

To share or not to share knowledge – that’s the decision!

The influence of feedback and expert status in knowledge sharing dilemmas



Karin S. Moser, PhD, Professor of Organisational Behaviour
 Business School London South Bank University, email: moserk@lsbu.ac.uk

Aims and Key Outcomes

- When do experts share knowledge under uncertainty?
- Experts have a knowledge advantage and uncertainty about others’ contribution to the common good
- Visibility and criticality of contributions are key for motivation to contribute in knowledge sharing dilemmas
- Feedback and expert status predict sharing intentions and sharing behaviour
- The levels of contribution interact with social value orientation, social norms and time perspective

Summary of Experimental Studies

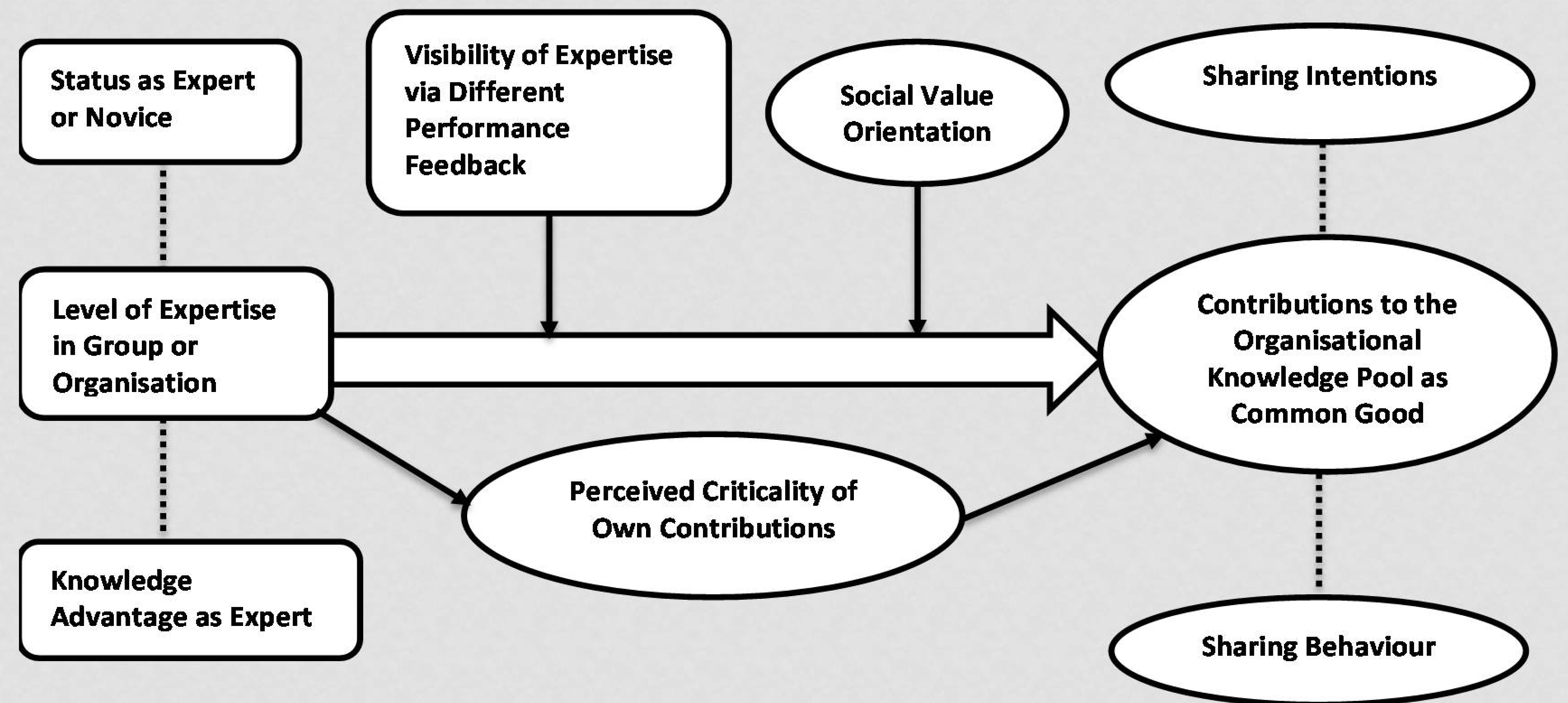
Groups and organisations set cooperative goals for their members, yet in reality some team members contribute more than others to these goals. Experts, in particular, face a social dilemma: From the group’s perspective they should share their knowledge, whereas individually they are better off not sharing, because acquiring knowledge is costly and they would give up a competitive advantage. Experts also have no way of knowing beforehand how much others are willing and able to contribute, so have to make a decision under uncertainty.

Two experiments (N1=96, N2=192) tested the hypothesis, derived from indirect reciprocity theory, that experts contribute more if their status is being recognized. Expert status was manipulated under different performance feedback conditions and the impact on people’s contributions in two different knowledge-sharing tasks was analysed.

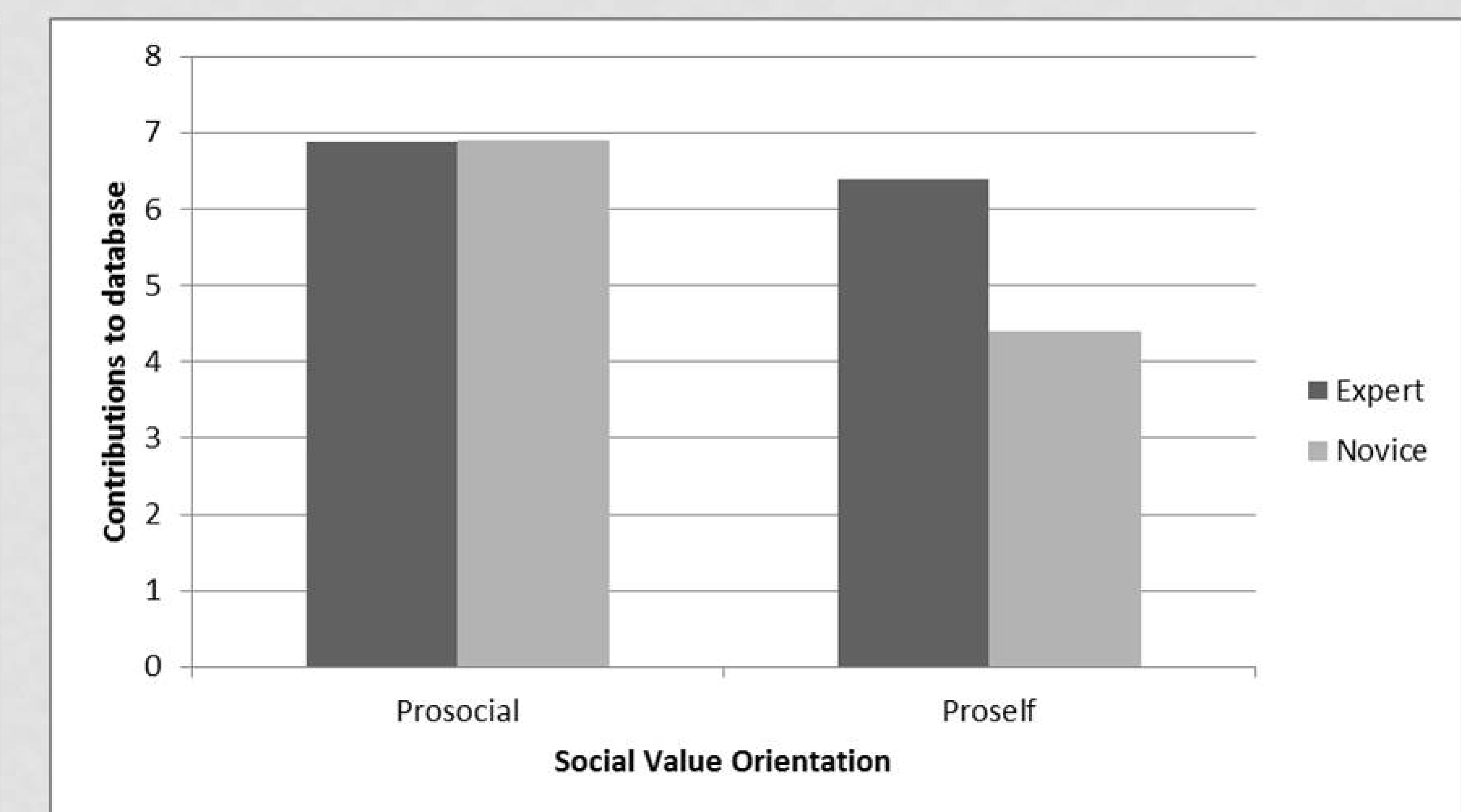
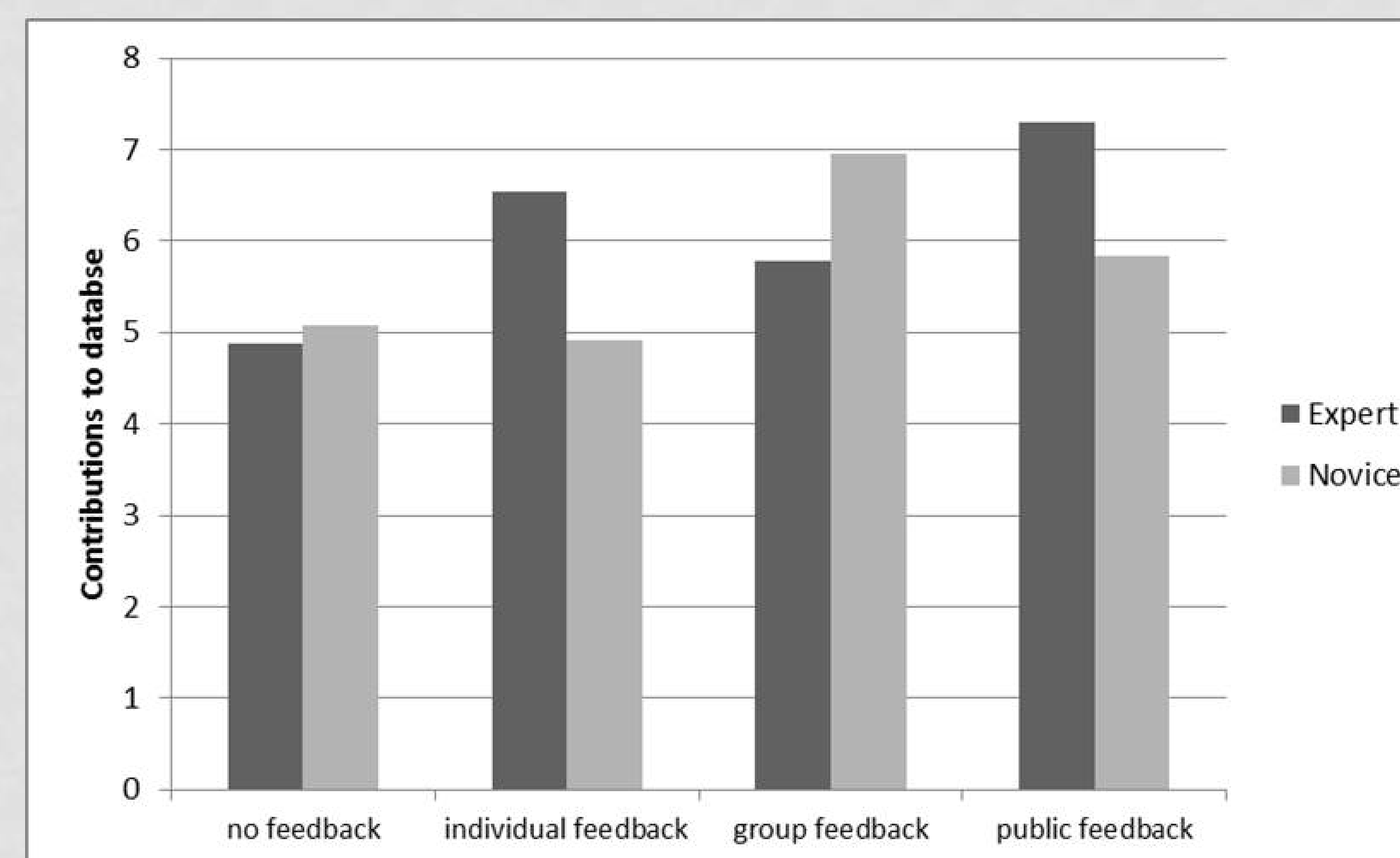
In both studies, experts contributed more when feedback was individualized and public, ensuring both individual status rewards and public recognition. In contrast, novices contributed more when performance feedback was collective, regardless of whether it was public or private feedback. Novices didn’t have to fear negative performance evaluations under group feedback and could gain in social status as members of a successful group. Social value orientation moderated expert contributions in Study 2, with proself-oriented experts being particularly susceptible to reputation gains. In the control condition, no feedback or information about levels of expertise was given at all and both experts and novices reduced their contributions significantly under full uncertainty.

The studies contribute to the neglected aspect of motivation in knowledge sharing dilemmas where collective and individual interests are not necessarily aligned, especially in the case of high expertise. They further contribute to understanding behaviour under uncertainty with respect to intangible assets.

Knowledge Sharing under Uncertainty



Results



Recent Papers

Moser, K. S. (2017). The Influence of Feedback and Expert Status in Knowledge Sharing Dilemmas. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 66(4), 674-709. doi: 10.1111/apps.12105

Moser, K.S., & Kaemmer, J. (2018). Collaboration Time Influences Information-Sharing at Work. *Team Performance Management*, 24(1/2), 2-16. doi: 10.1108/TPM-10-2016-0043