carries the power of the larger institutional position from which it comes.

Dornbusch and Scott (1975) conceptualize these two mechanisms as representing more generally the concept of validity. A social hierarchy is *valid* if actors treat norms, beliefs and procedures as taken-for-granted and matters of objective fact. In short, legitimacy exists when individuals simply accept that this is "the way things are" done. Validity is conceptually distinct from propriety. *Propriety* refers to one's own personal evaluation (positive-negative) of the structural hierarchy, its norms, rules and procedures. Propriety captures an evaluative dimension made on a personal level (Dornbusch and Scott 1975). One can think of propriety as a legitimacy evaluation made at the individual level, whereas validity is a legitimacy evaluation made at the collective or social level. Dornbusch and Scott suggest that different sources of legitimacy

may sometimes conflict with one another. For example, a focal employee might personally believe a manager's actions are proper, but also notice that the evaluations of others (peers, subordinates or managers) may stand in conflict with this belief. They predict that when such conflicts occur, validity (i.e., endorsement and authorization) will override and supersede legitimacy stemming from propriety (i.e., personal beliefs). In short, the collective dimension has greater power in shaping legitimacy because of the potential negative sanctions that may occur as a consequence of failing to support collective norms.

Dornbusch and Scott's theory of legitimacy has been tested and extended in a variety of settings. In the multi-source, multi-object theory of legitimacy, Walker and associates conceptually differentiate the sources of legitimacy from the objects of legitimacy (Zelditch and Walker 2003; Walker 2004; Johansson and Sell 2004). The sources of legitimacy include endorsement by a group of peers, authorization from higher authorities, and the propriety of individual. The objects of legitimacy refer to the "target" and include things such as individuals, positions, acts and tasks. For example, assume a group of three individuals that include (1. a target person whose commands and suggestions are seen as legitimate or not, (2. a focal actor who attempts to evaluate the legitimacy of the target person, and (3. a bystander who is a collective source of validation for that evaluation. In this hypothetical group, the target could be either a person holding a position or the attributes associated with that person (e.g., their actions, personality or ability). Information from the bystander constitutes one source of legitimacy. If the bystander is the target's superordinate, the focal actor will treat the bystander's positive evaluation as a kind of authorization; whereas if the bystander is a subordinate or peer the focal actor will employ the bystander's evaluation as endorsement. As such, the overall validity is affected by bystander's evaluation and the focal actor's personal judgments or propriety.

A related approach is found in the status theory of legitimacy, which calls attention to the importance of a referential belief structure (Berger et al. 1998; Ridgeway and Berger 1986; Ridgeway 1989). A *referential structure* is a taken-for-granted set of beliefs, values and routines held in common by a set of individuals. Referential structures guide behavior and attitudes under conditions of uncertainty and can do so knowingly or otherwise. People use referential structures to help account for and interpret events or routines in groups, organizations and society. Applied to the kinds of groups we study here, their theory suggests that legitimacy emerges when individual members believe that the actions of the team leader are consistent with, and guided by larger referential structures.

To summarize, Dornbusch and Scott's theory of legitimacy maintains that formal positions in hierarchical organizations have the authority to exercise sanctions and evaluations. In their scheme, the mobilization of sanctions and evaluations across positions is the foundation of legitimacy. Top-down mobilization of sanctions and evaluations constitutes authorization, whereas horizontal or bottom-up mobilization constitutes endorsement. Walker and associates elaborate on this by differentiating the target of legitimacy (e.g., acts, positions, persons) from the source (e.g., validity

and propriety). They further offer an extensive series of laboratory tests which generally support the theory in a variety of group settings. The status theory of legitimacy by Berger and Ridgeway (1986) adds to this body of work by elaborating the role of referential structures, from which individuals anchor and infer beliefs in the legitimacy of actions, persons and positions.

A Theoretical Model of Legitimation

Drawing together elements of these approaches we employ a theoretical model of legitimacy that examines how team members, managers and management jointly construct the legitimacy of managers in work teams. We focus on work teams in organizations, not hierarchical departments as has been traditionally assumed. Unlike departments, teams adopt a flatter structure to promote flexible operations, open lines of communication and quicker decisions. Managers in work teams are charged with framing the decisions and actions to be taken, coordinating tasks and generally supporting members (Hackman 1987; Katzenbach and Smith 1993; Thompson 1999). Such managerial practices tend to increase team members' efficacy for assigned goals (Mathieu, Gilson and Ruddy 2006; Srivastava and Bartol 2006). Effective managers also seek to gain voluntary compliance and commitment of team members (Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi and Beaubien 2002), rather than exercising control and administering sanctions as a means to promote compliance (Etzioni 1961). By the design of teams and the nature of the managerial role, the overall success of a team turns critically on the mutual support between managers and team members.

Building on Walker and associates' multi-source, multi-level theory of legitimacy we equate *legitimacy* at the individual level to *propriety*. We define this as the degree to which team members believe and take for granted the actions (and position itself) of the manager because this is the way things should exist. Legitimacy is also, to some extent, rooted in the referential beliefs the team holds. The referential structures could support the categorical beliefs regarding team-based leadership as opposed to a more traditional managerial role, the beliefs of managers in delegating and empowering the team vs. micro-managing, or beliefs regarding how team performance is measured. As such, individual members or the entire team can develop individual-level legitimacy (i.e., propriety) or collective-level legitimacy (i.e., validity) by considering whether the team manager's attempts to direct the team are based on, and consistent with larger referential structures in the organization (Berger et al. 1998; Ridgeway and Berger 1986).

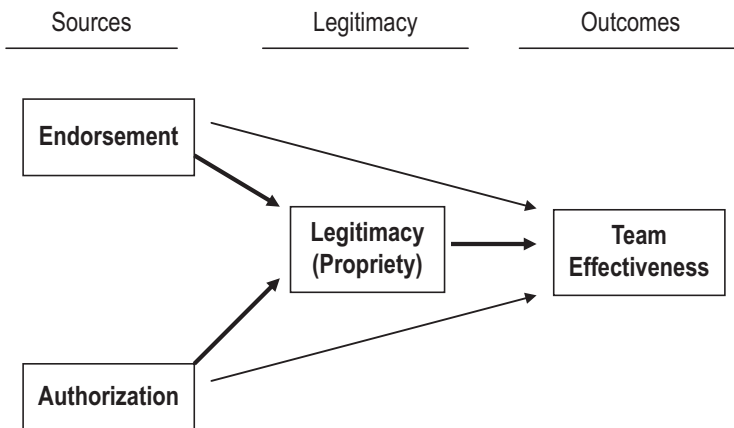
The *outcomes* of legitimacy are the benefits to the team and organization resulting from having a team leader who is seen as established and legitimate. These benefits include more efficacious work from team members, more voluntarism and compliance, better coordinated team operations, and enhanced levels of commitment and solidarity. Thus, in many ways, the success of the team as a vehicle to redress organizational challenges hinges on the extent to which management, team leaders and team members successfully negotiate a valid and orderly social unit. Our goal is to understand how the legitimation of team managers promotes such effective operation of teams.

Although we are concerned with established work teams, we do not assume, *a priori*, that all team members share the same referential beliefs or develop the same initial level of propriety (c.f., Johansson and Sell 2004). Especially during a transition period where organizations are restructuring from department-based to team-based operations, conflicts and tensions will likely emerge due to any inconsistency between the old and new referential beliefs. For example, the belief in the “traditional” manager who bears the responsibility of all aspects of operation management may persist and still garner support among team members, even after the corporation has restructured into a team-based system. If so, there will be a number of persistent conflicts and tension at the level of individual propriety until the majority of those involved adopt referential ideas consistent with team-based organization (Johansson and Sell 2004).

Drawing from Walker (2004), we locate the sources of validity in the social and organizational support that occurs within the organizational context. Research shows that social and organizational support are key factors in promoting positive sanctions and normative validation more generally (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa 1986; Shore and Tetrick 1991; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Yoon and associates (Yoon, Han and Seo 1996; Yoon and Lim 1999; Yoon and Thye 2002) extend these ideas to show that only when subordinates trust the authority of their managers do they tend to provide support in a voluntary manner. With these studies as a backdrop we suggest that individual team members see the support for their manager by other team members as a form of *endorsement*, while support by organizational practices, higher levels of management and corporate customers is seen as a form of *authorization*. Based on these factors, individuals will develop their own proprietary beliefs regarding the legitimacy of a manager.

To formalize and test these ideas we propose a theoretical model of team leader legitimization shown in Figure 1. The model differentiates legitimacy itself from its sources and consequences. Recall that an individual’s assessment of legitimacy is propriety.

Figure 1. The Theoretical Model



Endorsement and authorization constitute the two sources of collective legitimacy. The model proposes that endorsement and authorization are the key determinants of an individual's legitimacy evaluation which in turn affects team effectiveness. Beyond the main mediation role of individual legitimacy beliefs, the model stipulates the direct paths of endorsement and authorization to team effectiveness. This aspect of our theoretical model is predicated upon [Dornbusch and Scott's claim \(1975\)](#) (also see [Zelditch and Walker 2003](#); [Walker 2004](#)) that although individual perceptions of legitimacy are critical in building team effectiveness, the larger social construction of legitimacy (i.e., validity) plays a role in producing collective support and establishing team effectiveness.

There are several scope conditions for the model. First, the model is applied to a team (rather than traditional hierarchical) setting wherein members must work together to achieve the collective goals. The collective goal and collaboration are important because they create a common focus. Second, each member is required to contribute to the team with unique skills and competencies. Without unique contributions by members the team is essentially relegated to a traditional department. Third, the manager's performance is evaluated by both team members and upper level managers. These scope conditions constitute the climate in which propriety and validity processes should be activated in the team environment.

The two domains of effectiveness examined here are commitment to the team and perceived task efficacy. *Commitment* is a classic organizational concept defined as the degree to which an individual member identifies with, and is involved in, a particular team ([Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982](#); [Bishop and Scott 2000](#); [Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi and Beaubien 2002](#)). Consistent with the notion of organizational commitment, commitment to the *team* is characterized by a (1. strong belief in the team goals and values, (2. willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the team, and (3. desire to maintain membership in the team ([Bishop and Scott 2000](#)). *Efficacy* is each member's belief in the team's capability of performing assigned tasks effectively ([Bandura 1982](#); [Cohen, Chang and Ledford 1997](#); [Lindsley, Brass and Thomas 1995](#); [Gibson 1999](#); [Kirkman and Rosen 1999](#); [Mathieu, Gilson and Ruddy 2006](#); [Srivastava and Bartol, 2006](#)). We presume that as members come to view their manager as legitimate, they will show greater commitment to their teams and experience more efficacy when completing team tasks ([Gibson 1999](#)). Commitment captures an aspect of social order, whereas efficacy promotes a sense of empowerment ([Kilmann and Covin 1989](#); [Kirkman and Rosen 1999](#); [Yoon 2001](#)).

Hypotheses

We next derive a series of hypotheses regarding (1. the ways in which legitimacy is affected by various sources, and (2. the impact legitimacy has on two domains of members' effectiveness in teams. The first hypothesis is a direct extension of [Dornbusch and Scott's \(1975\)](#) organizational analysis as it applies to our work team setting. This extension suggests that, as a team, members assess whether or not the manager's actions and attributes are relevant to the team's goals and tasks, and the associated

referential structures should be activated. In turn, the extent to which the manager's actions and attributes are congruent with these referential structures should provide a template for an individual's belief of legitimacy, that is, propriety. At the same time, the multi-source and multi-object theory of legitimacy (Zelditch and Walker 2003; Walker 2004) asserts that individual's beliefs of managerial legitimacy are also affected by endorsement and authorization, which in our case, occur within and beyond the team boundaries. Endorsement is the degree to which a member perceives that other team members support the manager, whereas authorization is the degree to which the member perceives the manager is supported by other managers and the larger organization. Endorsement and authorization provide a powerful, socially-defined basis of proprietary beliefs regarding validity. With this in mind our first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: In work teams, endorsement and authorization will increase members' beliefs of their managers' legitimacy, i.e., propriety.

Dornbusch and Scott (1975) assert that in a manager-subordinate relationship within a traditional hierarchical organization, authorization is a more powerful source of legitimacy than endorsement. Applied to the team-based organizations of this study, however, this logic no longer holds. Our theoretical analysis implies that endorsement will have a stronger effect on legitimacy than authorization. The shift from a traditional organization to a team-based structure effectively distributes power more evenly across all team members such that members are now more accountable to one another. In turn, the manager's role is also transformed. Managers no longer monitor and sanction members in traditional terms, but instead they guide, collaborate and support members of the team. Furthermore, managers and members are required to be jointly accountable for their team outcomes and develop their own norms beyond those of the larger corporation. Team members also directly participate in evaluating their manager. Because of these factors scholars tend to characterize team-based organizations as loosely coupled systems –although each team is housed within a larger organization which tracks team performance, teams also retain a distinct identity through their own behavioral (or operational) autonomy (Weick 1979; Orton and Weick 1990). The overall implication is that peer evaluations are simply more salient and potent in autonomous work teams. Based on this logic Hypothesis 2 predicts:

Hypothesis 2: In work teams, the effect of endorsement on enhancing managerial legitimacy will be greater than that of authorization.

The theory also stipulates that after members evaluate the manager and develop positive views of that person's legitimacy in the managerial role, they will develop a sense of efficacy and become more committed to the team (Daft and Weick 1984; Berger and Luckmann 1966). In the context of these hypotheses, our theoretical analysis suggests

that evaluations of legitimacy will mediate the effects of the exogenous mechanisms (i.e., endorsement, and authorization) on these outcome perceptions and behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 3 predicts:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived legitimacy will mediate the effects of endorsement, and authorization on team members' efficacy and their commitments to the team.

The three hypotheses are built upon the theoretical model (Figure 1). The model differentiates legitimacy itself from its sources (or antecedents) and consequences. Propriety is an individual's perception of the team manager's legitimacy, whereas endorsement and authorization are collective sources of social validation. The consequences are the benefits for teams. The first hypothesis predicts the effects of the two sources on perceived legitimacy, i.e., propriety. Hypothesis 2 predicts that the effect of endorsement is stronger than that of authorization in team settings. Hypothesis 3 predicts a mediation process, indicating that endorsement and authorization produces a sense of legitimacy targeted toward managers. In turn, legitimacy enhances positive outcomes for the team. The rationale is that after members accept the legitimacy of their manager, this belief boosts members' efficacy and commitment to their team.

Methods

The data come from 56 teams across five Korean organizations collected from May 2001 to March 2002. These companies primarily manufacture home appliances, multimedia and telecommunication equipment, semiconductors and electronic supplies. Of the 480 questionnaires distributed to the 56 teams, 341 questionnaires were returned by the closing date comprising a 71 percent response rate. Listwise deletion of missing values reduced the final analyses to 320 individuals. As might be expected in the manufacturing industry, most respondents were male (88%), middle age (mean age = 33) and most had graduated above the junior college level (junior college graduates = 18%; college graduates = 45%). The data did not reveal any significant biases in terms of occupational category, education, gender or age.

The Context

Korea has experienced a breakthrough in industrial development since the 1960s. The country's gross domestic product increased dramatically from \$2 billion (U.S. dollars) in 1960 to \$473 billion in 2002. In the past 10 years Korea has been a leading global figure in manufacturing industries such as semiconductors, steel, shipbuilding and automobiles. The growth momentum was largely prompted by the Asian financial crisis of 1997. As a condition for bailout funds the International Monetary Fund forced the Korean government and firms to reassess Korean managerial practices and organizational structures with the goal of boosting global competitiveness. As a result, the mode of operation found in traditional Korean corporations gradually shifted from

“vertical” collectivism to a more “horizontal” individualism. Among the many new practices, the introduction of the work team as the primary organizational feature was behind many of these transformative efforts.

The Korean labor panel study (Cho and Keum 2004) reports that as of 2002, 45 percent of all Korean firms had adopted teams, and about 70 percent of those started the team initiatives after the downfall of the IMF and Korea’s financial crisis in 1997. Currently, more than 90 percent of large corporations in Korea have adopted some version of team-based design. As with other large Korean corporations exposed to global competition, the companies in this study have adopted work team initiatives strategically to handle the ever demanding challenge of operational flexibility and product innovation. The teams are semi-autonomous in that the companies formally appointed team members and managers based on the companies’ goals and design strategy.

Early studies of the shift to team-based work found that most team members and managers understood that their companies adopted a team structure to promote innovation and enhance flexibility. These studies also showed that individual performance and compensation were aligned substantially with team successes. Thus, issues such as team leadership, efficacy and commitment were important matters for most team members. Preliminary interviews with HR personnel and team leaders indicated that, although they had had ample experience with team operations, they were still struggling with issues related to titles, performance evaluations and compensation. To promote successful team initiatives, corporations responded by simplifying the rank and positions to simply “team manager” and “team member.” Further, the companies officially prohibited employees from referring to others using titles based on former rank and position.

Human resource departments also facilitated the change, providing training programs to teach managerial leadership, communication skills for team members and performance evaluation methods for both members and managers. While some expressed frustration with such changes, the majority of employees accepted that team-based initiatives were needed to create a global presence and felt that it would be impossible to return to traditional hierarchical operations. Our interviews with team members and managers indicate that such training efforts did successfully strengthen new referential belief structures consistent with “team managers’ leadership” as opposed to more traditional leadership styles.

Measurement

For the current study, we developed two independent questionnaires that were distributed to team members about one month apart. We rely on this method to create a time lag between independent and dependent variables, and to avoid related common-method variance problems. The first questionnaire contained independent variables (i.e., propriety, authorization and endorsement) and the mediating variable of legitimacy. We also included a variety of control measures on the first questionnaire.

The second questionnaire measured our key dependent variables (i.e., commitment and efficacy). Both questionnaires were administered to every member of each team.

We measured the two dependent variables (efficacy and commitment) using five-point Likert scales. All scales were first translated into Korean by the lead author and then translated back into English by bilingual translators. To verify our procedures we asked bilingual graduate students to independently identify any inconsistencies between the two translations, and we then adjusted the measures to reflect more accurately the meanings of the original instruments.

Efficacy, referring to each member's belief in his or her team's ability to effectively execute assignments (Kirkman and Rosen 1999), was measured by a six-item index ($\alpha = .86$). The items include: "Our team has confidence in itself;" "I believe we are extremely good at producing high-quality work;" "I believe that we expect to be known as a high-performing team;" "I believe that our team feels we can solve any problem;" "I believe we can be very productive;" and "I believe we get a lot done when our team works hard."

A five-item index ($\alpha = .89$) was used to measure commitment to the team, defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular team (Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982; Bishop and Scott 2000): "I speak highly of my team to my friends;" "I don't care about the fate of my team in which I work;" (reverse coded) "I am proud to tell others that I am a member of my team;" "I feel very loyal to my team;" and "I want to stay with my team as long as I can."

A series of five-point scales measured the two independent variables (i.e., authorization, endorsement) and the mediating variable (i.e., legitimacy). We developed the measures of authorization and endorsement from established measures of perceived organizational support used by Eisenberger and associates (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Eisenberger and associates define *perceived organizational support* as "the employee's global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being." (Eisenberger et al. 1986:501) Our measures of authorization and endorsement were constructed by replacing "our company," respectively, with "our upper management" and "my team members." Five-item indices were constructed for each measure ($\alpha = .74$ and $.84$ for authorization and endorsement, respectively).

Legitimacy, defined as the degree to which individual team members view the act and position of their manager as a granted for granted fact, was adopted from Choi and Mai-Dalton (1999). As with the other scales, respondents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement across a five-point scale for each item ($\alpha = .94$). The seven specific items constituting this measure are listed in Table 1.

In our investigation individual team members are the primary unit of analysis. However, we also take into consideration additional team properties and the overall team context by employing various control measures. Specifically, we measure and control for factors such as team size, the average education of team members and their average tenure. We also consider factors related to the leader such as that person's age, tenure and level of education. We also control for team autonomy, as research indicates that team autonomy is one of the most critical factors in determining team success

(Cohen et al. 1997; Hackman 1987). Team autonomy was assessed using the items from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristic questionnaire (four items, $\alpha = .74$).

Results

We use linear structural equation modeling (LISREL 8) for the analysis (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993). Following Burt's (1973) suggestion for avoiding confounding effects when measurement and structural models are estimated simultaneously, we adopt a two-step approach to the analysis. We first establish the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model, and then estimate the hypothesized causal paths with a series of structural equations (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Specifically, after estimating validity using a confirmatory factor analysis we combined the items for each measure into a single index for each construct. This procedure avoids identification problems when estimating subsequent causal models (Kenny 1979; Williams and Podsakoff 1989). LISREL affords the further advantage of estimating the causal models after correcting for attenuation due to random measurement error.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To assess whether legitimacy, authorization and endorsement are distinct theoretical constructs we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. Specifically, we compared the three-factor model (i.e., all factors distinct) with several alternative formulations. As such, we use the three-factor model as the baseline model for this comparison. We use multiple indicators to assess the fit, including the goodness of fit index, the adjusted goodness of fit index, the non-normed fit index, and the comparative goodness of fit index (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993; Bentler and Bonett 1980; Tucker and Lewis 1973). We then performed chi-square significance tests to determine the relative change in fit across the various models (James, Mulaik and Brett 1982).

As shown in Table 1 the results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicate that the three-factor model is the best fit. Compared to all two-factor models, the three-factor model consistently yields a significant improvement in fit across all goodness-of-fit indicators. The factor loadings for the three-factor model are shown in Table 1. Note that all of the items load significantly ($p < .001$), and all loadings are greater than .43. An examination of the cross-loadings does not indicate values larger than .25. Overall, these findings demonstrate that our measures of legitimacy, endorsement and authorization display the requisite levels of convergent validity. We also see substantial discriminant validity among the three constructs, as the latent correlation between any two constructs plus/minus twice the standard errors does not exceed 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988).

Correlation Matrix

Table 2 presents the LISREL corrected correlation matrix for the key theoretical variables. In general, the pattern of correlations is consistent with and supports the

hypotheses. As predicted, efficacy and commitment are moderately correlated with legitimacy ($r = .53$ and $r = .55$, $p < .01$). Also in line with our theoretical predictions note that legitimacy is moderately correlated with authorization ($r = .50$, $p < .01$), and strongly correlated with endorsement ($r = .67$, $p < .01$). The correlations also suggest direct effects such as authorization and endorsement are significantly correlated with our outcome variables (commitment and efficacy). Overall, all of the correlations suggested by our theoretical analysis appear significant in the data and are moderate to large in magnitude.

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Loadings for the Three-Factor Model

Constructs and Measurements	LE	AU	EN
Legitimacy			
He deserves to be our team manager.	.85		
I trust him as our team manager.	.89		
I do not approve of him as our team manager.*	.66		
I accept him as our team manager.	.91		
I want him to continue to be our team manager.	.85		
His order as a manager has much authority over me.	.76		
I am willing to follow his leadership.	.86		
Authorization			
Our upper management is willing to extend itself in order to help our team manager.		.74	
Our upper management is willing to help our team manager when she needs a special favor.		.71	
Our upper management fails to appreciate any extra effort from our team manager.*		.43	
Our upper management is willing to replace our team manager with another.*		.47	
Our upper management truly cares about our team manager's well-being.		.79	
Endorsement			
My team members are willing to extend themselves in order to help our team manager.			.81
My team members are willing to help our team manager when she needs a special favor.			.66
My team members fail to appreciate any extra effort from our team manager.			.57
My team members are willing to replace our team manager with another.*			.69
My team members truly care about our team manager's well-being.*			.84

Note: All factor loadings are statistically significant, $p < .001$; *indicates the item is reverse coded. (N = 320)

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability Coefficients and Correlations between the Key Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Team Efficacy	1.00				
Team Commitment	.54	1.00			
Legitimacy	.53	.55	1.00		
Authorization	.44	.48	.48	1.00	
Endorsement	.50	.54	.67	.50	1.00
Mean	3.67	3.40	3.79	3.25	3.55
Standard Deviation	.61	.75	.74	.57	.67
Cronbach Alpha	.86	.86	.94	.74	.84

Notes: $p < .01$ for all the relations. (N = 320)

Model Estimation

We adopt a progressive strategy in estimating the overall theoretical model. First, we estimated paths from the exogenous variables (i.e., endorsement and authorization) to the mediating variable (legitimacy). We next estimated a model predicting our outcome variables (i.e., team commitment and team efficacy) from all the antecedent variables including the mediating variables. To capture the effect of random measurement error for each construct in the model, we set the measurement-error term for each construct at 1 minus its reliability multiplied by the index variance (Kenny 1979; Williams and Podsakoff 1989). Table 3 provides the standardized coefficients for the causal paths, which can be interpreted as standardized betas in OLS regression terms.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the amount of explained variance associated with each endogenous variable is substantial and significant. We note that the two theorized sources of legitimacy, endorsement and authorization, explain 76 percent of the variance in the measure of legitimacy. In turn, the full model (including the mediating paths through legitimacy) explains 73 percent and 71 percent respectively of the variance in efficacy and team commitment. Having assessed the overall characteristics of the model, we next examine the key hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the more a team member perceives endorsement from other team members, and authorization from higher management, the more likely that team member is to see the manager as legitimate. Overall, the data support this prediction. Note that both authorization and endorsement significantly increase the perception of legitimacy ($\beta = .23$ and $.66$, $p < .001$) net of the other controls. As predicted here and more broadly in the legitimacy literature, both authorization and endorsement are important sources of legitimacy.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that the effect of endorsement on perceptions of legitimacy will be greater than the effect of authorization, given the structure and nature of work teams. Recall that the teams we investigate are self-managed groups characterized by autonomy and horizontal decision-making. As such, we predict that peer evaluation

Table 3: Standardized LISREL Coefficient Estimates for the Causal Model

Independent Variables	Legitimacy	Team Efficacy	Team Commitment
Team Characteristics			
Team Autonomy	.17***	.02	.01
Team Size	.09***	.19***	.13***
Team Tenure	.03	.08	.06
Team Education	.37***	.21**	.12
Manager's Age	.05	.46***	.10
Manager's Tenure	.05**	.12***	.09**
Manager's Education	.32***	.07	.07
Members Characteristics			
Member's Age	.10***	.04	.16***
Member's Tenure	-.08***	.08*	-.10**
Member's Education	-.04	-.05	.00
Exogenous Variables			
Authorization	.23***	.22***	.26***
Endorsement	.66***	.25***	.29***
Mediating Variables			
Legitimacy	—	.29**	.28**
R ²	.76	.73	.71

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$; two-tailed tests. (N = 320)

and support are more crucial than authorization from upper management. The results support Hypothesis 2. Controlling for other factors, the effect of endorsement on legitimacy is about three times as large as the effect of authorization ($\beta = .66$ and $\beta = .23$, respectively). Overall, this is again consistent with our predictions and theory.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 predicts that legitimacy plays a mediating role between its sources (i.e., endorsement and authorization) and outcomes (effectiveness and commitment). Again, the data support this hypothesis. Note that the two source variables have indirect effects on efficacy and commitment through legitimacy. This suggests that endorsement and authorization significantly enhance legitimacy, which in turn, increases efficacy and commitment ($\beta = .29$, and $.28$, $p < .001$). However, also note that endorsement and authorization directly increase effectiveness ($\beta = .25$ and $.22$, $p < .001$) and commitment ($\beta = .29$ and $.26$, $p < .001$).

The standardized coefficients shown in Table 3 inform the relative significance of each factor in the model. In predicting legitimacy, endorsement is the more significant factor ($\beta = .66$, $p < .001$) relative to authorization ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$). Endorsement and authorization have the similar direct effects on efficacy ($\beta = .25$ and $.23$, $p < .001$). The same pattern appears when efficacy is replaced with commitment. Here, the direct effects of authorization and endorsement on commitment are similar ($\beta = .26$, $\beta = .29$, $p < .01$). The impact of legitimacy in determining overall team effectiveness is similar to the direct effects of endorsement and authorization on team effectiveness.

Table 4: Standardized Direct and Indirect Causal Effects of the Key Exogenous Variables on Team Effectiveness

Exogenous Variables	Direct Effect		Indirect Effect		Total Effect	
	Team Efficacy	Team Commitment	Team Efficacy	Team Commitment	Team Efficacy	Team Commitment
Authorization	.22***	.26***	.07**	.06**	.29***	.32***
Legitimacy	.29**	.28**	—	—	.29**	.28**

Notes: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$; two-tailed test. (N = 320)

To assess the mediating role of legitimacy more precisely we decomposed the total causal impact into direct and indirect effects, based on Table 3. Support for the mediation hypothesis comes in the form of larger indirect effects. Table 4 provides the results of this decomposition. Again, the general results support the mediation hypothesis. Legitimacy mediates 24 and 19 percent of the total causal effects of authorization on efficacy and commitment, whereas it mediates 43 and 38 percent of the effects of endorsement on the same dependent variables respectively. That is, the causal effect of authorization is more direct than indirect, which further suggests that endorsement plays a key role in the mediation. Authorization may affect the final outcome variables more directly because it is mobilized directly from management even without much construction process of legitimacy by members. Taken together, these analyses suggest that legitimacy is one of the key mediating mechanisms linking endorsement and authorization to team effectiveness.

We also analyze a number of controls including team characteristics and individual demographics. For example, Table 3 shows that the level of team autonomy has a positive effect on legitimacy ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) but no effect on efficacy or commitment. This implies that the effects of team autonomy on efficacy and commitment are totally mediated by perceptions of legitimacy. The most critical feature of teams compared to departments is autonomy. Autonomy structurally facilitates the delegation of managerial power to team members and thus induces the better legitimacy evaluation from team members. Team size has consistently positive effects on legitimacy, efficacy and commitment. This pattern could be driven by the tendency for companies to assign more capable managers to larger teams. In contrast, education consistently dampens perceptions of legitimacy and efficacy. This trend might reflect that the more educated team members and managers are slow to accept the team transformation as granted and constitute major forces favoring the traditional management practice. Overall, there are no consistent or theoretically important trends with respect to the demographic variables of managers or members and the patterns are simply too complicated to draw reliable inferences.

Conclusion and Discussion

In response to the accelerating rate of organizational change many global corporations have adopted “teams” as the primary unit which drives innovation and production (Hackman 1990; Kazenbach and Smith 1993; Lawler 1992). Korean corporations

are no exception. For large firms in Korea, the shift to team-based operations was an imperative way to jump start innovation especially following the IMF regime and Korea's financial crisis in 1997. In fact, research indicates that more than 70 percent of the firms adopting a team-based structure reported that they adopted some other variant of work teams following the 1997 financial crisis in Korea (Cho and Keum 2004). We offer a theoretical model based on work in the legitimacy domain that suggests how these shifts affect commitment and efficacy.

The theoretical model makes a number of predictions. First, it predicts that the socially constructed aspects of validity (i.e., endorsement and authorization) will play the key role on determining team members' perceptions of legitimacy (i.e., propriety). The second hypothesis predicts that, given the important differences between work teams and traditional hierarchical departments, endorsement will have a stronger effect than authorization. The final hypothesis suggests that legitimacy will mediate the effects of endorsement and authorization on commitment and efficacy.

Overall, the key hypotheses were supported. First, both endorsement and authorization enhanced perceptions of legitimacy net of the other control variables. Second, the effect of endorsement is about three times larger than that of authorization. We note that this makes sense in the context of the work team structure, and would expect this pattern to be reversed in traditional hierarchical departments. Finally, we found partial support that the sources of legitimacy in these teams operate indirectly (through legitimacy) to effect team efficiency and commitment. The mediation is partial in that there are still some direct effects of endorsement and authorization on team effectiveness. Overall, the theoretical model suggests that individuals develop perceptions of managerial legitimacy (i.e., propriety) by observing support of other team members (endorsement) and that of higher management (authorization). We view this as a social validation process that solidifies and makes real managerial legitimacy.

The larger direct effect of endorsement and authorization on the dependent measures suggests the power of social construction itself. In the context of a valid social hierarchy, endorsement and authorization have strong direct effects, independent of a focal individual's personal assessment of propriety. Endorsement, in and of itself, becomes an institution of collective evaluation among and between peers, while authorization constitutes another kind of social institution related to corporate evaluation, rituals and routines. In contrast to Dornbusch and Scott's (1975) prediction that authorization is the strongest source of validity in hierarchal organizations, we find that endorsement is a stronger source of institutional evaluation in the work teams studied here. The effect of both kinds of validity is likely to be even stronger in times of organizational uncertainty and transformation. That is to say, when organizational routines and rules are unclear or fluctuating it is likely that members will seek information, reassurance and guidance via their peers and managers.

Our work raises issues of timing and dynamics that may be used to guide future investigators. Although we measured authorization, endorsement and legitimacy on the first questionnaire prior to the measurement of the final dependent variables there is still room for improvement. From a cognitive dissonance perspective subjects may

strive for some degree of consistency in reports of their own and others' attitudes (Festinger 1957). If so, this would account for some of the covariance of legitimacy, authorization and endorsement. Future researchers may measure these constructs at distinct points in time. Doing so would also help to unravel the dynamic temporal relation between authorization and endorsement.

In closing, the general implications of our research suggest reasons why team-based initiatives often fail despite the benefits that they promise (Vallas 2003; Cappelli 2006). Macro explanations rooted in organizational ecology would locate the source of the failure in structural inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1984; Kraatz and Zajac 1996). The idea here is that previous organizational arrangements hamper the transformation from traditional to team-based designs. Other accounts highlight the power dynamics that can and do operate within teams and organizations. From this perspective, team-based transformations are unsuccessful because managers are unwilling to relinquish their position and share decision-making power with members of the team and fail to mobilize endorsement and authorization (Taplin 2001). We find that once social encounters promoting authorization and endorsement emerge, team effectiveness and a sense of commitment are the results. The power of organizations to make a successful transition to team-based designs, as such, lies in the social validity that emerges from fundamental group dynamics.

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