

Aalto University
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Degree Programme in Information Networks

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**Finnish Teamwork in World-Class Team Sports
And What It Might Imply for Interdependent
Workplace Teams**

Master's Thesis

Helsinki, November 27, 2017

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Title of thesis Finnish Teamwork in World-Class Team Sports and What It Might Imply for Interdependent Workplace Teams

Master's programme Information Networks

Thesis supervisor Professor Esa Saarinen

Major or Minor/Code SCI3047 Information Networks

Department Industrial Engineering and Management

Thesis advisor(s) Professor Eila Järvenpää

Date	Number of pages	Language
27.11.2017	118	English

Abstract

World-class team sports is often used as a source of lessons for workplace teamwork. Since there are various types of teams, the degree of interdependence can be used to draw more reliable and profound analogies between these different realms. Whereas less interdependent teams necessitate only little interaction between members, highly interdependent sports and workplace teams require continuous and tight collaboration by everyone.

Building on the fact that certain Finnish teams in six interdependent world-class team sports have recently performed better than expected in many competitions, this study explores the common reasons for successful teamwork in these teams and contemplates how these aspects could be utilized in interdependent workplace teams. The study obtained two sets of qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve high profile coaches from aesthetic group gymnastics, basketball, floorball, ice hockey, synchronized skating and volleyball, while I also used my own experiences as a professional floorball player employing analytic autoethnography. The analysis of the interview data followed the roadmap for building theory from cases.

The study suggests that teamwork has constituted a major source of competitive advantage for these teams and identifies five common reasons for successful teamwork. First, specific Finnish values have had a profound positive impact on the tone of teamwork. Second, the people in these teams have shared certain attributes, reflecting above all willingness to help and always place the team first. Third, the teams have been able to generate an atmosphere of extraordinary respect and trust, which has allowed individual members to release their entire potential but also made them inclined to devote that potential wholly to their team's use. Fourth, the teams have attained a solid common ground and engaging high-quality decisions by a thorough dialogue and participative decision-making. Fifth and finally, the teams have employed a variety of elevating daily routines and rituals that have contributed to the way members have treated and interacted with each other.

On top of these five perspectives, the study explains how a longer-term Finnish culture of success could be established into a shorter-run successful team by holding the team rather permanent, being able to look beyond results and by primarily loving the daily work and people in the team. Altogether, it appears that the perspectives could be broadly applicable in Finnish interdependent workplace teams with only minor exceptions and cautions.

Keywords teamwork, team sports, interdependence, team effectiveness, success

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Työn nimi Suomalainen tiimityö joukkuehuippu-urheilussa ja mitä voimakkaan keskinäisen riippuvuuden tiimit voisivat siitä työelämässä oppia

Koulutusohjelma Informaatioverkostot

Valvoja Professori Esa Saarinen

Pää tai sivuaine/koodi SCI3047 Information Networks

Työn ohjaaja(t) Professori Eila Järvenpää

Päivämäärä 27.11.2017

Sivumäärä 118

Kieli englanti

Tiivistelmä

Joukkuehuippu-urheilusta otetaan usein oppeja työelämän tiimityöhön. Koska tiimejä on monenlaisia, niiden edellyttämää keskinäistä riippuvuutta voidaan käyttää apuna luotettavampien ja syvällisempien vastaavuuksien löytämiseksi. Pienen keskinäisen riippuvuuden tiimit vaativat vain vähän jäsenten välistä vuorovaikutusta, kun taas korkean keskinäisen riippuvuuden tiimit sekä joukkueurheilussa että työelämässä edellyttävät kaikilta jatkuvaa ja tiivistä yhteistyötä.

Tietyt suomalaiset huippu-urheilujoukkueet kuudessa korkean keskinäisen riippuvuuden lajissa ovat viime aikoina menestyneet poikkeuksellisen hyvin. Kyseiseen havaintoon perustuen tämä tutkimus etsii tiimityön yhteisiä menestystekijöitä näissä joukkueissa ja pohtii, miten löydettyjä tekijöitä voisi hyödyntää vastaavanlaisissa tiimeissä työelämässä. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin kahta kvalitatiivista aineistoa. Haastatteluaineistoa kerättiin kahdeltatoista eturivin joukkuevoimistelu-, jääkiekko-, koripallo-, lentopallo-, muodostelmaluistel- ja salibandyvalmentajalta, minkä lisäksi hyödynsin omia kokemuksiani salibandyammattilaisena autoetnografian keinoin. Haastatteluaineiston analysointi noudatti malliesimerkkeihin pohjautuvaa grounded theory -menetelmää.

Tutkimus vahvistaa, että tiimityö on luonut kyseisille joukkueille merkittävää kilpailuetua ja tunnistaa viisi yhteistä ja toisiinsa liittyvää tiimityön menestystekijää. Ensiksi, suomalaisilla perusarvoilla on ollut voimakas vaikutus sävyyn, jolla tiimityötä tehdään. Toiseksi, ihmisillä näissä joukkueissa on ollut tiettyjä yhteisiä piirteitä, kuvastaen ennen kaikkea halua auttaa ja asettaa joukkue etusijalle kaikissa tilanteissa. Kolmanneksi, joukkueet ovat kyenneet luomaan poikkeuksellisen kunnioituksen ja luottamuksen ilmapiirin, mikä on auttanut yksittäisiä jäseniä realisoimaan potentiaalinsa mutta myös kanavoimaan tämän potentiaalın joukkueen käyttöön. Neljänneksi, hyödyntäen perusteellista dialogia ja osallistavaa päätöksentekoa, joukkueet ovat saavuttaneet vankan yhteisen ymmärryksen sekä laadukkaita ja sitouttavia päätöksiä. Viidenneksi, joukkueet ovat käyttäneet monia päivittäisiä rutiineja ja rituaaleja vaikuttaakseen kohottavasti tapaan, jolla jäsenet ovat olleet vuorovaikutuksessa keskenään sekä kohdelleet toisiaan.

Näiden viiden menestystekijän lisäksi tutkimus esittää, kuinka lyhyemmällä aikavälillä menestyssekäaseen joukkueeseen voitaisiin luoda pidemmän aikavälin suomalaista menestyksen kulttuuria pitämällä joukkueen kokoonpano verraten muuttumattomana, kykenemällä näkemään konkreettisten tulosten taakse sekä nauttimalla ensisijaisesti päivittäisestä työstä joukkueen ihmisten kanssa. Tutkimuksen perusteella näyttää siltä, että tunnistetut menestystekijät olisivat hyödynnettävissä vastaavissa suomalaisissa työelämätiimeissä vain vähäisin poikkeuksin ja rajoituksin.

Avainsanat tiimityö, joukkueurheilu, keskinäinen riippuvuus, tiimien tehokkuus, menestys

PREFACE

Already for a long time, I have been aware of the potential of team sports to provide valuable insights on high-class teamwork and dreamed of an opportunity to make a systematic representation of these insights. Given the background, preparing a thesis on these issues was an obvious choice. Symbolically, it also allowed me to close two books, those concerning my studies and sports career, and open a new one, relating to enhancing teamwork and better life in other realms. Furthermore, by this study, I could pay my modest tribute to Finland on its one hundredth anniversary; in fact, the contents match very well with *Together*, the theme of our centenary celebration.

There are plenty of people to acknowledge. While being essential around this study, the encouraging and visionary support from my supervisor and humanist teammate, Professor Esa Saarinen, has already continued for roughly ten years in various forms, having a far-reaching impact on my thinking. Professor Eila Järvenpää contributed also substantially during the thesis process and is the person behind the brilliant idea of using autoethnography to incorporate my personal experiences as a team sports practitioner into the study.

All the interviewees—high profile coaches Kaisa Arrateig, Henrik Dettmann, Titta Heikkilä, Jukka Jalonen, Anneli Laine-Näätänen, Heikki Luukkonen, Petteri Nykky, Anu Oksanen, Pieti Poikola, Tuomas Sammeltuon, Tommi Tiilikainen and Erkkka Westerlund—deserve a warm thank you for very insightful interviews and their enthusiasm for the study. Conversations with many friends from the university and elsewhere provided both perspective and depth. Last but not least, I am grateful to all fellow players, coaches, opponents and other members of the floorball community, with whom I have lived within the phenomena that I have here tried to explain.

Let even the next one hundred years of Finland be full of world-class teamwork, both in sports and elsewhere.

Helsinki, November 27, 2017

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1 INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades, teams—defined as groups of people who are interdependent and pursue a shared goal—have become an increasingly popular way of designing work in a variety of organizations and communities (see, e.g., Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Delarue et al., 2008; Salas et al., 2015). This shift has been mainly due to the competitive challenges and growing complexity that many organizations and industries are facing. As the environment nowadays calls for more flexible, productive and creative arrangements that take advantage on employees' diverse personalities, thoughts, skills and experiences, teams in many forms are generally presumed to make up the optimal composition.

While the use of teams has spread in contemporary organizations, it is no surprise that the literature around teams and teamwork has become prolific with an immense variety of definitions and models (Knights and McCabe, 2000; Stewart, 2006; Avolio et al., 2009). Given the need for teams, both scholars and practitioners have been interested in discovering the ways to design teams so that they lead to optimal outcomes for both organizations and employees. Even though some rather universal guidelines can be given for making any conceivable team work, the literature is fairly unanimous in proposing that teamwork varies with context, being contingent on numerous factors (Sundstrom et al., 1990; Thompson and Wallace, 1996; Mueller et al., 2000; Salas et al., 2015).

Therefore, because no detailed precept of teamwork is applicable everywhere, it becomes vital to choose the most suitable design in each case separately (Dunphy and Bryant, 1996). Moreover, when applying guidelines from certain teams to other kinds of teams—for example from sports to workplace teams—one must ensure that the degree of fit between these two contexts is sufficient according to some relevant criteria, such as the degree and type of interdependence among the given teams (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006; Mathieu et al., 2008).

1.1 Background and motivation

To find the recipe for outstanding teams in the workplace, world-class team sports has been fairly extensively used as a source of provoking thoughts, useful models and inspirational examples (see, e.g., Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001; Jones, 2002; Weinberg and McDermott, 2002; Wolfe et al., 2005; Ievleva and Terry, 2008; Fletcher, 2011). When it comes to team effectiveness, it has been proposed that team sports comprises one of the most valuable settings from which various organizations could learn, given that the principles of success observed in team sports would be applicable in and transferable to workplace teams. At the same time, however, it has been suggested that because sports and workplace teams differ in many dimensions—let alone concerning the wider cultural context—the transfer of knowledge is more relevant between some teams than others and must therefore be conducted cautiously. This calls for additional research concerning the potential connections between the more specific set-ups within the two domains.

The extent and nature of interdependence stands for a key dimension that can be used to make a distinction between different types of teams in both sports and the workplace and, further, to draw more insightful and whole-hearted analogies between these two realms (see, e.g., Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006; Pescosolido and Saavedra, 2012). In terms of interdependence, team sports can be placed on a continuum. Some sports involve only little interaction among teammates and excellent teams are made of excellent individual performers, whereas some other sports necessitate continuous involvement by all members and excellent teams are comprised of excellent team players. Workplace teams can be perceived similarly; in some teams, success is dependent on outstanding independent work, while other teams are strongly interdependent and cooperation constitutes the dominant value. After understanding these characteristic features, we are able to assess the degree of fit between different sports and workplace teams and choose the configurations in which the transfer of knowledge would be most specific and prolific.

Over the past years, certain Finnish teams in aesthetic group gymnastics, basketball, floorball, ice hockey, synchronized skating and volleyball have been exceptionally successful when comparing their relative performance in international competitions to that of teams from many other nations. Interestingly, from the above framework of interdependence point of view, one common factor in these triumphs is that all the sports are considered highly interdependent team sports. What is more, it has been often commented that these Finnish teams have performed better than what could have been expected on the grounds of the capabilities of the teams' individual athletes. Thus, given that collaboration is key in such interdependent settings, we could assume that the Finnish teams have been exceptionally good at teamwork. Given the number of players and the scale of individual talent in Russia, for example, Finland should have no chance against them in ice hockey; nevertheless, Finland has lately more often than not beaten Russia in important tournaments. Along with the triumphs in these sports, team sports has gained a stronger foothold in the Finnish society in general and in Finnish sports in particular (Ryömä, 2015, 64).

Also outside team sports, in many business environments, the starting point for Finland and Finnish organizations is commonly identical. In the face of a globalizing world, due to its small population, Finland might often possess less knowledge and other resources in absolute terms than available in larger nations (see, e.g., Chaker, 2011; Jalonen and Lampi, 2012, 223–226). Hence, whenever relevant, to blossom in various fields, it is crucial for Finnish organizations to orchestrate their resources for the common good as symphonically as possible. In all contexts that feature at least some degree of interdependence, teamwork is key for Finland. Since team sports is widely considered as a valuable reference point for workplace teams and several Finnish teams in interdependent team sports have recently been extraordinarily successful, it would be interesting to know whether the teams feature any common success factors of teamwork that would be applicable also in the workplace.

Besides studying for two university degrees at Aalto University and gaining work experience in study-related fields, thanks to my professional career in floorball I have personally been deeply involved with interdependent team sports during my young adulthood. After starting recreational floorball as a young boy in the

beginning of the 1990s, debuting at the senior level in 1999 and representing the Finnish national floorball team since 2000, world-class team sports has long been my primary target of passion, effort and commitment as well as my overriding source of pride, joy and lifelong experiences. Furthermore, along with belonging to teams that have achieved great triumphs—including above all three world championships—but also being a member in teams that have performed much worse, I have obtained various practical insights into what might matter in terms of successful teamwork in such a context. Thus far, however, despite reflecting the issue for years and talking on the topic on various occasions, I have not structured my learnings thoroughly in black and white, let alone performed an academic study on them.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the common reasons behind successful Finnish teamwork in interdependent team sports and to contemplate how these issues could be utilized in the Finnish workplace. The impetus for the study stems from the three premises presented above: (i) that teamwork has lately become increasingly essential in organizations, (ii) that team sports makes up a conceivably fruitful setting for drawing lessons for the workplace and (iii) that certain Finnish sports teams have recently been exceptionally successful. Beyond the main purpose, however, the study embodies also a personal purpose. The preparation of this thesis enables me to structure some learnings I have acquired during the years in the dual role of being both a team sports practitioner and an academic and, further, to reflect how I could take advantage of them in my future endeavors in the workplace.

Therefore, the purpose of the study translates into two main research questions:

1. What are the common reasons for the recent successful teamwork among the Finnish teams in interdependent world-class team sports?
2. How could these aspects of successful teamwork be utilized in Finnish interdependent workplace teams?

As mentioned above, both sports and workplace teams differ in many dimensions. To utilize lessons from sports to increase our knowledge of workplace teams, we must address the similarities and differences between teams within the two realms. These distinctions are important not only because they determine the transferability of the results obtained in a specific context but also because they have key implications for organizing teamwork (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006). In this respect, to facilitate the relevant comparisons, it is useful to employ some theoretically grounded framework (Wolfe et al., 2005). In this study, the concept of interdependence, which is considered as an informative way to characterize teams (Mathieu et al., 2008), serves as such a framework. Following the formulation by Katz (2001), the focus here is on “sports where team members play different positions, are interdependent and must work together closely to beat a competing team” (p. 57), instead of “sports where the success of the team is essentially the sum of individual players’ independent performances” (p. 56). Thus, the more detailed success factors of less interdependent teamwork are excluded from the study.

1.3 Contribution

The main contribution of the study is a practitioner-friendly insight into successful teamwork in Finnish interdependent team sports and, consequently, in workplace teams that feature a roughly similar degree of interdependence. Generally, even though the teamwork literature includes an abundance of descriptions of conditions and processes that might affect teamwork (for a recent review, see, e.g., Salas et al., 2015), they too often fail to address teamwork challenges in real life (Mathieu et al., 2008). Salas et al. (2008), for example, call for the need to investigate “teams in the wild” (p. 544), which would enable higher-quality guidance to organizations, complementing the theoretical models. By inspecting my own experiences through analytic autoethnography and combining them with interview data from world-class coaches employing grounded theory, the study provides a practically accessible and metaphor-rich but scientifically legitimate approach to successful interdependent

teamwork.¹ As such, the study is primarily targeted at a variety of practitioners involved with interdependent teams both in sports and in the workplace.

At the same time, however, the study contributes also to the teamwork literature by introducing the first-ever inquiry into Finnish interdependent team sports. To the best of my knowledge, there are no previous academic studies that would piece the aforementioned sports together as interdependent sports and trace their common thread of successful teamwork.² Some non-academic books discussing success stories in these sports from varying perspectives do exist,³ but they—while being very inspirational—only rarely concern teamwork directly or provide practical implications for the workplace. More broadly, in this respect, the study provides the Finnish discussion on teamwork and leadership with a more comprehensive view on the value of team sports and its potential to offer guidelines for further developing teamwork in the workplace.

1.4 Structure of the study

The thesis is organized as follows. The following three chapters deal with the general theoretical background. Chapter 2 introduces to the basic concepts around teams and explains how to differentiate teams by interdependence, Chapter 3 focuses on the use of team sports as an educative setting for the workplace and Chapter 4 presents a few aspects of successful teamwork that are useful to be aware of before building our own theory. Thereafter, Chapter 5 describes the research design in more detail and Chapter 6 includes the answers to the first research question. Chapter 7 contains the answers to the second research question and discusses the findings of the study. Chapter 8 concludes and provides ideas on future research.

¹ Jones (2002) and Hays (2006), for example, underline that the most powerful standpoints on team performance emerge if one is capable of combining personal experiences as an elite athlete with scientific knowledge in the related areas.

² Even internationally, Weinberg and McDermott (2002) as well as Fletcher (2011) note that despite the large number of books concerning the generic principles that are essential in sports but applicable in all kinds of organizations, there have been surprisingly few empirical studies investigating the overlap and/or crossover of issues between more specific domains.

³ These include at least Saarikoski (2015) in basketball, Saarinen (1995) and Pirinen (2016) in ice hockey and Saari (2011) in floorball.

2 TEAMS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *team* originates from the old expression for a bridle, referring to a crop of draught animals harnessed together and, by analogy, to a group of persons involved in joint work or action. All around the world, teams exist these days increasingly at all levels in many organizations and industries but also in other communities not involved in producing goods or services (see, e.g., Sundstrom et al., 1990; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Mueller et al., 2000; Salas et al., 2015). Along with their emergence in the workplace and their apparent links with organizational performance, teams have naturally drawn a growing interest as a field of study from several perspectives (Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Stewart, 2006; Salas et al., 2008; Avolio et al., 2009).^{4,5}

This chapter provides an introduction to teams, which helps us understand how they differ from each other and allows us to make a distinction between different team sports and workplace teams later in the study. The chapter begins by defining teams and teamwork as well as by explaining why teams are gaining more popularity. Thereafter, the chapter portrays the typical types, roles and skills that teams may involve. Finally, the chapter explains how teams and their tasks are embedded in the organizational context and brings out the framework of interdependence, which will be applied with different team sports in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 Defining teams and teamwork

Over the years, teams and teamwork have been defined in a number of ways, without reaching explicit, generally accepted definitions (Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Delarue et al., 2008). Most often the term *team* stands for a collection of two or more individuals who are interdependent and autonomous in their tasks and work toward

⁴ While the topic is focal on today's agenda, however, its roots date back all the way to the pioneering work performed in the Tavistock Institute by Trist and Bamforth (1951) who examined miners' social and psychological responses to socio-technical work design.

⁵ For comprehensive reviews of the literature around teams, see, e.g., Cohen and Bailey (1997), Delarue et al. (2008), Mathieu et al. (2008) and Salas et al. (2015).

some common objectives, sharing responsibility for the outcomes and comprising an intact social entity in one or more social systems (see, e.g., Sundstrom et al., 1990; Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Mueller et al., 2000; Webber and Donahue, 2001; Kerr and Tindale, 2004). Such a definition—resting on multiple persons, interdependence and a shared goal—captures well the primary components of teams (Salas et al., 2015). Depending on time and context, however, a few other terms such as *group* and *work unit* have also been used to describe this form of organizing work (Benders and Van Hootegem, 1999).⁶ To keep semantic confusion to a minimum, I will throughout this study employ the above phenomenological bottom line of the term *team*, instead of striving for adopting any stricter definition.⁷

To be effective, teams must engage in and be capable of performing both *taskwork* and *teamwork*, where the effectiveness of one facilitates the other (Salas et al., 2015). Taskwork comprises the tasks that do not necessitate interdependent interaction with other team members but must be completed to later reach the team goals, whereas teamwork refers to the interdependent aspects of team activity required to coordinate the performance of the members (Salas et al., 2008). As such, teamwork encompasses the interrelated set of shared behaviors (actions), attitudes (feelings) and cognitions (thoughts) needed to operate as a team and contribute to the dynamic process of performance (Morgan et al., 1993; Zaccaro et al., 2001; Salas et al., 2005; Delarue et al., 2008). Even if a team would possess extensive knowledge of a task, it would be doomed to fail without proper teamwork, i.e. if the team members are not able to share the knowledge, coordinate their behaviors as well as trust each other (Mathieu et al., 2008).

⁶ Even though Guzzo and Dickson (1996) argue that it is both impossible and pointless to attempt to distinguish between the concepts *team* and *group*, they remind that certain authors recognize subtle differences in the sense that teams would only compose a subset of groups. According to this view, the former is usually claimed to connote more than the latter in terms of shared commitment and goals as well as interdependence and synergy among members (see, e.g., Sundstrom et al., 1990; Sinclair, 1992; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Fisher et al., 1997; Annett and Stanton, 2000; Belbin, 2000, 13–25; Robotham, 2008). Moreover, Cohen and Bailey (1997) note that the popular management literature has tended to use the term *team*, whereas the academic literature has been more inclined to use the word *group*. Nonetheless, in this study, I will use these different concepts interchangeably.

⁷ A potential, widely cited stricter definition would be the one proposed by Katzenbach and Smith (1993, 21) who suggest that “a team is a small group of people (typically fewer than twenty) with complementary skills committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals.” In the context of this study, however, this definition would be too strict because it would exclude some team sports (in which the regular size of a team is around 20 players plus the coaching staff) and because it would consider only teams with a high degree of interdependence as “true” teams.

2.2 Why teams?

There are various reasons behind the recent interest in teams and teamwork. Mueller et al. (2000) locate these factors at two distinct levels. At the more general level, since the concept of teamwork has connotations of collaboration, comradeship, commitment and conviviality, it is firmly linked with our motive of affiliation. As such, it carries an almost irresistible appeal to our social, moral and individual imperatives; being a *team player* is nowadays necessary in many positions. Or, as Sewell (1998, 401) puts it, teamwork is associated with some “emancipatory rhetoric,” in contrast with pursuing control as an end in itself. At another level, Mueller et al. (2000) argue that the fascination in teams and teamwork is linked to the competitive challenges that many industries are facing. In this regard, teams and teamwork denote a vehicle to improve organizational performance by strategically strengthening organizational capabilities and competences.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993, 16) highlight that organizations now operate in an era in which “high levels of performance depend on being customer driven, delivering total quality, continuously improving and innovating, empowering the workforce and partnering with suppliers and customers.” In this respect, they suggest that teams and performance compose “an unbeatable combination” (p. 15); teams are both more flexible and productive than other organizational arrangements. The authors claim that whenever a mix of diverse skills, experiences and judgments is needed, teams will produce better results than individuals in confined roles and responsibilities.⁸ Several authors, including for instance Manz and Sims (1987), Sewell (1998) and Bacon and Blyton (2000), have provided similar viewpoints on the effectiveness of teamwork over other forms of work design, typically suggesting that teamwork improves both the quality of work life and organizational performance.

⁸ From the knowledge point of view, scholars have viewed teamwork as a focal process through which knowledge held by individuals can be exchanged, combined and transformed into intellectual capital and, further, into competitive advantage (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Drucker (1992), for example, argues that since knowledge is the primary strategic resource in the contemporary society—land, labor and capital becoming secondary—the function of any organization is to put knowledge to work. Consequently, he insists that organizations must employ teams in which individual outputs are judged by their contribution to the common task, replacing the traditional bosses and subordinates.

Theoretically, a number of arguments explicate the links between the use of teams and organizational performance, being founded among others on strategic human resource management, self-leadership, sociotechnical work design, business process reengineering, lean production, organizational learning, job enrichment and empowerment (see, e.g., Mueller, 1994; Sewell, 1998; Bacon and Blyton, 2000; Knights and McCabe, 2000, and the references therein). To understand these links, the arguments can be grouped in different categories and, further, at sequential layers that explain how outcomes in one category contribute to the outcomes in the next category. As illustrated in Figure 1, Delarue et al. (2008) demonstrate for example how introducing teams can reduce absenteeism and, subsequently, improve productivity, which can ultimately generate higher profits.^{9,10}

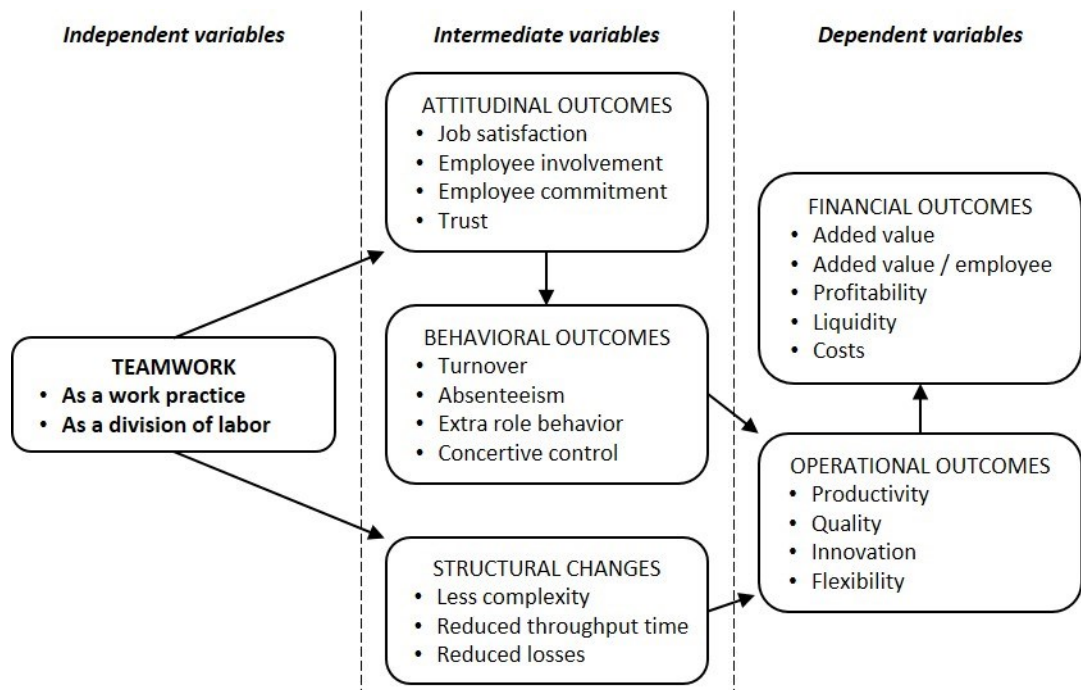


Figure 1. Links between the use of teams and organizational performance. Modified from Delarue et al. (2008, 131).

⁹ Delarue et al. (2008) also remind that while the traditional performance indicators fall under operational and financial outcomes, the team literature has introduced new indicators that concern the outcomes for the team and its members. Thus, viewing all the outcome categories as a hierarchy demonstrates the important links that exist between the use of teams and bottom line results.

¹⁰ In practice, the use of teams has been associated with an improved financial performance, organizational efficiency and quality as well as an enhanced capability to respond to the changing demands in the organizations' environment (see, e.g., Morgan et al., 1993; Cohen and Ledford, 1994; Cohen et al., 1996; Dunphy and Bryant, 1996; Ichniowski and Shaw, 2003; West et al., 2003, and the references therein).

Despite all the praise, however, the use of teams should be treated with caution. Some studies demonstrate that it has resulted either in lower productivity and financial performance or in positive outcomes for organizations but worse outcomes for employees within these organizations (see, e.g., Bacon and Blyton, 2000, and the references therein).¹¹ Therefore, as Mueller et al. (2000) brightly suggest, teams and teamwork should perhaps be seen as something more than a groundless management trend but less than a panacea for all organizational problems. Since teamwork can have both positive and negative effects on organizations and employees, we always have to maintain a critical eye on its different configurations; perceiving it as a panacea would obscure seeing its negative effects (Knights and McCabe, 2000). We must keep in mind that the use of teams varies with context; no detailed model is applicable everywhere but contingent on a variety of factors (Sundstrom et al., 1990; Mueller, 1994; Thompson and Wallace, 1996; Salas et al., 2015). In addition, since various conceivable performance outcomes exist, management seeking specific performance improvement must be aware of the team models that would best achieve the desired outcome (Dunphy and Bryant, 1996).

2.3 Types of team

Teamwork draws on a variety of traditions, resulting in a number of different types, shapes and forms of teams in present-day organizations (Mueller et al., 2000). The literature provides various typologies, which usually overlap to a certain extent.¹² Driskell et al. (1987), for example, name six categories of teams, based on behavioral requirements: (i) mechanical/technical, (ii) intellectual/analytic, (iii) imaginative/aesthetic, (iv) social, (v) manipulative/persuasive and (vi) logical/precision. McGrath (1984), on the other hand, presents an eightfold typology of team tasks: (i) generating plans, (ii) generating ideas, (iii) solving problems with correct answers,

¹¹ Various scholars have claimed that management might even intensify its control over workforce through teamwork (e.g., Delbridge, 1995; Sewell, 1998), that peer control in teams actually constrains members more powerfully than bureaucratic control (e.g., Barker, 1993; Ezzamel and Willmott, 1998; Knights and McCabe, 2000; Townsend, 2007) and that the team ideology tyrannizes individuals by encouraging the use of teams with unsuitable tasks and unrealistic goals (e.g., Knights and Willmott, 1987; Sinclair, 1992). Moreover, the use of teams might give rise to irrational decision-making (e.g., Janis, 1971; Aldag and Fuller, 1993) as well as to free-rider problems and social loafing (e.g., Holmstrom, 1982; Karau and Williams, 1993; Chan, 2016).

¹² For an extensive review of these classifications, see, e.g., Devine (2002).

(iv) deciding issues with no correct answers, (v) resolving conflicts of viewpoints, (vi) resolving conflicts of interests, (vii) resolving conflicts of power and (viii) executing performance tasks. The McGrath typology, which locates teams on three dichotomized dimensions (conflict–cooperation, conceptual–behavioral and choose–execute), stands for another example of holistic classifications that place different teams into exclusive and exhaustive categories.

Since the 1990s, both scholars and practitioners have also classified teams found in actual organizations according to their functional role (Devine, 2002). Cohen and Bailey (1997), for instance, identify four types of teams, including work teams, parallel teams, project teams and management teams. Katzenbach and Smith (1993, 12), on the other hand, separate between “teams who recommend things,” “teams who make or do things” and “teams who run or manage things,” each of which face unique challenges in their specific context. Similarly, in their widely cited typology, Sundstrom et al. (1990; 2000) distinguish six general team categories: (i) production, (ii) service, (iii) project, (iv) management, (v) advisory as well as (vi) action and performing teams, which are founded on their differentiation from and coordination with other work units as well as on their typical work cycles and outputs.

In the Sundstrom et al. (1990; 2000) typology, production teams, such as automobile assembly teams, produce repeatedly tangible outputs, whereas service teams, like telecommunications sales teams, cooperate to conduct transactions with customers. Project teams, for example new product development teams, are usually cross-functional and perform separate, specialized and time-limited projects, disbanding after the completion of the project. Management teams, such as corporate executive teams, consist of managers who coordinate work units under their purview through various procedures. Advisory teams, such as quality circles and selection committees, are assembled temporarily to recommend solutions and solve problems. Finally, action and performing teams, which comprise of negotiating teams, surgery teams and musician groups, for instance, carry out complex, temporally limited performance events in the midst of audiences, opponents and/or challenging

environments. Sports teams, the focus of this study, also fall under action and performing teams in the Sundstrom et al. framework.¹³

Altogether, along with the progression of team research, the typologies of teams have become almost as varied as the number of scholars discussing them (Salas et al., 2005). Moreover, the simple taxonomies have proven somewhat problematic as they might provide an oversimplified view and debate of reality and denote bifurcation and separateness when elements in fact overlap considerably (Benders and Van Hooft, 1999; Bacon and Blyton, 2000). Nevertheless, considering the type of team is a proper starting point when tracing the determinants of effectiveness and transferring the results obtained in one team context to another (Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006). On top of that, it is more informative to characterize teams according to their underlying actual nature, such as in terms of the degree and type of interdependence (Mathieu et al., 2008).

2.4 Team roles and skills

Regardless of their type, teams are comprised of members who carry out different roles. Team roles refer to “an individual’s tendency to behave in particularly preferred ways which contribute to and interrelate with other members within a team” (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004, 337). Belbin (1981; 1993a) proposes a widely cited framework for understanding roles within a team, suggesting that there are nine¹⁴ significant roles that compose the core of an effective team: (i) plant, (ii) resource investigator, (iii) coordinator, (iv) shaper, (v) monitor-evaluator, (vi) teamworker, (vii) implementer, (viii) completer and (ix) specialist. In his view, management must ensure that all these roles are fulfilled. Team members

¹³ Another category of teams that has recently gained much importance, mainly due to the developments in information and communications technology, comprises virtual teams. Robotham (2008) describes these as “groups of people who work interdependently with shared purpose across space, time and organization boundaries using technology to communicate and collaborate” (p. 53). Virtual teams are often cross-functional, generating new work processes or solving customer problems. Members in these teams may be located across the world and include people from different cultures, rarely meeting face-to-face. Compared to other types of team, the element of virtuality and the lack of face-to-face contacts may cause distinct problems, particularly in the development of trust within the team.

¹⁴ Originally, Belbin (1981) proposed eight roles, but later he (Belbin, 1993a) revised the framework to include nine roles.

complement each other and if there are less than eight people in the team, some members should take on more than one role. Belbin argues that successful teams are consisted of individuals with different attributes; for example, a good team must include someone who generates new ideas and someone who takes care of meeting schedules and targets. Thus, the personal characteristics fit an individual particularly for some roles and limit the likelihood for being successful in other roles.¹⁵

Belbin's widespread team role theory has also been criticized by various authors (see, e.g., Belbin, 1993b; Furnham et al., 1993; Dulewicz, 1995; Fisher et al., 1996; 1997; 1998; Senior, 1997; Prichard and Stanton, 1999; Butcher and Bailey, 2000; Hayes, 2002, 48–50). For instance, it has been argued that there is limited empirical evidence supporting Belbin's ideal team composition and that other measures than those used by Belbin might be more applicable to identify different team roles. Moreover, the view on teams conforming to some ideal despite organizational circumstances has been rejected; different situations might bring out completely different facets of personality. Nevertheless, Belbin's framework has been extensively used in a variety of organizations (Hayes, 2002, 116; Robotham, 2008). Regardless of its weaknesses, the model is anyway capable of showing which kind of contributions people can make to a team's work, as well as underlining that successful teamwork usually requires various types of activity (Hayes, 2002, 50).

Alternatively, instead of the role approach and the static assumptions suggested by Belbin, teams can be conceived through skills that members bring to them, which emphasizes development over time (Hayes, 2002, 50–51). Katzenbach and Smith (1993, 47–48) assert that teams must possess the right mix of skills, which fall into three categories. First, technical or functional expertise refers to the expert knowledge that is required to undertake a task. Second, problem-solving and decision-making skills stress the importance of being able to identify problems and opportunities teams are facing, evaluate available options and make decisions about

¹⁵ Another widely known framework for team roles is called *the Team Management Wheel*, provided by Margerison and McCann (1990). Similar to Belbin (1981), they propose eight specific team roles, but they also group these roles into four general approaches: explorers, advisers, controllers and organizers. Furthermore, in their model, Margerison and McCann incorporate a linker who brings about coherence for the whole set-up by coordinating the different team members and activities as well as by acting as a representative with outsiders.

how to proceed. The third category consists of interpersonal skills, including for example helpful criticism, objectivity, active listening as well as recognizing the interests and achievements of others; these skills result in effective communication and constructive conflict, and, further, in common understanding and purpose. Overall, Katzenbach and Smith discuss that while it is clearly incorrect to ignore skills in team selection, it is also common to overemphasize them; as teams compose a powerful vehicle for personal learning and development, their dynamics usually cause the potential skill gaps to be filled along the way.

2.5 Tasks and the organizational context

As depicted above, teams vary in a number of dimensions. To understand the factors affecting team performance, two opposite perspectives have been provided by the literature (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004, 408–409). On the one hand, the input-process-output (IPO) model, which represents an inside-out approach, looks at teams from within, considering us being team members (for a review, see, e.g., Mathieu et al., 2008). However, the flaw of this view, despite having been modified and extended in several ways, is that it underestimates the many contextual and environmental factors inherent in teamwork (Mathieu et al., 2008). On the other hand, the ecological framework originally presented by Sundstrom et al. (1990), which represents an outside-in approach, perceives teams as being embedded within their organization. This view underlines the different interactions that a team has with its environment; as such, team performance is best understood as an ongoing process including both internal processes (labelled as *team development*) and external surroundings (*organizational context*), being mediated by *team boundaries*.

In the Sundstrom et al. (1990) framework, the organizational context of a team describes eight aspects that are external to the team but relevant to it to operate.¹⁶ Among them, *tasks* comprise a major and widely approved source of difference between teams, differing in various categories such as technical versus interpersonal

¹⁶ These aspects include organizational culture, task design and technology, mission clarity, autonomy, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and consultation as well as physical environment.

demands, intermember communications, task divisibility and dependence on the performance of others. Multiple scholars have claimed and empirically proven that tasks substantially affect the processes required for team performance (see, e.g., Salas et al., 2005, and the references therein). Thus, given the task and its requirements and constraints, it is essential to organize teamwork so that it promotes effective team performance, understanding the impact of interdependence on team processes and outcomes (Saavedra et al., 1993; Sprigg et al., 2000).

2.6 Differentiating teams by interdependence

Interdependence is a task characteristic that plays a key role in defining the appropriate form of work design for a team, initially presented by Thompson (1967) who suggested that work should be organized so that it reflects the degree in which different individuals and departments are dependent on each other to complete their own work (Sprigg et al., 2000). Later, the concept has been extensively referred to as the extent to which team members must rely on each other and collaborate to produce or deliver the product or service generated by the team (see, e.g., Mohr, 1971; Lynch, 1974; Jenkins et al., 1975; Van de Ven et al., 1976; Overton et al., 1977; Kiggundu, 1981; 1983; Saavedra et al., 1993; Wageman, 1995). In other words, it refers to the degree in which the performance of one team member depends on the (successful) performance of the other member(s). As such, the concept is “crucial for the understanding of the reasons for the emergence of team-level phenomena” (Katz-Navon and Erez, 2005, 438).

Interdependence in teams and organizations might derive from multiple sources and can be further conceptualized in several ways. According to Wageman (1995), the most important components are *task interdependence* and *outcome interdependence*. The former represents the degree to which a task necessitates collective action, stemming from inputs into the task (including the distribution of resources and skills as well as the technology that defines the task) and the processes by which the work is executed. The latter stands for the degree to which the outcomes for an individual team member, such as rewards and achievement of a goal, depend on the

performance of other team members. Even though these forms are conceptually distinct, they usually covary positively in practice (D’Innocenzo et al., 2016).

2.6.1 Thompson’s hierarchy of interdependence

In his original formulation, Thompson conceives interdependence in terms of the flow of work, materials and objects among members of a team.¹⁷ He presents a hierarchy of ascending levels of task interdependence, consisting of *pooled*, *sequential* and *reciprocal interdependence*. Pooled interdependence, the first type characterized by least interdependence among team members, exists when each member contributes to the team’s outcome individually, with little or no direct interaction with the other members of the team. Here, members typically have similar roles. Because entire tasks are completed almost independently, team performance is simply equivalent to the sum of individual performances. Sales teams and pools of word processing specialists who attend to the inbox without regarding the work of others stand for examples of this type of interdependence. (Thompson, 1967, 54; Van de Ven et al., 1976; Saavedra et al., 1993; Katz, 2001)

The second type of interdependence called *sequential interdependence* refers to cases in which a team member must act before another can act so that an output of one team member becomes an input for a certain other member. This composition is fairly common in the workplace, particularly in assembly tasks and other sequential processes; it is a set-up made of hierarchical top-down planning and control. Since the nature of the task is rather prescribed and not easily adaptable, team members can mainly improve only their own performance. Each member has a rather narrowly circumscribed role and interaction between team members is programmed and routinized. Therefore, team performance presumes successful completion of each step in the correct order as well as good interaction between the steps. (Thompson, 1967, 54; Saavedra et al., 1993; Katz, 2001)

¹⁷ To be exact, Thompson (1967) views interdependence as a characteristic inherent in the technology of a task, while other authors have later associated it with the way people behave when performing their work (Wageman, 1995). The perspective of the current study falls between these extremes.

Reciprocal interdependence, the third type of interdependence, is characterized by a series of temporally varying bidirectional interactions; an output of a team member becomes an input for another member(s). In this configuration, team members often have specific abilities and roles, each member contributing to the task by performing her role, but the order of action might alternate. This form of interdependence is more complex than the two above forms because team members are dependent on each other in various ways and at different times, depending on the demands of the task environment. Thus, team performance calls for coordination among the members and adaptation to changing situations. Surgery groups and cross-functional task forces comprise examples of reciprocal interdependence. (Thompson, 1967, 54–55; Saavedra et al., 1993; Katz, 2001)

Due to the hierarchical relationship between the different forms, Thompson (1967, 55–64) argues that pooled interdependence must exist before sequential, while sequential interdependence must take place before reciprocal. Since the three types involve increasing degrees of contingency, Thompson claims that they call for different devices to attain coordination, communication and decisions. Regarding coordination, standardization is key with pooled, coordination by plan with sequential and mutual adjustment with reciprocal interdependence. Regarding communication and decisions, pooled interdependence necessitates a smaller amount of communication and less frequent decisions, whereas the opposite holds for reciprocal interdependence. Therefore, given the type of interdependence, Thompson concludes that the organization must facilitate the use of most appropriate processes.

2.6.2 Team interdependence

Building on Thompson, the interdependence typology has been later extended with *team interdependence*, first introduced by Van de Ven et al. (1976), to describe simultaneous work interaction (Saavedra et al., 1993). By this concept, Van de Ven et al. refer to “situations where the work is undertaken jointly by unit personnel who diagnose, problem-solve and collaborate in order to complete the work” (p. 325). Here, contrary to the other types of interdependence, there is no temporal lapse in the work flow between team members; the work is performed simultaneously by the

whole team. As such, team interdependence calls for mutual interactions to decide the course of inputs and outputs together, involving for instance exchange of ideas, information and materials (Saavedra et al., 1993). These interactions can be considered most complex, but the teams featuring team interdependence are also most adaptable; roles tend to overlap so that other members of the team can compensate for the challenges faced by some members (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006). Altogether, Figure 2 depicts the four types of interdependence.

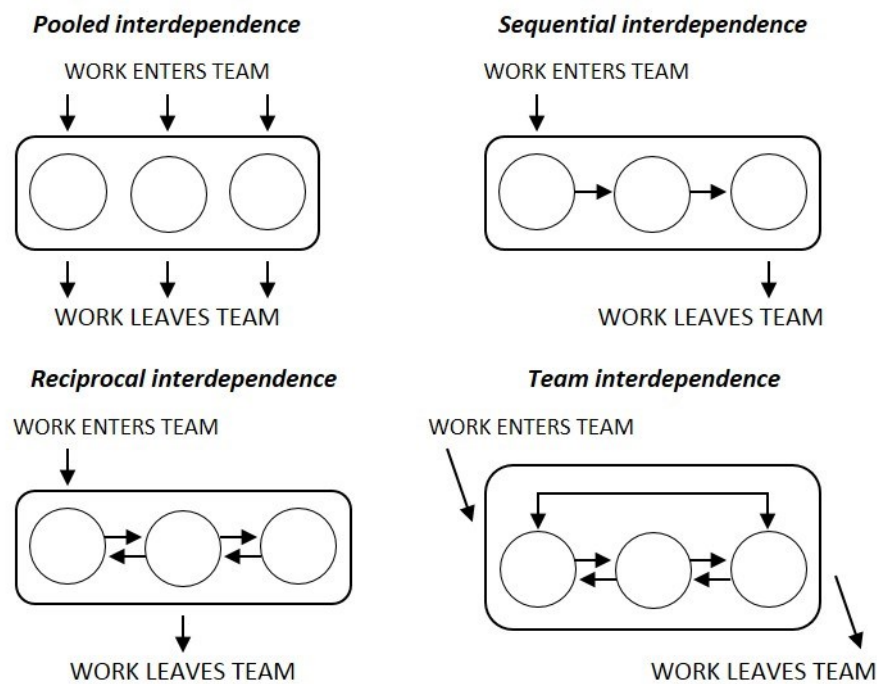


Figure 2. Different types of interdependence. Modified from Saavedra et al. (1993, 62).

Examples of settings belonging to team interdependence include interdisciplinary new product development teams, mental health group therapy sessions, groups of researchers who form a think tank to design a study as well as sports teams playing a match (Van de Ven et al., 1976; Saavedra et al., 1993). As will be explained in the following chapter, however, every team sport does not fall under this type of interdependence, which, in turn, has important implications for lessons that can be taken from team sports to different workplace teams.

3 TEAM SPORTS AS A SETTING FOR TEAMWORK LESSONS

As suggested above, teams and teamwork exist also outside conventional work organizations. One such area is team sports,¹⁸ which has been widely considered as a useful setting for learning successful teamwork that could be incorporated into the workplace (see, e.g., Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001; Jones, 2002; Weinberg and McDermott, 2002; Wolfe et al., 2005; Ievleva and Terry, 2008; Fletcher, 2011). Despite the numerous interconnections between the two realms, however, it has also been proposed that some key differences must be taken into consideration before conducting any transfer of knowledge.

This chapter glances through the literature on the applicability of team sports as an educational setting, particularly from the point of view of developing teamwork in the workplace. The first section explains *why* sports in general and team sports in particular have aroused extensive attention in the working life, whereas the second section answers to the question *what* aspects of team sports are particularly educative for the workplace. The remaining part of the chapter discusses the key differences between team sports and the workplace as well as classifies different team sports by interdependence, using the framework presented in the previous chapter.

3.1 Benefits of performing organizational inquiries in sports

Both academics and practitioners have been keen on drawing lessons from sports in general and team sports in particular, counting on the possibility of transferring knowledge to another context (see, e.g., Kellett, 1999; Weinberg and McDermott, 2002; Adcroft and Teckman, 2009; Pescosolido and Saavedra, 2012).¹⁹ Generally,

¹⁸ *Team sports* refers to sports in which competition takes place between athletes joined within groups (Lebed and Bar-Eli, 2013, xviii). *Teamwork in sports* can be generally defined as “the commitment of individual players to one another and to a common purpose in the context of a shared athletic enterprise” (Gaffney, 2015, 3). These definitions are applied throughout this study.

¹⁹ For a review of organizational studies performed in sports, see, e.g., Keidel (1987), Wolfe et al. (2005) and Day et al. (2012). For a list of non-academic books written mostly by coaches in team sports, see, e.g., McNutt and Wright (1995), Katz (2001), Weinberg and McDermott (2002), Wolfe et al. (2005) and Fletcher (2011). For a list of corresponding Finnish books, see Ryömä (2015, 64).

scholars have viewed sports as a useful laboratory and setting in which the larger society exists in microcosm. Eitzen (2016, 4), for example, proposes that “sport is an institution that provides scientific observers with a convenient laboratory within which to examine values, socialization, stratification and bureaucracy, to name a few structures and processes that also exist at the societal level.” Keidel (1987), in turn, suggests that “the world of sports mirrors the world of work, that game or play structures parallel work structures” (p. 591), but also that “the different varieties of *team* sports can serve as a living laboratory for organizational inquiry” (p. 608).

In terms of organizational behavior, which naturally covers teams and teamwork, Day et al. (2012) argue that sports offers researchers “an interesting and relevant context” (p. 398) because many of the methodological realities of studying people and groups in context are less challenging than elsewhere. In sports, they emphasize that rules are clear and understandable, outcomes are transparent and there are ample sources and amounts of performance data regarding both individuals and teams. Moreover, even though there might be some differences between sports and other organizational contexts, the authors believe that there is “sufficient contextual overlap” (p. 399) to generalize lessons from sports to the workplace (or conversely).

Concerning teams, in comparison with many workplace teams, Wolfe et al. (2005) propose that members of sports teams have unusually clear and consistent abilities, goals, relationships and role definitions. In addition, the authors underline the clarity of team structures as well as the rules and procedures by which teams must operate as factors that make team sports a fascinating context to study how highly motivated individuals and groups perform and behave in “quasi-laboratory conditions” (p. 185). Due to the inspiring high-energy environment evident in sports, Wolfe et al. even note that studies within this realm are fun—and thereby productive—to conduct.

A less academic standpoint provides additional justifications for the applicability of sports. Wolfe et al. (2005) argue that examples and metaphors taken from sports tend to resonate effectively with the practitioners that organizational research is assumed

to influence.²⁰ When compared to business life, for example, Adcroft and Teckman (2009) claim that sports has familiarity and accessibility for a wide range of people; many have a favorite player, team or sport, whereas only few have a favorite CEO, company or industry. At a more profound level, Adcroft and Teckman contemplate that we have “a deep and abiding passion” (p. 12) for sports, due to the emotions that the national teams of popular team sports, for instance, arouse, regardless of one’s economic or political background. Finally, Keidel (1984) comments that while no sport is perfectly equivalent to a business, sports has anyway a metaphorical and heuristic value that exceeds the potential flaws, besides being truly user-friendly.

3.2 What can workplace teams learn from sports?

The contribution of team sports to the study of successful workplace teams can be conceived at least through two interconnected lenses: individual behaviors that foster effective functioning of teams and different aspects of successful cooperation. Regarding the former, employing the individual as the unit of analysis, the literature entails numerous lists of personal attributes essential in both team sports and the workplace. Danish et al. (1993), for example, provide an extensive list of qualities and skills—many of which are closely associated with teamwork—that can be acquired in sports and later utilized in many other life domains. Loehr and Schwartz (2001), on the other hand, discuss how executives can become “corporate athletes” by following some habits and traits of world-class athletes. Moreover, as suggested by Aoyagi et al. (2008), for instance, the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)²¹ framework can be applied also among sports teams to discern favorable behaviors.²²

Beyond the individual attributes, the central lessons from team sports to workplace teams apply the group or organization as the unit of analysis and concern strategic

²⁰ In this respect, while Dutton (2003) highlights the need to bring life into organizational studies, Wolfe et al. (2005) offers inquiries in sports as a solution because they evoke images of “living at the edge” (p. 205), which is somewhat rare in nonsport organizations.

²¹ Originally proposed by Organ (1988), OCB is defined as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal rewards system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (p. 4). Organ distinguishes five categories of OCB: helping, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue.

²² For a review of studies exploring the relationship between involvement in team sports and workplace skill development, see, e.g., Dupuis et al. (2006) and Extejt and Smith (2009).

human resources management and cooperation. From the strategic perspective, Keidel (1984) conceives team sports as a context in which management of human resources comprises a focal part of the overall strategy because many other strategic decisions in the realm take place in an already mandated framework (regarding a sport, league or season, for instance) and because “sports are unequivocally people-intensive” (p. 12). As such, team sports concretely illustrates optimal orchestration of human resources. Moreover, since team sports undeniably necessitates cooperation, Keidel suggests that it provides an opportunity to perceive and analyze teamwork in very practical forms, which contrasts with the blurred and undifferentiated sense in which teamwork is elsewhere often inspected.

Katz (2001) underlines that it is particularly coaching, instead of managing structure, that usually constitutes the decisive factor in team sports and, consequently, makes up the key lesson that can be transferred to the workplace. While variables such as the design of a task, team or its context might vary substantially and require much attention in the workplace, Katz asserts that these variables are rather constant among sports teams and do not explain much variance in performance in comparison with the team building activities and daily interaction with the team. At the same time, however, she reminds that getting the structural factors in place should often precede coaching in the workplace; only after the structural variables have been properly established, coaching can further improve a team’s performance.

3.3 Some differences and cautions

Despite the apparent similarities and opportunities to draw analogies between sports and workplace teams, the two realms feature also a number of differences that have to be considered to utilize lessons from sports appropriately in other contexts (see, e.g., Keidel, 1984; Wolfe et al., 2005; Adcroft and Teckman, 2009; Pescosolido and Saavedra, 2012). Altogether, the literature highlights five distinct differences. First, Ievleva and Terry (2008) note that while performance indicators are immediately and clearly observable in sports, there can be significant time lags before results are revealed in the workplace, which might call for dissimilar intervention strategies.

Second, the authors claim that the goal-setting process in sports is more straightforward, whereas in the workplace the variety of goals might be more complex, perhaps even conflicting, which necessitates thorough clarification of both the objectives themselves and the development of strategies to meet them.

Third, Ievleva and Terry (2008) argue that the temporal ratio of being in training mode to being in performance mode differs substantially between the two domains, which has an impact on the design of performance enhancement approaches. In the workplace, there might be no chances for trying out new things in a risk-free setting. Fourth, the authors emphasize that rules, processes and outcomes in the workplace are much less neatly and well established, perhaps even changing frequently, which might create confusion when outlining priorities and actions. In relation to this difference, Katz (2001, 66) reminds that the workplace stands for “a more ethically complex and higher-stakes arena than the playing field,” activities possibly having more far-reaching consequences and affecting a wide range of stakeholders.

The final point of divergence between sports and workplace teams considers the innate degree of loyalty. Adler and Adler (1998) discover that the form of intense loyalty that is generated in some sports teams—as well as in combat units, complex and intensive surgical teams and astronaut work groups, for example—surpasses overwhelmingly the more bland forms of commitment often found in organizational teams. Since the aforementioned groups frequently have “highly interdependent members that function at a high performance level” (p. 413), the authors suggest that there may be several organizational and structural characteristics that contrast with the ordinary workplace, which, in turn, might affect transferability issues.

3.4 Categorizing team sports by interdependence

Similar to workplace teams, sports teams differ in a variety of dimensions. Also here, perhaps the most important dimension of fit relates to interdependence among team members (see, e.g., Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006; Gaffney, 2015). In fact, team sports provides a generic and illustrative

framework for understanding teams in the workplace, each sport corresponding to a specific prototypical level of interdependence and, consequently, a particular type of workplace team. Applying the taxonomy of interdependence presented in Section 2.6, team sports can be placed on a continuum, hinging on the degree to which mutual interactions are permitted and required for successful performance. As illustrated in Figure 3, at the one end of the continuum lie independent sports in which individual outputs are aggregated to create a team outcome, while at the other extreme team members are mutually and intensively dependent on one another, greater cooperation and coordination typically resulting in much better performance.



Figure 3. Examples of team sports and workplace teams on the interdependence continuum. Extended from Keidel (1984; 1987), Katz (2001), Cannon-Bowers and Bowers (2006) and Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012).

3.4.1 Placing team sports on the interdependence continuum

Under this framework whose key characteristics are summed up in Table 1, baseball and relay races in various sports make up examples of *pooled interdependence*, alluding to the rather little amount of interaction among team members. There are rarely more than two or three athletes involved in a single play or sequence and different phases of a contest (such as offense and defense or relay legs) are completely separated. Moreover, the structure of the event comprises the main instrument to achieve coordination and determines the phase sequence. In other words, athletes usually perform one at a time, the performance of neither the preceding nor the following athlete having any effect on the current performance. Thus, the basic unit is the individual, making these sports and their contests only loosely coupled systems. Because team member contributions are rather discrete and independent of each other, excellent teams are composed of excellent individual performers. (Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001)

Dimension	Degree of interdependence		
	Pooled	Sequential	Reciprocal/team
<i>Exemplifying sports</i>	Baseball, relay races	American football	Basketball, floorball
<i>General issues</i>			
Basic unit	Individual	Group	Team
Density on field	Low	Moderate	High
Real-time athlete decision-making	Low	Moderate	High
Player-orientation	High	Low	High
Dominant value	Self-reliance	Loyalty	Cooperation
Hierarchy	Flat	Steep	Flat
<i>Communication, coordination and cohesion</i>			
Flow of information	Top-down & bottom-up	Top-down	Top-down, bottom-up & lateral
Communication requirements	Low	Moderate	High
Coordination requirements	Low	Moderate	High
Key coordinating mechanism	Design of sport	Planning & hierarchy	Mutual adjustment
Social control and conformity	Low	Moderate	High
Social cohesion payoff	Low	Moderate	High
<i>Managerial issues</i>			
Core management competence	Tactical: determine the line-up	Strategic: prepare the game plan	Integrative: teach team members to coordinate themselves
Developmental focus	Individual	Individual and group	Individual and team
Recruitment focus	Self-starters	Dutiful soldiers	Ready collaborators
Remuneration	Individual performance	Individual & group performance	Team performance

Table 1. Key differences between team sports featured by pooled, sequential and reciprocal/team interdependence. Compiled from Keidel (1984), Katz (2001) and Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012).

Second, American football features *sequential interdependence*, characterized by a moderate amount of interdependence. Players do interact, but merely in a series and in a predetermined way according to the coach who is the primary coordinator and prepares the master plan. Roles of individual players are narrowly defined and the quarterback acts as the main on-field executor of the game plan. Since every player on the field is involved in every play and there is some contingency regarding which team and who controls the ball, American football represents a more tightly coupled system than the sports under pooled interdependence. Therefore, the basic units here are the large group or platoon (such as offense, defense and transition) but also the small group (consisting for example of linemen and backfield). In this category,

excellent teams are composed of excellent performances of the platoons, each of which must function as mechanically as possible. (Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001)

Examples of *reciprocal interdependence* and *team interdependence* in team sports are somewhat more blurred and overlapping in the literature.²³ In any case, reciprocal interdependence is well exhibited by various racing sports, where racing teams must adapt to fluctuating situations in more intricate ways. Team members usually have precise roles and carry out two-way interactions, but the order of action is not known in advance. While the majority of interplay in these sports resonates with reciprocal interdependence, racing sports might sometimes also stand for team interdependence, for example when the driver and the spotter discuss a situation together with the crew chiefs and arrive at a mutual decision. (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006)

Finally, *team interdependence*, the most complex type of interdependence, is featured by sports like basketball, floorball,²⁴ ice hockey and volleyball. Here, coordination is mainly achieved by players themselves through constant mutual adjustment, particularly when the game is on. Because the nature of these sports is very fluid and frenetic, every player on the field is involved in every play and there is continuous movement, proaction and reaction by all. Furthermore, all players are participating in offense, defense and transitions (all of which even turn into each other instantaneously), handling the ball and (at least occasionally) attempting to score, thereby forming a highly coupled system. Roles in these teams overlap to the extent that members can compensate for each other's weaknesses and help with problems that have been encountered. Since the team is the basic unit and cooperation is the dominant value, excellent teams in this category are comprised of excellent team players, helping the whole become greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, teams in this category must work together closely to beat their opponent. (Keidel, 1984; 1987; Katz, 2001; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006)

²³ This is because different authors use slightly different variations of the taxonomies of interdependence. Keidel (1984; 1987) and Katz (2001) use only a three-level framework, consisting of pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependence, where the latter contains many of the aspects of team interdependence that has been later introduced as an additional layer by Cannon-Bowers and Bowers (2006) and Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012).

²⁴ As a younger and still mostly European sport, floorball is not mentioned in the current literature. However, based on my own experiences, I am very confident that floorball belongs to this category—it actually illustrates some of the aspects of team interdependence in its purest forms.

3.4.2 Implications for the workplace

Altogether, Keidel (1984) and Katz (2001) suggest that while sports in general and team sports in particular might provide useful lessons for workplace teams, a closer look at these sports reveals that some sports serve as more relevant and instructive models and metaphors for a specific workplace team than others. This is because different sports exhibit very different dynamics and manifest distinct organizational patterns. Although the above taxonomy of interdependence contains also challenges due to its prototypical nature—some sports just feature elements that fit into multiple levels—it can still help both academics and practitioners to draw more profound lessons from sports to their own organizations (Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, 2006).

Therefore—beyond the use of global concepts such as competitiveness, team spirit and winning, which are applicable everywhere—Keidel (1984) and Katz (2001) encourage workplace organizations to carefully consider the degree of fit between their teams and the team sports that are being emulated and, consequently, identify inconsistencies that might be causing problems.²⁵ When performing this assessment, however, they highlight the need for being clear about the nature of similarity and the organizational level of analysis; for example, organizations often feature different modes of interdependence at different organizational levels. The structural deviations that make a difference in the way teams should be conceived and managed have various practical implications for the workplace, all the way from organizational strategy and structure to style, also concerning teamwork. Table 2 collates several such prototypical implications.

The foregoing breakdown of team sports and workplace teams by interdependence illuminates in more detail the teams under consideration in this study. Since the focus here is on interdependent team sports, I will investigate teamwork in a context whose main characteristics are presented in the rightmost column of Table 1. Although all kinds of team sports exemplify optimal orchestration of human resources to a certain extent, it is in interdependent team sports where successful cooperation entails the

²⁵ Wageman (1995) is even able to prove how team performance and team member satisfaction improve when design characteristics of a task match the innate degree of interdependence of the task.

Organizational dimension	Degree of interdependence		
	Pooled	Sequential	Reciprocal/team
<i>Strategy</i>			
Distinctive competence	Adding value through star performers	Reducing costs and/or complexity through coordination	Innovating by combining resources in novel ways
Strategic orientation	Divergence	Convergence	Divergence and convergence
<i>Structure</i>			
Coordinating mechanism	Design of free-standing roles and units	Hierarchical planning and administration	Mutual adjustment
Decision system	Decentralized	Centralized	Shared
Information system	Locally controlled	Globally controlled	Distributed
Reward system	Individualistic	Hierarchic	Mutualistic
Effects of physical layout	Independent action	Programmed interaction	Voluntary interaction
<i>Style</i>			
Organizational value	Self-reliance	Compliance	Collaboration
Employee value	Opportunity	Security	Community
Teamwork	Situational	Scripted	Spontaneous
Communication pattern	Two-way	One-way	Three-way
Leadership style	Laissez-faire	Authoritarian	Facilitative
Skill emphasis	Generalist or unconstrained specialist	Constrained specialist	Generalist and specialist
Development	From the outside	From within	In concert with others
Cultural bias	Diversity	Uniformity	Complementarity
Risk-taking posture	Risk-embracing	Risk-avoiding	Risk-accepting
Effect of status symbols	Horizontal separation	Vertical separation	Integration
Advantages to employees	Autonomy, visibility	Stability, reflected power	Stimulation, group belongingness
Disadvantages to employees	Isolation, self-exposure	Regimentation, depersonalization	Exhaustion, role confusion
Instrumentality	Organization to employee	Employee to organization	Mutual

Table 2. Core contrasts and implications for the workplace between pooled, sequential and reciprocal/team interdependence. Obtained from Keidel (1987, 594–595).

greatest potential to make the whole of a team superior to the sum of the team's parts. Similarly, from the workplace point of view, the lessons from the study are most relevant for interdependent workplace teams and organizations, i.e. instances that feature aspects presented in the rightmost column of Table 2.

4 SUCCESSFUL TEAMWORK: WHAT SHOULD WE ALREADY KNOW?

Less surprisingly, the team literature provides an immense number of models and recipes for successful teams (see, e.g., Hackman, 1987; Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Salas et al., 2005, Mathieu et al., 2008, and the references therein). In terms of this study, there is no point in offering a comprehensive review of all studies.²⁶ Instead, this chapter highlights three aspects of successful teamwork that have been proposed by the literature and are worthwhile to understand before moving any further.

Before considering successful, well-performing or effective teams, we must amplify what is meant by these different definitions—the first section deals with this issue and offers an alternative to make a distinction between them. The second section explains why there is only a limited number of globally relevant guidelines for successful teamwork. The final section presents a few considerations that are anyway universally shown to contribute positively to teamwork.

4.1 Distinguishing team performance and team effectiveness

The discussion on successful teams entails a potential definitional struggle regarding the use of concepts *team performance* and *team effectiveness*. Salas et al. (2005) propose that we should differentiate between the two; while the former stands for “the outcomes of the team’s actions regardless of how the team may have accomplished the task,” the latter takes a more holistic view and considers also “how the team interacted ... to achieve the team outcome” (p. 557). Because there are possibly many external factors that may have an effect on the success of the team, the authors claim that evaluating the team merely by performance measures might be deficient in some cases. Hence, according to this view, performance and

²⁶ Moreover, as I have conducted theory-building research, the idea was not to think about specific relationships or establish a detailed view of the extant literature on successful teamwork at the outset. However, to assist in the initial design of even theory-building research, it was justifiable to identify potentially important constructs from existing research (Eisenhardt, 1989). In this sense, the purpose of this chapter could be conceived as paving the way for something that Suddaby (2006, 635) calls “a practical middle ground between a theory-laden view of the world and an unfettered empiricism.”

effectiveness might not always go hand in hand; a well-performing team is not necessarily effective and vice versa.

When defined broadly, team effectiveness can be assessed through three different lenses: tangible outputs produced by the team, consequences for individual team members and improvements in the team's capability to be effective in the future (see, e.g., Hackman, 1987; Sundstrom et al., 1990; Guzzo and Dickson, 1996). Tangible outputs—that correspond to the concept of performance and therefore make team performance merely a subset of team effectiveness—refer to productive outputs of a team in relation to a task and standards given by people who receive and/or evaluate the output, including quantity, quality, speed and customer satisfaction, for example. Consequences for team members center around team member satisfaction; teamwork should rather satisfy than frustrate members' personal needs. Lastly, improvements in future capability encompass social processes, such as participation, willingness to work together, intermember coordination, communication and problem solving, which should enhance or at least maintain the team's ability to work also on subsequent tasks. Altogether, taking this extensive view on successful teams assures that team performance is not obtained at any cost but without team members feeling disgust and/or disillusionment and without destroying the integrity of the team as a performing unit.²⁷ This study also takes the broad point of view, using the terms *successful* and *effective* interchangeably.

4.2 Context-specificity of the effectiveness determinants

In the beginning of the study, we learned that teams exist in many shapes and forms and carry out different kinds of work in very different organizations and environments. Teams are also invariably embedded in some larger social systems, which determine a large part of the context in which teamwork takes place and, consequently, have an influence on team effectiveness (see, e.g., Gladstein, 1984; Hackman, 1987; Sundstrom et al., 1990; Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Cohen and Bailey, 1997; Mathieu et al., 2008). Contexts, which are comprised of organizational

²⁷ As such, the view incorporates more extensively the conceivable different outcomes presented in Figure 1 in Section 2.2.

contextual variables (i.e. sources of influence that are external to the team but internal to the larger organizational system, including for example information, education and reward systems and material resources) as well as environmental contextual factors (emanating from outside the organization but influencing the team, including for instance business environments and customer demands), can either facilitate or hinder team success. Therefore, success factors of teams are usually context-specific, which makes it challenging to discover any rigorous globally valid theory of team effectiveness.

Salas et al. (2015), for example, emphasize that context is essential to teamwork since “it has the capability to shape the very nature in which team members interact with one another” (p. 611). Since there is no silver bullet in teamwork either, the authors insist that it is important to anticipate different contextual factors that might influence team effectiveness and, further, to develop plans to address these factors. Anyway, this study—similar to most earlier studies—will mainly not focus on other contextual factors than tasks and the related degree of interdependence. As explained in Section 3.1, team sports constitutes a suitable laboratory for organizational inquiry, but research conducted in laboratory or simulated settings neither can nor should consider contextual variables and will normally be better off by holding these variables constant (Hackman, 1987; Mathieu et al., 2008).

4.3 Some generic considerations

Although the building blocks of successful teams are context-specific and a wide range of different conditions and processes have been proposed during the years, the literature is rather unanimous in some issues that are applicable in a large variety of contexts and teams (see, e.g., Guzzo and Dickson, 1996; Hayes, 2002; Salas et al., 2015). In the following, I will shortly present six such considerations that are not only prevalent in the theoretical literature but also involve empirical evidence on team effectiveness, given a team’s task, goals and organizational context. These considerations include (i) cooperation, (ii) cohesion, (iii) communication, (iv) leadership, (v) composition and roles and (vi) culture.

First, cooperation, which Salas et al. (2015) define as “an overarching teamwork consideration that captures the motivational drivers necessary for effective teamwork” (p. 604), includes “the attitudes, beliefs and feelings of the team that drive behavioral action” (p. 603). Among the various possible cooperative mechanisms, it has been proposed that effective teamwork is boosted by collective efficacy (Katz-Navon and Erez, 2005), trust (Bandow, 2001), collectivist orientation (Eby and Dobbins, 1997) and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), for instance. Second, cohesion, which according to Hayes (2002, 35) stands for “the invisible bond” linking team members together, making a team “see themselves as belonging to it and as different from the others,” has been found to contribute to team effectiveness across settings (Webber and Donahue, 2001; Chiochio and Essiembre, 2009). The main components of cohesion include interpersonal attraction, group pride and task commitment, each of them playing an even more crucial role in interdependent teams (Beal et al., 2003).

Third, communication and information sharing, which represent “probably the single most important factor for establishing cohesion” (Hayes, 2002, 41), have been identified as essential for team effectiveness (Salas et al., 2005). This holds especially in the case of sharing unique information, even though teams are often found to fail to share information when it would be most necessary (Mesmer-Magnus and DeChurch, 2009). Furthermore, communication has an influence on many important aspects of teamwork such as goal specification, coordination, conflict and trust (Rosen et al., 2011). Fourth, leadership, which can be further specified in terms of empowering and transformational leadership, for instance, corresponds considerably with successful teams (Zaccaro et al., 2001; Stewart, 2006). On the other hand, beyond these traditional vertical constructs that view leadership hierarchically, shared leadership practices have also yielded higher team effectiveness, not least in contexts featuring a higher degree of interdependence (Pearce, 2004; D’Innocenzo et al., 2016).

Fifth, a clear link has been showed to exist between composition—the characteristics of individual members of a team—and team effectiveness (Salas et al., 2015). In aggregate, members with high cognitive abilities, desirable personality traits as well

as relevant expertise make their team more successful, but it is essential to always find out whether individual abilities and dispositions have a positive impact on the team as a whole, not just on the individual performance of a given member (Stewart, 2006). For example, strong team orientation, i.e. a tendency to work with others, facilitates the achievement of team objectives (Salas et al., 2005). Moreover, relating to composition, an integral feature of effective teams is that their members carry out different roles that are in sync both with each other and with the characteristics of the individual members (Robotham, 2008).

Last but not least, culture, defined as the “assumptions about humans’ relationships with each other and their environment that are shared ... and manifest in individuals’ values, beliefs, norms for social behavior and artifacts” (Salas et al., 2015, 603), has significant predictive power for team-related outcomes (Taras et al., 2010). Specifically, cultural values mould the way team members perceive themselves in relation to the team, which, in turn, has a major influence on shaping teamwork attitudes, cognitions and behaviors (Salas et al., 2015).

Altogether, as underlined by Salas et al. (2015) and concisely illustrated by the above considerations, the team literature already encompasses a fairly thorough view on the essential components of teamwork and team effectiveness. Thus, the authors assert that teams and organizations should utilize this knowledge in their unique contexts better, underlining that “translating this literature into something practical for organizational leadership is of utmost importance” (p. 614). Team sports stands for a fruitful setting for providing practical and context-specific lessons for workplace teams, but several authors, including Weinberg and McDermott (2002), Wolfe et al. (2005), Cannon-Bowers and Bowers (2006), Fletcher (2011) and Day et al. (2012), note that relatively few academic studies combine an examination of successful teamwork in sports with a discussion on the workplace relevance of the findings. When it comes to Finnish teamwork in particular, to the best of my knowledge, there are no such studies at all.²⁸ This study contributes to filling these gaps.

²⁸ Rahkamo (2016) discovers the determinants of exceptional expertise and success among Finnish multifold Olympic champions and suggests that building such excellence is a collaborative activity, the findings thereby being highly relevant for workplace teams and organizations. However, her primary focus is still on successful Finnish athletes in individual sports, not in team sports.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes the research design in more detail. To address the research questions posed in this study, I used two sets of qualitative data, employing teams as the primary unit of analysis. On the one hand, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve high profile coaches from successful Finnish interdependent world-class sports teams. On the other hand, I employed analytic autoethnography to capitalize on my professional career in floorball. Overall, both the process in general and the analysis of the interview data in particular followed the roadmaps for developing grounded theory introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and for building theory from cases proposed by Eisenhardt (1989) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). By utilizing two types of data and two distinct methodologies, I was able obtain both data triangulation and methodological triangulation.

5.1 Finnish interdependent sports teams: the recent background

During the recent decade, the Finnish men's national teams in basketball, floorball, ice hockey and volleyball have been exceptionally successful in relative terms when comparing their results in international competitions to those of many other nations. In basketball, Finland has become a regular participant in European championships, reaching ninth place twice (2011 and 2013) and even qualifying for world championships in 2014 in this utmost global sport. In floorball, Finland has won three world championships (2008, 2010 and 2016), each time after beating Sweden, with roughly twice as many registered players than Finland, in the final. Moreover, Finland has won three world junior championships (2011, 2015 and 2017). In ice hockey, during the last ten years, Finland has won one world championship (2011), four other world championship medals (2007, 2008, 2014 and 2016), two Olympic bronze medals (2010 and 2014) as well as two world junior championships. In volleyball, which is played throughout the world similar to basketball, Finland has regularly participated in European championships, reaching a top-eight placing three times (2007, 2011 and 2013), and participated in world championships once (2014).

Earlier in this study, we made a distinction between different sports and workplace teams based on the degree of interdependence. According to this framework, all the above sports are considered highly interdependent team sports, i.e. settings in which teamwork plays a major part in the overall success of the team. Moreover, when it comes to the above Finnish teams, it has been commented that their results have often been better than what could have been expected on the grounds of the skills and expertise of their individual players. Hence, we could assume that these Finnish teams have been particularly good at teamwork, which provides a fruitful basis for a multiple case study exploring successful teamwork. Yin (2014, 2), for example, claims that performing a case study is advisable when (i) many *how* and *why* questions are being asked, (ii) the researcher has only little control over the events and, perhaps most importantly, (iii) when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Moreover, when possible, Yin (2014, 63–64) prefers the use of multiple-case designs to single-case designs to generate more powerful results.

In addition to the sports and male teams presented above, Finland has recently prospered also in two female team sports: aesthetic group gymnastics and synchronized skating. In the former, during the last decade, different Finnish teams²⁹ have altogether won five gold and three other world championship medals. In the latter, Finnish teams have won in total five gold and seven other world championship medals. Using the concepts described in Section 2.6, even though these two sports do not feature *task* interdependence in the highest sense—for example, instant and intensive mutual adjustment by team members is required during a performance only if something does not go according to the predetermined plan—they still feature a very high degree of *outcome* interdependence. In these sports, nobody is a star at the same time than the contribution of each member is vital. Furthermore, the inclusion of aesthetic group gymnastics and synchronized skating entails data on successful female teamwork. Drawing on both men’s and women’s teams makes the use of the lessons taken from team sports more effective in the workplace (Katz, 2001).

²⁹ In contrast to the four ball sports mentioned above, in these two sports Finland has not had separate national teams to which athletes would have been nominated from different club teams. Instead, in world championships in aesthetic group gymnastics and synchronized skating, Finland has been represented by the country’s best club teams.

5.2 Overview of the research approach

Case study research is one form of social science research, focusing on understanding the dynamics inherent within specific settings. This type of research typically combines multiple data collection methods to allow triangulation and can be used to achieve various aims, such as providing description, testing theory or generating theory. Case studies are most appropriate either in early stages of research on a subject or much later to provide fresh empirical insight into an already explored topic. Building theory from cases, the approach used in this study, is a research strategy that stems from grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and employs cases to build theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theory inductively from the empirical evidence. Contrary to most empirical studies, therefore, the strategy leads from data to theory and not vice versa. Overall, it is seen as one of the best bridges between rich qualitative evidence and mainstream deductive research. (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2014, 2)

The approach rests on two key concepts: constant comparison and theoretical sampling. The former denotes that data are collected and analyzed simultaneously, while also paying attention to the extant literature. The latter specifies that decisions about data collection are determined by the theory that is being constructed. As such, the method is most applicable to investigate the process by which case participants construct meaning from intersubjective experience. Instead of trying to make true statements about reality, the purpose is to better understand the patterned relationships among social actors and how these relationships and interactions construct reality. Hence, building theory from cases is best suited to explore interesting phenomena yet without clear explanations that could be discovered from data in an interpretive rather than logico-deductive process, the researcher herself playing an active role along the way. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006)

The teamwork behind the recent triumphs of the Finnish interdependent world-class sports teams constituted one such interesting phenomenon, due to the potential of team sports to provide lessons about organizational behavior and the lack of earlier research in this specific context. Therefore, employing the process of building theory

from case studies, my aim was to develop novel, insightful and intimate theory of successful teamwork that is closely linked with the empirical evidence as well as transferable across interdependent teams also outside the realm of team sports. Overall, the research process followed the roadmap proposed by Eisenhardt (1989), which merges qualitative methods, the design of case study research as well as grounded theory building and extends the previous work in a variety of areas. Figure 4 portrays the main steps of the highly iterative process employed in this study.³⁰

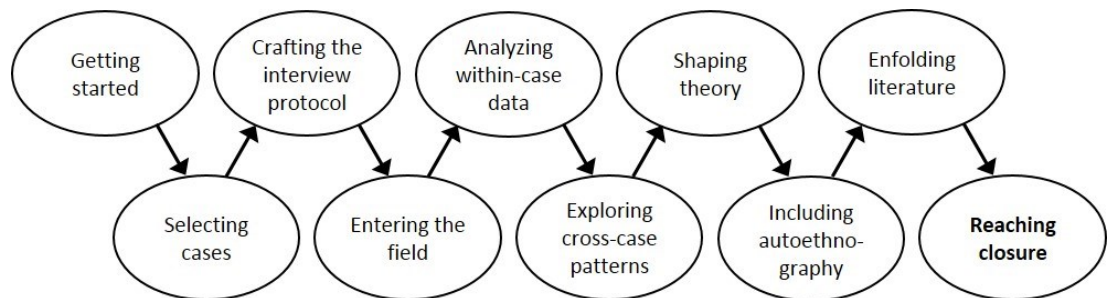


Figure 4. Research process employed in the study. Extended from Eisenhardt (1989).

Building on the recent history of the Finnish interdependent sports teams and my personal background as a floorball professional, the first phase consisted of an initial definition of the research questions and approaches and, subsequently, an identification of some potentially important constructs that were presented in Chapter 4. The second and third phases comprised of selecting the cases and determining the data collection methods, respectively. Entering the field, the fourth phase, involved the distinctive feature of building theory from different cases: to a certain extent, data were collected, coded and analyzed simultaneously. Moreover, during this lengthy step, minor adjustments were made to the interview protocol to delve more into the emergent themes and special opportunities present in some of the cases.³¹

The fifth phase included an analysis of the within-case data, inspecting each case as a stand-alone entity, whereas the sixth step searched for cross-case patterns by using

³⁰ Thus, even though here sketched as linear, the process involved continuous iteration backward and forward between the steps.

³¹ Eisenhardt (1989, 539) calls this chance to make minor adjustments "controlled opportunism" and considers it as a legitimate procedure in theory-building research. For example, as one of the later interviewees was publicly known to underline the importance of recruiting athletes with suitable attributes and reaching a specific climate in the team, I prepared additional *why* and *how* questions around these themes for that particular interview.

structured lenses on the whole data with the aim to increase the likelihood of obtaining precise and reliable theory. Seventh, the emergent frames were systematically compared with each case, working iteratively towards a theory that would fit the data as closely as possible. In the eighth phase, as an extension to the typical process of building theory from cases, I prepared my autoethnographic excerpts that fitted the theory obtained in the previous phase. The ninth phase consisted of contrasting the theory with the earlier teamwork literature. The tenth and final phase comprised of identifying the point at which it was in place to stop adding cases and iterating between the theory and data.

5.3 Incorporating autoethnography

Autoethnography has become an increasingly popular form of qualitative research and writing that seeks to systematically describe and analyze personal experiences and connect them to wider cultural, political and social issues. It aims at generating meaningful, accessible and evocative research that openly both acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality as well as the researcher's influence. In this sense, autoethnography challenges the canonical ways of conducting research, recognizing that different people have different assumptions about the world, which opens up new perspectives and opportunities; the researcher's story is rather celebrated than demonized. The method merges characteristics of autobiography, i.e. writing retroactively and selectively about experiences and moments that the author perceives as significant, and ethnography, i.e. studying a culture as a participant observer to make it more familiar to both insiders and outsiders. Thus, autoethnography refers to writing analytically about epiphanies that stem from being part of a culture, using personal experiences as primary data and applying the relevant methodological tools and literature.³² (Muncey, 2005; Ellis et al., 2011)

There are many forms of autoethnography, varying in the emphasis placed on *auto-* (regarding the self), *-ethno-* (the culture) and *-graphy* (the research process) (Reed-

³² In this respect, the fundamental difference between ethnography and autoethnography is that whereas in the former the researcher tries to become an insider in the research setting, in the latter she in fact is the insider (Duncan, 2004).

Danahay, 1997, 2). Different applications include viewing it as directly equivalent to personal narratives, using it to link concepts from the literature to narrated personal experiences and considering it as a method as robust and justifiable as any other approach (Wall, 2008).³³ In this sense, autoethnography denotes more a philosophy that acknowledges the presence of the researcher than a precisely defined method (Wall, 2006). Moreover, substantial latitude seems to exist in the production of autoethnographic texts, as long as they “connect the personal to the cultural” in some way or another (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, 740). Whatever the exact focus, autoethnographers begin with using the subjective self and capitalizing on their experiences in a culture to investigate self-other interactions more deeply, trying to answer questions that are otherwise unanswerable (Holt, 2003; Duncan, 2004).

Not surprisingly, the scholarly legitimacy of autoethnography has been questioned.³⁴ In this regard, Duncan (2004) highlights the need for justifying the choice of this method as well as demonstrating how some appropriate evaluation criteria could be applied. In my case, due to my lengthy involvement in team sports and certitude that there are yet unanswered questions in the realm, autoethnography offered a chance “to make sense of my unique world” and “report directly from my experience as a practitioner” (Duncan, 2004, 31). Smith and Sparkes (2009, 6) argue that thanks to “the ability to impart information about an athlete’s personalised world, narratives can reveal a great deal about individual and group lived experiences.” Hence, through my story as a player in successful floorball teams, autoethnography was useful to provide further insight into successful Finnish interdependent teamwork.

Among the different applications, my approach resembles analytic autoethnography, which according to Anderson (2006) contains five key features: (i) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (ii) analytic reflexivity, (iii) narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, (iv) dialogue with informants beyond the self and (v) commitment to theoretical analysis. I had various reasons for choosing this approach. First, being a CMR denotes “the most compelling kind of being there” (p. 379), although even complete membership allows only a partial perspective on the team under study

³³ For an extensive list of examples of such applications, see, e.g., Ellis and Bochner (2000, 739–740).

³⁴ For a discussion on whether autoethnography constitutes proper research, see, e.g., Sparkes (2000), Holt (2003), Duncan (2004), Wall (2008) and Ellis et al. (2011).

because of the likely differences among the members. Second, while Anderson claims that most of us “do not find our research interests as deeply intertwined with our personal lives as autoethnography requires” (p. 390), the assertion does not hold in my case. Third, beyond documenting personal experiences, the commitment to an analytic agenda refers to a purpose to “gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data” (p. 387), which matches with my aim to shed new light on interdependent teamwork generally.³⁵ Furthermore, as Pace (2012) suggests, analytic autoethnography can be well combined with the analytic strategies (and other forms of data) in grounded theory to improve theoretical understanding.

5.4 Selecting cases and collecting data

Selection of cases and the concept of population are important aspects also when building theory from cases. However, as the purpose in such research is to develop theory (and not to test it), the focus is on theoretical (instead of statistical) sampling, which chooses cases according to their potential to provide theoretical insight, i.e. to illuminate and extend relationships and logic among different constructs. While theoretical sampling is rather straightforward when using a single case, it becomes more complicated when employing multiple cases. On the other hand, multiple cases typically yield theory that is more robust, generalizable and testable than that generated by single-case research. Therefore, when operating with multiple cases, selection of cases should be founded less on the uniqueness of a given case and more on theoretical reasons such as the likelihood to replicate and/or extend the emergent theory. (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2014, 57–62)

In this study, to shed light on successful teamwork in Finnish highly interdependent teams, which constitute the domain of the findings, the Finnish world-class sports teams presented in Section 5.1 were identified as an applicable (theoretical) research sample and the coaches of these teams as key informants who could provide rich, valid and reliable data. Initially, the sample consisted of ten teams in six sports.

³⁵ This kind of aim to generalize is a key differentiator between analytic autoethnography and evocative or emotional autoethnography proposed by Ellis and Bochner (2000) (Pace, 2012).

However, to gain more insight into the sports that thus far included only one team, the sample was complemented by one basketball and one volleyball team, both of which had won several Finnish championships during the recent decade. In the end, as listed in Appendix 1, the sample consisted of twelve teams, two in each sport.³⁶ To cope with the potential trade-off between a well-grounded theory and empirical richness (Suddaby, 2006), each sport (including two teams) constituted one case.

The main part of the data was collected in semi-structured interviews³⁷ with twelve Finnish high profile coaches. All the interviewees fulfilled two criteria: (i) they had acted (or still act) as the head coach in one of the teams for several years during the recent decade, being part of the teams' triumphs and (ii) they were in Finland generally considered one of the most reputed in their sport. Appendix 2 provides more details on the interviewees and the interviews. After taking the initial contact with the interviewees by phone and agreeing on the time for the interview, they were submitted a concise eight-slide introductory presentation, including a description of the background, motivation, purpose and research questions of the study.

The interview protocol, which is available in its entirety in Appendix 3, was prepared keeping in mind a variety of issues. On the one hand, I followed the guidelines by Charmaz (2006, 26) who in the context of grounded theory studies encourages the use of some broad open-ended questions that help "unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" and later allows "to invite detailed discussion of topic." In particular, Part II in the protocol comprised of such questions. On the other hand, as recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), the potentially important constructs presented in Chapter 4 were incorporated into the interview themes; Table 3 lists the main themes included in the protocol and covered in all the interviews. Moreover, to discover concrete activities or events with broader consequences, I applied the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) in the questions. In the course of collecting data, the interview protocol was slightly modified to provide additional theoretical insight.

³⁶ Overall, because sports involves explicit and standardized criteria for determining success, it provides with "a ready process for identifying the specific people by relying on other experts' judgment" (Sosniak, 2006, 293) and made the selection of cases in this study rather straightforward.

³⁷ In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has predetermined a list of themes and questions that will be covered, but has a chance to vary them from interview to interview and ask additional questions if required to explore the research questions in more detail (Saunders et al., 2009, 320).

• Success and winning	• Collaboration
• Cohesion	• Sense of community
• Communication	• Leadership
• Composition	• Roles
• Culture	• Transferability to the workplace

Table 3. Main themes in the interview protocol.

The interviews took place in spring and summer 2017 and were conducted in Finnish. When it comes to the interviewing style, I took into account the general guidelines for semi-structured interviews proposed by Saunders et al. (2009, 326–341). More specifically, I aimed to follow *intensive interviewing* that for Charmaz (2006, 25–27) “permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic with a person who has had the relevant experiences” (p. 25) and presumes that “the researcher should express interest and want to know more” (p. 26) for example by requesting details that clarify the interviewee’s reflections. Moreover, while the style naturally involved asking questions that did not guide the answers in any direction, it allowed to vary the order and content of the questions case by case. After each interview, I transcribed the recordings in Finnish to maintain the data as original as possible. Later, however, I translated the quotes presented in this report carefully into English, with the purpose of conveying the original formulation and tone as well as possible.³⁸

One of the key issues in reaching closure, the final phase in the research process depicted in Figure 4, concerns when to stop adding new cases. Eisenhardt (1989) reminds that although ideally this should occur when reaching theoretical saturation, it is in reality combined with a variety of pragmatic considerations and that researchers might in fact plan the number of cases in advance. On the other hand, Suddaby (2006, 639) suggests that identifying saturation “takes tacit understanding, which is achieved as much through experience as through a priori criteria.” Also in this study, the addition of cases was terminated because of all the above premises. After twelve in-depth interviews, incremental learning was about to become minimal and the extent of the data set was well meeting the requirements for a Master’s thesis, whereas no additional noteworthy Finnish interdependent world-class sports

³⁸ The combined lengths of the recordings and transcripts were 26 h 10 min and roughly 161 sheets, respectively.

teams were existing either. Furthermore, the inclusion of in total six sports was in line with Eisenhardt's recommendation of having four to ten cases in the sample.

In addition to the interviews, as explained in the previous section and portrayed in Figure 4, "I relied on the memories of my lived experience" (Wall, 2008, 45) as another source of data by using analytic autoethnography. However, due to my lengthy background in the area I was investigating, I had to be careful in separating my own thoughts from the collection and analysis of the interview data. Tracy (2010, 841), for example, highlights the need for "honesty and transparency about the researcher's biases, goals and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys and mistakes of the research." Whereas building theory from cases provided a structured approach to analyzing the interview data, I strived for minimizing the chance of my background driving the results too much by preparing the autoethnographic excerpts only after the theoretical hypotheses had been shaped in the latter phase of the research process. Put differently, autoethnography was merely assumed to give additional insight into the developed theory, not vice versa.

5.5 Analysis of the interview data

As proposed by Eisenhardt (1989), the analysis of the interview data was carried out in three iterative parts, including (i) within-case analysis, (ii) exploration of cross-case patterns and, subsequently, (iii) shaping the theory. First, the purpose of the within-case analysis was to cope with the relatively large volume of data from the beginning and to become closely acquainted with the sport-specific patterns, without considering the data on the other sports. As such, it allowed the possibly unique themes inherent in each case to emerge before generalizing the patterns over all the sports. After transcribing the interview recordings, the within-case analysis consisted of reading through each transcript a few times and compiling the most significant themes of each sport on a separate worksheet, thereafter moving on to coding.

Second, for cross-case analysis, Eisenhardt (1989) offers a variety of alternatives. Out of these tactics, in this study, I found most suitable to apply the one that selects

pairs of cases and then lists similarities and differences between these pairs, which can result in “new categories and concepts which the investigators did not anticipate” (p. 541) and, therefore, in more robust findings. However, I modified the tactic in two ways. On the one hand, I selected the pairs recursively so that the first two sports that had gone through the within-case analysis, aesthetic group gymnastics and ice hockey, formed the first pair. After comparing these sports, the resultant analysis was compared with synchronized skating, the third sport, et cetera. Finally, the combined analysis of the five other sports was compared with volleyball, the sport whose coaches I interviewed and in which I conducted the within-case analysis last.³⁹ On the other hand, while paying some attention to the differences between each pair, I mostly focused on the similarities between the pairs because of the research question that aimed at identifying the *common* reasons for successful teamwork.

In coding, I employed atlas.ti, the qualitative data analysis software, and primarily followed the guidelines for grounded theory coding by Charmaz (2006, 42–71). Open (or initial) coding, which ultimately yielded 127 codes in 993 quotations, aimed at sticking close to and creating a good fit with the data, but also at sparking my thinking and letting novel ideas to emerge. In practice, I assigned an initial code to anything that I was noticing in the transcripts and found important regarding the research questions. Moreover, I paid attention to keeping the initial codes simple, precise and analytic. I mostly made the codes to refer to quotations that consisted of sentences or even longer pieces of text, with the aim of being more easily able to go back to the original quotation in the later phases of coding. Particularly because there were several months between the initial coding of the first and last interview, I returned to the first interviews after coding the last interview to check the consistence of my coding and made some minor additions to the first codings.

In the second, categorical (or focused) phase of coding, I began to sift through, synthesize and explain larger amounts of the data. By actively using my creative insight, I tried to find out which initial codes made most sense to categorize the data and located the initial codes to the more abstract subcategories. In comparison with

³⁹ Because of this scheme for enforcing the cross-case analysis, I arranged the interview dates so that the two interviews concerning each sport took place close to each other, as also visible in Appendix 2.

the first phase, this phase of coding was less linear. For example, since some implicit issues in earlier interviews turned explicit in later interviews, I went back and forth in the data to explore these issues in more detail, which assisted in refining these subcategories. The subcategories related mostly to specific significant concepts, such as to participative decision-making. In the end, there were 32 subcategories.

Third, in theoretical coding, I employed the subcategories obtained in categorical coding, tried to establish relationships between them and group them into higher-level main categories. In this phase, I drew several drafts of flow charts that illustrated how the subcategories were linked to each other. For example, I explored among others how a specific concept presumed, was associated or contradicted with another concept. Similar to categorical coding, this phase was highly iterative; the emerging main categories and the inherent relationships were refined multiple times to be well justified by the data. Theoretical coding produced twelve main categories.

Fourth and finally, in selective coding, I reduced the twelve main categories further to six core categories, which were systematically connected to all the three lower-level categories and correspond to the six perspectives presented in the following chapter. Keeping in mind the research questions, the core categories were assumed to consist of the core explanatory concepts that explained the common reasons for successful interdependent teamwork that were reflected in the data. At this point, therefore, these categories acted as the guide to additional data collection and analysis and provided an outline for next writing up the theory. Figure 5 illustrates the different phases of coding, whereas Figure 6 gives an overview of how the various interview findings evolved into the different categories during the analysis. Moreover, Appendix 4 provides a partial example of how some of the interviewee expressions developed into one of the core categories.

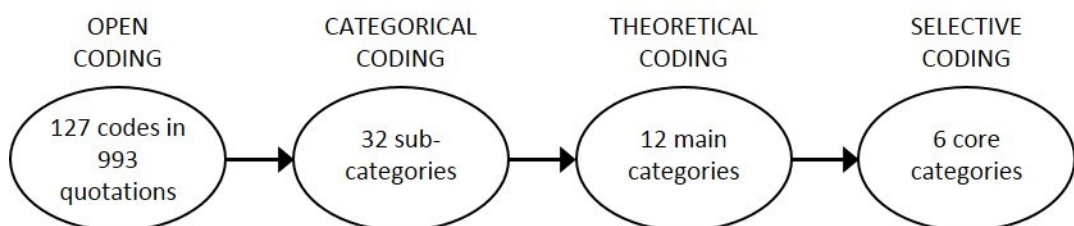
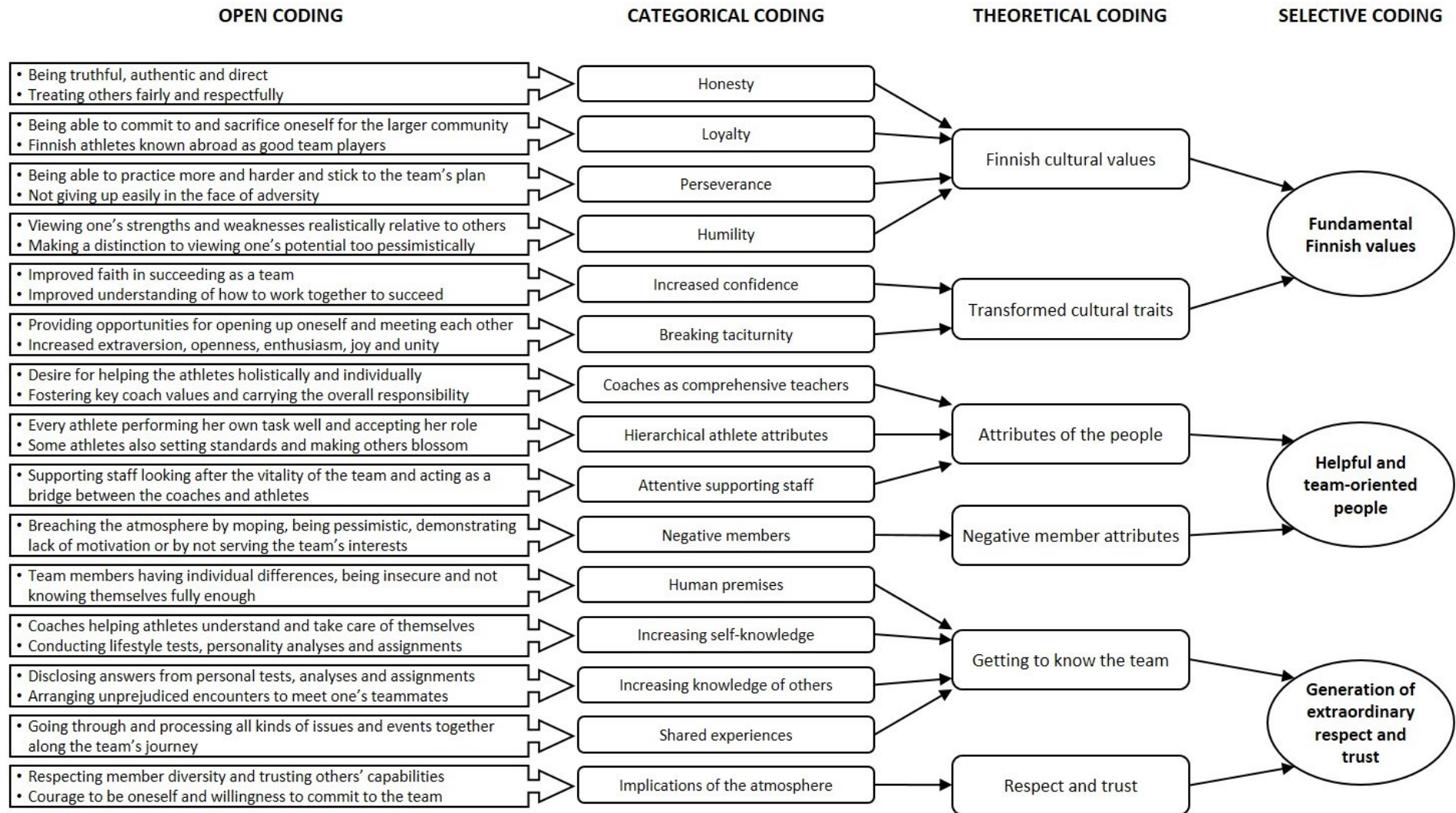


Figure 5. Different phases of coding.



(Figure 6 continues on the next page)

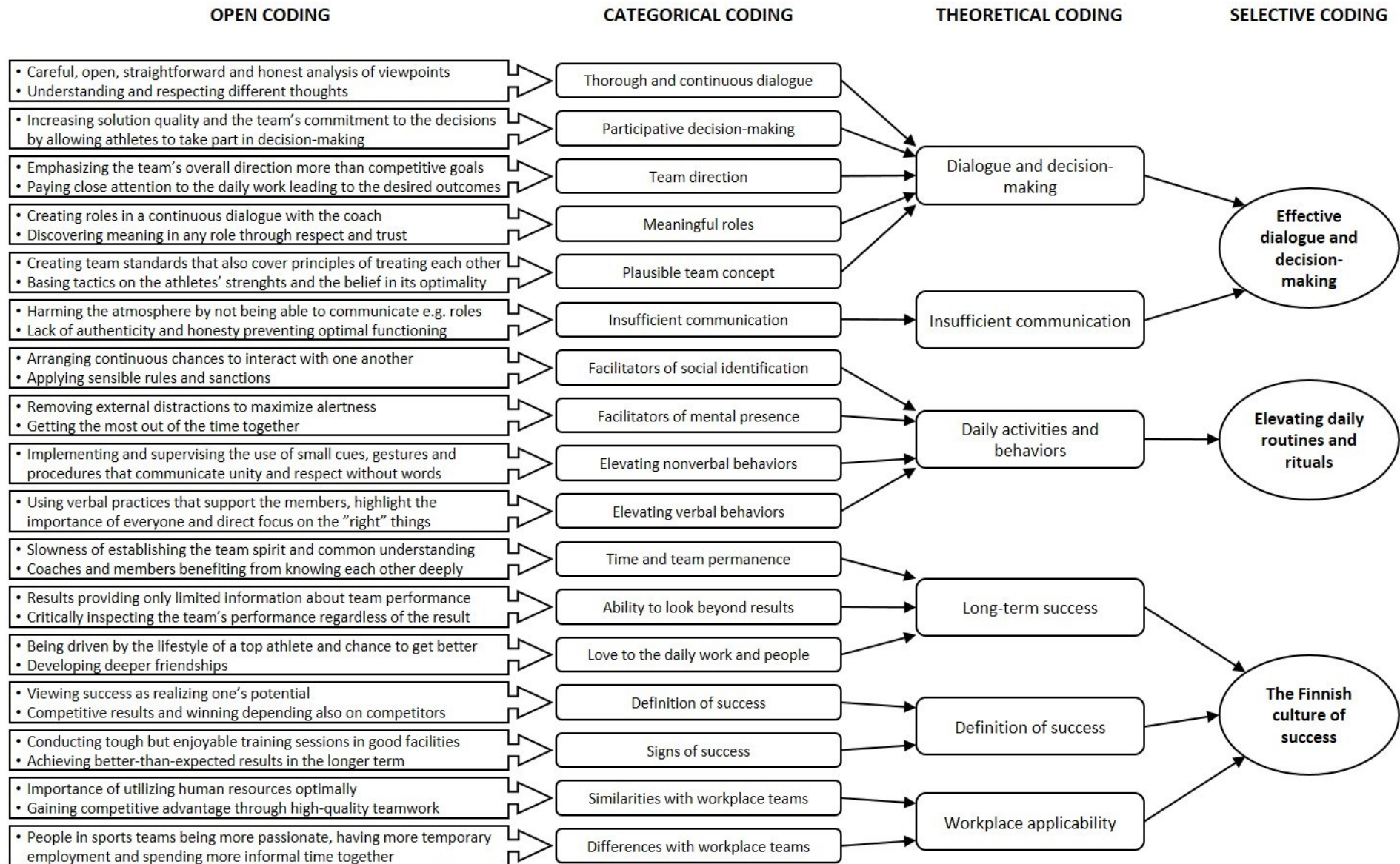


Figure 6. Overall structure of the interview data.

6 DETERMINANTS OF THE FLOURISHING FINNISH TEAM

“It’s precisely here where we have our competitive advantage: how, as a small country, to get people to work together, to trust and respect each other.” [a]

This chapter presents the common reasons for successful teamwork in the specific Finnish teams in the six interdependent team sports. As also illustrated by the above quote, the coaches were unanimous in that high-quality teamwork has constituted a major source of competitive advantage for their teams, contributing strongly to the teams’ exceptionally good results in international competitions. Without excellent teamwork, these teams would have had a much smaller chance against larger nations and competitors with a broader talent pool. At the same time, however, many other aspects than mere teamwork are naturally required to succeed as an interdependent sports team. These aspects—including for example technically skillful individual players and coaches, let alone issues delineated by the organizational context—have undeniably played a role as well in the recent triumphs of the Finnish teams.⁴⁰

As demonstrated in Figure 6, the analysis of the interview data ended up in six core categories that capture the common determinants of successful Finnish teamwork. The categories are represented by six interconnected perspectives that have resulted in the emergence of flourishing Finnish teams, as depicted in Figure 7. The first perspective describes a set of fundamental Finnish values (introduced in Section 6.3) that have contributed to the teamwork in these teams in several ways, whereas the second perspective portrays the common attributes of the people in these teams, reflecting first and foremost willingness to help and place the team first (Section 6.4). The third perspective explains how the teams have generated an atmosphere of extraordinary respect and trust (Section 6.5), which has allowed the individual members to release their full potential and aroused their desire to dedicate that potential wholly to their team’s use.

⁴⁰ Regarding the organizational context (whose effects are otherwise out of scope of this study), for example, prior investments by the national federations and other instances in training conditions and in the whole junior system, as well as provision of proper resources for the (adult) team itself, appeared to be essential in many cases for later developing the team to a certain point, only beyond which excellent teamwork within the team has become relevant.

The fourth perspective introduces the procedures for the effective dialogue and decision-making (Section 6.6) that the teams have employed to transform the desire to sacrifice oneself to the team into concrete actions. The fifth perspective focuses on the visible daily routines and rituals (Section 6.7) that have been in use in the teams and had an influence on the way in which the members have treated and interacted with each other. The sixth perspective proposes the additional features that according to the interview data are required for establishing a longer-run culture of success (Section 6.8) into a shorter-run flourishing Finnish team.

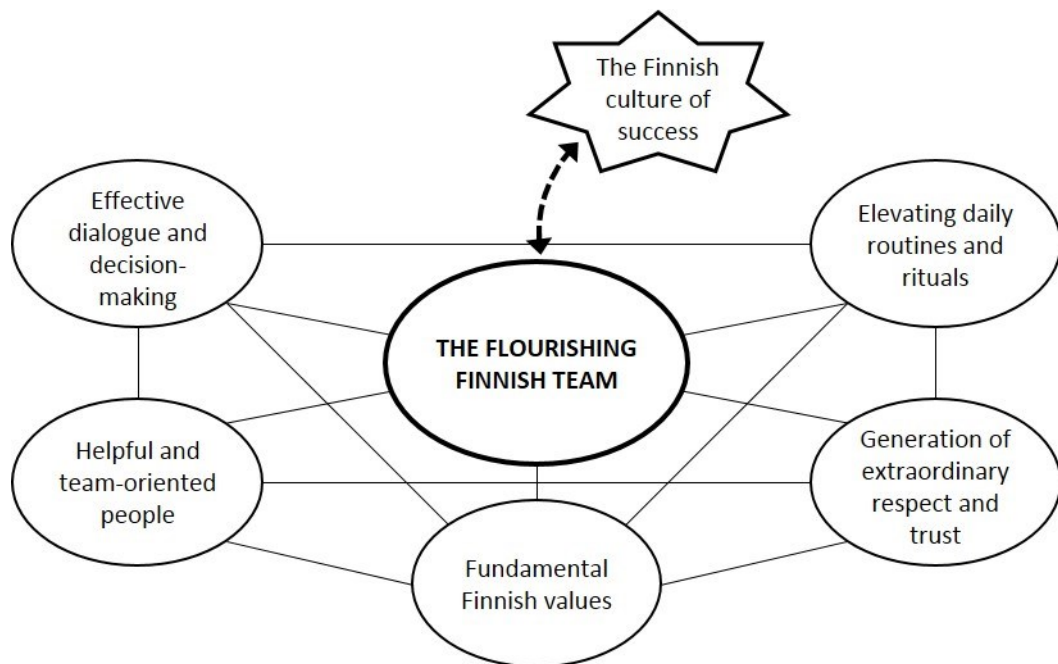


Figure 7. Determinants of the flourishing Finnish team.

Overall, regarding these perspectives, two issues are worth noting. First, while fundamental Finnish values stand for an influencing condition, all the other perspectives refer to emergent states and processes. Salas et al. (2015, 610) define influencing conditions as “factors that shape the manner or degree to which teams engage in teamwork,” whereas Marks et al. (2001, 357) describe emergent states as “properties of the team that are typically dynamic in nature” and processes as “the means by which members work interdependently ... to yield meaningful outcomes.” Thus, fundamental Finnish values denote aspects that have de facto not occurred within the sample teams (and are therefore located bottommost in Figure 7), while the other perspectives consist of themes that have occurred within and by the teams.

Second, the framework includes neither any directional paths nor hierarchy. When establishing relationships between the core categories during the analysis of the data, I found that all the perspectives affect each other in a variety of ways, which underlines the need for considering the perspectives holistically. Moreover, no perspective was found to be more important than others; instead, they all have contributed significantly to successful teamwork among the investigated teams.

The chapter begins with two introductory sections. Section 6.1 takes a philosophical stance on what is meant by *success* in these results, while Section 6.2 explains why the teams in the center of the framework in Figure 7 are called *flourishing*. Sections 6.3–6.8 cover the different elements of the framework. Throughout the chapter, the text proceeds as a turn taking between the two methods used in the study. The major part of the text is comprised of the theory built from the six cases through analyzing the interview data, supplemented by several interview quotes.⁴¹ Table 4 lists examples of these quotes, originating from each sport (i.e. case) and relating to each perspective (i.e. core category). The theory is regularly supported and given more depth and practicality by my own autoethnographic excerpts, separated from the rest of the text clearly with a different font and style. These excerpts also include a label *A player's point of view* to underline that they represent my views as a player, in contrast to the rest of the text that represents only the views of the coaches.

6.1 Redefining success: a philosophical prologue

“I have nearly a bad conscience about knowing how little winning matters to me. Paradoxically, the team that is least pressured by winning increases its chances to win most. Those who’ve not yet won anything should also understand this idea. It allows us to hug each other after losing the final match of a season and note what a great season we had.” [i]

Since this study deals with successful teamwork, it is essential to take part in the somewhat philosophical discussion and delineate what is here meant by *success* or *winning*, a related concept often employed in sports. Contrary to what the term is often connected to, the coaches attached success closely to fully realizing their

⁴¹ To maintain anonymity and concentrate on what has been said instead of who has said what, the coaches were randomly assigned tags from *a* to *l* that are mentioned in connection with the quotes.

Perspective	Sport					
	<i>Aesthetic group gymnastics</i>	<i>Basketball</i>	<i>Floorball</i>	<i>Ice hockey</i>	<i>Synchronized skating</i>	<i>Volleyball</i>
<i>Fundamental Finnish values</i>	“I say to them that their strength lies within being able to practice more than others.”	“Abroad, people know what they get when hiring a Finn, both in good and bad.”	“Finns have their feet on the ground.”	“Compared to the other places where I’ve been, the premises for doing high-quality teamwork are good in Finland.”	“Principally, our sport is challenging for Finns because you should show your emotions, combining movement and empathy.”	“Even the Finnish traits depend on the atmosphere that you create and on the kind of culture there’ll be.”
<i>Helpful and team-oriented people</i>	“I hope that my gymnasts will become their own masters so that they’ll have their happiness in their own hands.”	“Anyway, the most important thing in being a coach is that what you do has a meaningful impact on others.”	“Above all, a good team player brings himself and his best effort to the team’s use every time.”	“Helping is a good word; that’s my ultimate task. To help, to guide, to advise ... where we’re going and how.”	“These skaters will surely be respected and valuable members in their future work communities.”	“Most essential for me is that someone gets inspired when she sees my team play and I can contribute positively to her life.”
<i>Generation of extraordinary respect and trust</i>	“Trust emerges from different experiences and from realizing that we’ve coped with each of them.”	“Principally, no one has an inadequate attitude. It’s more about not having the courage to give one hundred per cent.”	“When having a strong chemistry and close relationships, there’s a stable core around which to build the team’s story.”	“It’s easy for a player to say that he’ll be committed but in reality it cannot be measured until facing a tough situation.”	“You don’t have to love each personality and be their bestie, but you have to respect and accept the diversity that we have.”	“Respect extends also to respecting opponents. We recently played against a lousy opponent but did it diligently all the way.”
<i>Effective dialogue and decision-making</i>	“In terms of feedback, you have to know the athlete well and sense her mood and look.”	“Communication, as we understand it, deals with exchanging opinions and thoughts on collective matters.”	“Regardless of whether negative or positive, the feedback must be honest and straight, that’s awfully important.”	“A good team is actually not a good team before everyone has expressed her opinion.”	“There’s lots of shared leadership. I always say that keep me informed but the more you decide yourself the better.”	“Players compose the magic of the game. It’s amusing to claim that they wouldn’t be able to play without the coaches.”
<i>Elevating daily routines and rituals</i>	“For example with proper posture, body language can be used to build courage and promote a culture of winning.”	“Then you must show in everyday life what’s important ... I keep a constant watch on these issues.”	“We began with the game we want to play, but then we pondered how we should treat each other to play that kind of a game.”	“My way of leading people has focused on their motivation, attitude and way of confronting with others.”	“Once, when one skater didn’t have a swimming suit, the whole team swam naked. Then I knew that it was a good team.”	“I’m not interested in choreographies; I’m interested in situations where people are genuine and help each other.”
<i>The Finnish culture of success</i>	“All the gymnasts that go on and on have the hunger and they love what they do—otherwise they would’ve quit already.”	“When we win a title, the good feeling should originate from the journey to the title, not from attaining the title itself.”	“It’s nothing if you win once. Now, when we’ve won three times, we might have some understanding on what really matters.”	“Too often wrong people make wrong judgments about wrong issues, without seeing the issues below the surface.”	“After winning the world championship, it was unforgettable how they began to practice again a couple of weeks later.”	“People often speak only about winning without saying nothing about the everyday issues that lead to winning.”

Table 4. Examples of coach quotes relating to each perspective on flourishing Finnish teams.

teams' potential and much less to concrete and "hard" competitive results. By focusing on becoming as good as one can, it is assumed that the team will ultimately receive the result that it deserves in a competition. As also proposed by the renowned American basketball coach John Wooden (Wooden and Jamison, 2005, 8), "success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable."⁴² According to this view, which the coaches found undeniable, neither an individual nor a team can give more than everything, which should automatically lead to an optimal competitive result, without putting too much pressure on the result per se.⁴³

When defined this way, success differs from winning, i.e. finishing first (or reaching an otherwise great result) in a competition.⁴⁴ Competitions, by definition, involve comparing the performance of a team to that of other teams and the result of the team is always relative to those of the other teams. Due to the differences in the premises of the competing teams and the fact that each competition is a random event where even a clear favorite does not win every time, no successful team can always win.⁴⁵ However, by being successful, the coaches underlined that the team gives itself a chance to win—otherwise it has no chance at all in the very competitive world-class sports. Chance favors the prepared mind.⁴⁶ Success is achieved through own actions, whereas winning depends also on the competing teams and other external factors.

"If being successful equals winning, it's really suffocating and oppressive; that you somehow give free rein to others to decide how you now feel, like being strangled." [1]

⁴² Also for me personally, out of the several books that I have read about leadership and organizations written by former coaches and players, *Wooden on Leadership* by Wooden and Jamison (2005) is the most influential and indisputable. I strongly recommend an interested reader to turn to the book.

⁴³ In public discussion, athletes and teams are sometimes criticized for their comments about going into a competition with an aim to merely do their best, the main argument being that since sports is about competing and winning, they should aim at winning or reaching some other given result and not doing so would mean that they are not true competitors. Quite the contrary, the view proposed by the coaches holds that by becoming the best they can, athletes and teams will actually maximize their willingness to compete and desire to perform, which will also maximize their competitive result.

⁴⁴ Of course, *winning* could also contain several meanings such as winning oneself, winning another team that a team has not previously won, being able to do the right concrete things that bring home the trophy in a championship match, or behaving as a true champion after one has won a title. In any case, as defined here, winning refers to a harsh and simple numerical measure, to highlight the difference between the coaches' view on success and competitive results.

⁴⁵ Being conscious of the impact of chance does not naturally imply that a team is left with no alternative but to passively wait for the result. Quite the contrary, by preparing better than competitors along the way to the competition, the team can actively increase its odds on reaching a certain result.

⁴⁶ This aphorism belongs originally to Louis Pasteur, a reputed French chemist and microbiologist.

Consequently, instead of putting too much emphasis on winning, the interviewed coaches have prioritized the everyday work and aimed at making the process as enjoyable as possible. Since becoming as good as one can obviously calls for consistent high-quality training and a disciplined lifestyle, i.e. doing right things with high standards, as well as for a desire to do things better to chase new dreams, success in world-class sports appears to be deeply connected to intrinsic motivation, which Ryan and Deci (2000, 55) view as “doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable.” Moreover, holding the focus more on the daily work and less on competitive results is liberating and releases additional resources for the work itself, which, as a by-product, is assumed to generate better competitive results.

“During some weeks, our number of training hours is crazy. No one wants to be there and do the work if the whole isn’t enjoyable in some weird way. If the athletes are happy and babbling when we begin early in the morning and still smiling when they leave after a tough and thorough session, I get an instant feeling of success.” [g]

At the same time, however, the importance of winning should not be undervalued. Becoming better than others is an innate feature of sports; one must want and be able to win and losing should feel reasonably horrible. Efforts to win drive athletes and teams forward; fundamentally, it is difficult to imagine sports without the aim to obtain a great result in a competition. Therefore, optimally, both the journey and its end should be borne in mind but so that the former dominates the latter. Victories should indeed feel good and be celebrated—like all rare moments in life—but being aware of the amazing journey that lies behind it additionally boosts the feeling.

In this light, when presenting the determinants of successful Finnish teamwork, this chapter deals with issues found to be important in helping the Finnish interdependent sports teams fully realize their potential and become the best they can through enjoyable high-quality everyday work. As such, looking back to Section 4.1 that made a distinction between team performance and team effectiveness, the chapter builds on the latter, broader definition, but also supplements it by a flavor that emphasizes intrinsic motivation and realizing one’s potential. Obviously, the determinants will not guarantee that any Finnish interdependent team employing the framework would win, but they will surely assist in maximizing the team’s chances

to win, i.e. to achieve the second most important thing, as well as in making the whole journey more enjoyable and meaningful to the participants.

A player's point of view: My source of intrinsic motivation de luxe

“Are you still playing, why?” “With your background and talent I'd be doing something else.” “Do you really mean that you can earn enough money in floorball?” “You should already have a proper job.” “I can imagine that it's fun to play, but...”

These are some of the comments I have heard during the years on my choice of path thus far. (However, not to leave readers with a biased view on all the comments I have heard, I must underline that the major part has been less questioning and more admiring and supporting, emphasizing the awesomeness of finding such a passion and suggesting that I will have plenty of time to do other great things later.) I naturally understand the reasoning behind these comments and have without doubt pondered these issues myself as well, but I am now pretty proud of sticking to what I have loved.

After trying out and doing several sports as a typical young kid in the 1990s, I ultimately chose floorball at the age of twelve simply because it felt most enjoyable. Little by little, followed by many kinds of positive experiences, the hobby got more serious and my training more determined, but still in the secondary school I perhaps dreamed more about becoming the CEO of Nokia than playing floorball professionally and becoming a world champion (I was a mobile phone enthusiast who got his own Nokia 2110 before anyone else in our class, which partly explains the goal). Looking back now, my floorball journey has been significantly prolonged, the main reason clearly being my love to the sport, daily work to learn and get better as well as to the whole lifestyle as a top athlete. Put differently, floorball has provided me with a superb source of intrinsic motivation. In fact, the sport is probably one of those where such motivation is needed most; due to the very limited amount of money, fame and praise available, I would have probably quit playing a long time ago if extrinsic motivators had been dominating. The same surely holds for the other floorballers with a long career and, as Vink et al. (2015) propose, is in line with other team athletes.

More generally, I see sports as an excellent forum to fulfill oneself and become the best one can, if only one is navigated by intrinsic motivation. Sports is life with the volume turned up.⁴⁷ However, when it comes to (interdependent) teamwork in particular, I see potentially even deeper implications. As Martela (2015) suggests that there are four basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, relatedness and beneficence⁴⁸—that “are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity and well-being” (Deci and Ryan, 2000, 229) and thereby constitute the components of a meaningful life (and, as a by-product, lead even to happiness), I would claim that being part of a successful team can be considered as a basic unit of meaningful life.

⁴⁷ This aphorism is not mine either. I saw it for the first time on an inspiring poster at a training facility in Helsinki, without later being able to find out to whom it originally belongs.

⁴⁸ To be exact, the three first of these needs are incorporated in the self-determination theory (see, above all, Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Deci and Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, 2011, and the references therein), whereas beneficence is an extension recently proposed by Martela (see, e.g., Martela, 2015, 68–71; Martela and Ryan, 2016).

When I contemplate specifically my time in the Finnish national team, I find that I have belonged to the team by my own volition (autonomy), managed to play a decent game there (competence), enjoyed working closely and ambitiously with my teammates, sharing a concrete competitive goal in the back of our heads (relatedness) and we have also been able to act as role models and as a source of inspiration for the Finnish society (beneficence). Talk about meaningful life that, mainly as a by-product, has also generated pretty nice competitive results.

Therefore, team sports is life in an orchestra with a loud and symphonic sound. And, if I still want, I hopefully have a good deal of time in front of me to later become an intrinsically motivated CEO.

6.2 The flourishing Finnish team

As we learned in Chapters 2 and 3, excellent interdependent team outputs necessitate not only excellent individual contributions but also that the individuals and their outputs make up a coherent whole. To make an interdependent team greater than the sum of its parts and the best it can be, teamwork must assist the individual members in reaching their best and in orchestrating the individual bests to work symphonically together. The investigated Finnish teams have met both of these conditions. From the individual perspective, the members have been able to let off their handbrakes and truly be themselves, realize their potential and release a major share of their reserves of energy and strength. From the collective perspective, the members have both wanted and known how to channel their potential and reserves to their team's use.

Because competitions represent the moment of truth in all sports, showcasing how athletes and teams have conducted their everyday work, they also stand for the most suitable setting to contemplate how the combination of meeting the above two conditions has been visible among these Finnish teams.⁴⁹ In competitions, the teams have appeared unitary and hard-working; each member has known what she has been supposed to do and how it has related to the tasks of others, sacrificing her individual self for the common good. On the other hand, the teams have featured an unusual

⁴⁹ The interviewed coaches were unanimous in that competitions, i.e. settings in which the team is supposed to be at its best, signify the ultimate context for measuring how the team works together. The exhaustive definition for a good team spirit, for example, includes much more than having a fun and relaxed atmosphere in the locker room (which even hobbyist teams may easily have). Most importantly, a good and genuine team spirit implies that team members do everything for their team in competitions during tough moments, which also contributes to making all the others do the same.

combination of uniform actions and tolerance for different personalities; in addition to self-evidently and strictly following the team concept and putting the team first, the members have been able to demonstrate their unique skills and traits, enriching the team further. Moreover, even during tough and intensive competitions, the teams have been smiling, having fun and truly enjoying doing things together. In a way, the members have seemed to be more than just teammates, reflecting respectful and trustful companionship and viewing the team as the best place to be.

To highlight these attributes beyond the better-than-expected competitive results, I will call the Finnish teams in the center of the framework in Figure 7 *flourishing*, instead of employing the word *successful*. For Fredrickson and Losada (2005, 678), for example, “to flourish means to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth and resilience.” In this respect, the sample teams have indeed flourished as they have not only performed effectively but also operated with integrity and meaning as well as been emotionally satisfied with each other and with the wider organizational context. In other words, teamwork in these teams has generated success, given the definition in the previous section, but also more far-reaching noble implications, unleashing human potential.

6.3 Fundamental Finnish values

“Some people think that values are worthless. In my opinion, they’re very important.” [e]

The first perspective on flourishing Finnish teams concerns Finnish national traits and, more broadly, the national culture. People within a specific country often hold a set of common values that can be used to understand why and how the country’s culture differs from those of other countries (see, e.g., Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001, and the references therein). National cultural values, i.e. “general standards or principles that are considered intrinsically desirable ends” (Jones and George, 1998, 532), comprise “the bases for the specific norms that tell people what is appropriate in various situations” (Schwartz, 1999, 25) and have many permanent implications in teamwork at the national level, most likely in both good and bad (Salas et al., 2015).

While each team in the sample has fostered its own specific set of values and spent a varying amount of time on jointly determining them, the analysis of the interview data identified four values, labeled as fundamental Finnish values, which stem from the national culture and have had a positive influence on teamwork in each of the teams. In addition to these favorable values, the analysis also revealed two adverse Finnish traits. The teams' capability to turn around these traits to their advantage partly explains their flourishing. This section introduces the positive values and negative traits and shows the ways these elements have had an impact on the teams.

6.3.1 Values contributing to Finnish teamwork

“It’s important to be conscious of the values stemming from our history, traditions and national attributes, but when going into an important competition, we’re definitely not anymore preparing the team as we’d enter the Winter War.” [j]

The four fundamental Finnish values that were identified include (i) honesty, (ii) loyalty, (iii) perseverance and (iv) humility. Drawn from the interviews, Table 5 lists a variety of examples of how these values have been reflected in typical situations in the sample teams. First, honesty, which Helkama (2015, 159–166) also presents as an important Finnish value, has two different meanings. On the one hand, it means that Finns are truthful, sincere and straight when speaking about their feelings or different circumstances and facts, without a hidden agenda. On the other hand, honesty implies that their actions are fair and respectful towards others. Loyalty, secondly, refers to the Finnish tendency to stay committed to a community larger than oneself. Finns are fairly capable of placing the community before oneself and adhere to its rules and regulations. The coaches highlighted that Finnish athletes are nowadays known abroad for their ability to collaborate and sacrifice themselves for the team.

Third, Finns are industrious and resilient. After deciding to do something—that might take more time than elsewhere though—they are able to stick to the plan and want to complete what they have started. This value implies that Finns are capable of working more and harder than others, all the time maintaining a good work ethic without becoming self-indulgent (Helkama, 2015, 139–154). Moreover, when facing challenges, Finns do not give up easily but get up again and fight to the last, even if

Sample team situation	Fundamental Finnish value			
	<i>Honesty</i>	<i>Loyalty</i>	<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>Humility</i>
<i>Getting to know new teammates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openly revealing issues about oneself and the team's realities to the newcomers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticking to the team and its concept fully even if the newcomers would make one's own on-court role to diminish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working hard to help the newcomers familiarize with the team both on and off the court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having an open-minded, curious and respectful attitude towards the newcomers, viewing them directly as equal teammates
<i>Solving a dispute in a meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest about facts and one's own opinions and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to place the team's interest ahead of one's own and commit oneself to the team-optimal solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striving for finding a solution at any cost, not sweeping the problematic issues under the carpet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respecting, understanding and giving room for the viewpoints of others, not desperately striving for "winning" the dispute with own arguments
<i>Conducting a regular practice session</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if not being under the watchful eye of the coach and the rest of the team, doing everything as planned and agreed with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strictly following the team's training scheme, even if certain team-optimal aspects in the scheme are not optimal for oneself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying through the whole practice session with maximum effort and focus, no matter how long and/or tough the session is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that success is generated in best possible daily work by taking nothing for granted
<i>Performing in an important competition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the high stakes and tough opponent, playing by the rules and showing respect for the opponent, referees and spectators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacrificing oneself for the team by making an important defensive play that involves even physical pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the team's plan industriously, leaving everything on the court and fighting to the last 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being humble but confident: knowing own strengths but being also aware that the opponent might surprise if not doing everything diligently
<i>Reacting to a successful competition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing compassion for the opponent and being able to see the actual reasons behind the successful performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging that successful performances also at the individual level arise from primarily serving the team, not vice versa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to work hard and get better, building on the improved confidence from the successful competition, instead of becoming less industrious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that there is still a lot to improve in the team's performance and that successes do not make one a better human being
<i>Reacting to an unsuccessful competition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest about all the reasons for the unsuccessful performance to obtain a realistic view on why everything did not go as planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticking to the team and its concept even harder in the face of adversity, instead of beginning to niggle at the team's atmosphere and prioritize one's own interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not giving up, analyzing the past performance thoroughly and deciding to work even harder for the next competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to look in the mirror and admit one's own mistakes at the same time than maintaining one's self-esteem

Table 5. Examples of the effect of the fundamental Finnish values on different sample team situations.

not having the odds on their side. However, when troubles come along, perseverance should not denote obstinacy but allow to alter one's behavior accordingly.⁵⁰

Finally yet importantly, Finns feature “an almost genetically endowed humility” (Chaker, 2011, 224). They have their feet on the ground and a realistic perception on their capabilities, viewing themselves modestly in relation to others. Even if they possess unique qualities and skills, they do not boast about them, being aware that others have their own unusual qualities and skills. Additionally, when they appear to be the best according to some criteria, they know that it does not entitle them to look down on other human beings. As an important distinction, however, humility must be distinguished from crawling, i.e. unnecessarily downplaying one's own qualities and abilities in relation to others. Crawling hinders flourishing because it entails a too pessimistic view of one's potential. As suggested below, the sample teams have for their part contributed to replacing unnecessary crawling with healthy humility.

6.3.2 Traits turned around by the sample teams

“Finnishness involves also negative aspects ... but these aspects don't exist in our team because it's not managed similarly.” [e]

In addition to the favorable values, the investigated teams have turned around two negative Finnish traits, thereby possibly molding the mindset of the whole society. The first of these issues relates to team confidence, the faith in succeeding as a team by working together, which has a positive impact on team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2008). Traditionally, as Chaker's (2011, 177–179) examples of Finns' earlier athletic triumphs suggest, Finland has been considered as a land of individual sports, without capabilities to prosper as a team. Little by little, initiated by the ice hockey national team in 1995 and continued by others, the teams have exemplified that Finns can succeed and that high-quality teamwork might make up a source of competitive advantage, even if they have long been a little brother to their larger neighbors.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Chaker (2011, 181–196) provides a discussion on this “darker side of sisu.”

⁵¹ In this respect, to show what we can as a team, concrete competitive results have undeniably played a very important role, regardless of the claim proposed in Section 6.1 that becoming the best one can (i.e. being successful) is ultimately a more essential motive than defeating one's opponents (winning).

At present, thanks to the earlier triumphs, the currently active generations of athletes and coaches are equipped with an improved potency (Shea and Guzzo, 1987), i.e. a better faith in their general potential as a team. Moreover, they have gained team efficacy (Katz-Navon and Erez, 2005; Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006), understanding the practical ways they can succeed, regardless of operating with scarcer resources. These generations doubt less whether they are good enough, care less what others think of them and are more capable of enjoying and showing their best at decisive moments. As such, they reflect the combination of being humble but confident.⁵²

"If we sometimes happen to lose, we no longer lose because we're Finns but because the opponent is better. Even if we're underdogs against the best nations, everyone really believes that we have a chance. Unloading the old burden has had noteworthy implications across our team sports but also for the Finnish society." [i]

Second, through their own actions, the sample teams have been able to pierce some holes into the ice of conventional Finnish taciturnity, releasing substantial resources for their collaboration and, consequently, flourishing. Generally, attributes such as extraversion and openness to experience tend to have both a direct (Bell, 2007) and indirect (Barrick et al., 1998) influence on team effectiveness. The inspected teams have provided their members with an atmosphere to gradually open up themselves to and communicate with each other, resulting in deeper sister- or brotherhood and more courage to contribute to the team by overtly being oneself. For their part, the teams have embodied a shift from being somewhat dispassionate, untalkative and repressed to manifesting enthusiasm, joy and unity. More broadly, in this respect, the teams have demonstrated to the society by their own example that it is okay to share one's feelings and personality (in both good and bad), feel enthusiastic and chase one's dreams, particularly together with other people with similar dreams.

"Foreigners often see us as an unapproachable and unsocial population that doesn't show its emotions. On the surface it might be so, but we've succeeded in breaking that surface and taken significant steps forward. Our guys have been cuddling and shedding tears in the team events, touching the core of ourselves." [j]

⁵² In the context of team sports, being humble but confident means that a team is realistically aware of its potential that has been acquired during the years by thorough preparations, at the same time than the team respects its opponents and knows that they can also surprise if the team, for some reason or another, is not alert and does not do everything as well as possible before and during a competition.

A player's point of view: Sitting on the bench in Sweden

To understand aspects and values of our national culture, exploring another culture is often amazingly educative, as Hofstede (1980) also reminds. I learned this in Sweden—even if the country presumably stands for the least exotic foreign culture from the Finnish standpoint. During my year in Falun, my second Swedish team, I had a difficult season personally. I was still recovering from a major knee operation, missed my girlfriend who was at the time living in another country and did not fully acclimatize to this smaller Swedish city whose atmosphere I felt somewhat stagnated and fusty,⁵³ all of which made me perform below my normal standard. From time to time during that season, I played in the third line (instead of the second), which meant that my on-court role was smaller than what I had been used to. The situation was new and frustrating to me, but at the same time it was very fair; in sports, you are as good as your most recent performance and at that moment I did not deserve more in that otherwise excellent team. I had no trouble accepting the coach's decisions; instead, I trained extra to get back in shape and supported the guys without demonstrating my inner frustration. During the moments when I had to stay on the bench, I did everything I could to cheer the boys and made sure that I would be ready to hop in if the coach wanted so. I had learned that doing so would maximize team performance.

After all, it turned out that I had been interpreted incorrectly. “Tero, you should show more emotions and anger,” I heard the coaches and the GM say in the feedback discussions after the season. Since I did not begin to sulk and throw my sticks at the wall when not allowed to play, they had assumed that I did not care, which did at least not improve my chances to get on the court. I had just thought, similar to Wooden (Wooden and Jamison, 2005, 112), that emotionalism is counterproductive and by displaying temperament I would have been sanctioning it for my teammates, which simply does not belong to the repertoire of a loyal and humble Finn. As Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) remind, national culture might account for dozens of percent of the variation in attitudes and social behaviors, including among others aggression, obedience and conformity. Without doubt, my body language could have been more enthusiastic and I should have had a more thorough dialogue with the coach about my feelings already during the season. The main point, however, is that the fundamental Finnish values might generate competitive advantage by bringing out courses of action that, I strongly insist, have a more positive effect on team effectiveness than some alternative values possibly dominating elsewhere.

6.4 Helpful and team-oriented people

The second perspective on flourishing Finnish teams that emerged from the interview data centers around the common attributes of the people in these teams. As such, it relates to the broader team composition research that has featured studies of team effectiveness for a long time (Mathieu et al., 2008) for two relatively obvious

⁵³ Luckily, from the perspective of doing sports, the town was perfect. The guys and training facilities were great and we finished the season by winning the Swedish championship.

reasons. On the one hand, understanding the relationship between the attributes and team effectiveness assists in the selection of members (Salas et al., 2015). On the other hand, being conscious of the important variables might guide training and development efforts within the team (Stevens and Campion, 1994). This section presents the focal aspects of three distinct sets of members: (i) coaches (Subsection 6.4.1), (ii) athletes (Subsection 6.4.2) and (iii) the supporting staff (Subsection 6.4.3).

6.4.1 Coaches as comprehensive teachers of life

”For me, being a leader or a coach is about helping other human beings. A coach should be able to support, encourage and inspire her athletes; that makes up good leadership. Even within the wider coach community, I’m not sure whether this idea has been underlined and discussed thoroughly enough.” [k]

The primary purpose of the coaches was clearly visible in the data: to have the athletes and the team in the center and to help them develop themselves. However, while the coaches have naturally carried the main responsibility for organizing and executing everything the teams have done related to their sport, their idea of helping has covered much more than just maximizing the teams’ on-court performance. They have striven for helping their athletes more comprehensively learn, think, dream, collaborate, reach goals and gain experiences. They have wanted to assist the athletes in taking better care of themselves as well as in becoming more aware of themselves and others, viewing sports only as a small, albeit important, part of a balanced life and well-being.⁵⁴ As such, this approach to leadership resembles—not surprisingly—coaching, which Wageman (2001, 561) generally defines as “direct interaction with the team that is intended to shape team processes to produce good performance” and which has been shown to have a mixed influence on team performance but a solely positive influence on a variety of intermediate variables (Mathieu et al., 2008). Moreover, the coaches appeared to have allocated more time and attention to coaching than workplace team leaders typically do (Hackman and Wageman, 2005).

⁵⁴ In this respect, the most rewarding moments for the coaches have related to observing that an athlete or a team has realized an issue concerning her/its development and begun to work passionately to get better, or more generally to having been part of teams where they have been able to help other members chase their dreams.

To help the athletes and teams as comprehensively as possible, the coaches have started to coach their team more and more by coaching individuals, i.e. aiming at having an influence on the whole team through single members of the team, instead of coaching the whole team as a single uniform unit. According to their view, the better individuals there have been in the team, the better has the whole team become. However, coaching individuals does not here refer to focusing purely on the technical skills and/or physical capabilities of an athlete—let alone concentrating on individuals at the cost of the team—but conceiving each athlete holistically as a unique individual with different characteristics and micro-level motives.⁵⁵ From this point of view, as Hackman and Wageman (2005, 269) divide team coaching further into “helping individual members strengthen their personal contributions” and “working with the team as a whole to help members use their collective resources,” the focus of the interviewed coaches has been increasingly on the former, flavored with several “therapeutic and personal development elements” (Ives, 2008, 103).

More specifically, to succeed in this approach as a coach, the analysis of the data identified three areas that were common to all the cases: (i) knowing each athlete holistically, (ii) fostering a set of key coach values and (iii) carrying the ultimate responsibility for the team’s collaboration and performance. First, the coaches have been able to touch, support and understand how each athlete has related to the whole team by being curious and getting to know her completely enough through a constant (rather than intermittent) dialogue, in both formal and informal contexts.⁵⁶ Due to a number of practical constraints, the coaches have typically not been able to discuss an ideal amount of time with everyone, but they have anyway strived for becoming acquainted with each member of their team as deeply and soon as possible. Along with such a dialogue, the athletes have also begun to understand that the coaches have been there for them, not vice versa, and that the coaches have been willing to learn as well.

⁵⁵ In this respect, being a coach has been about observing and then helping an athlete with her daily behavior in terms of motivation, self-confidence and emotions, both on- and off-court, instead focusing merely on the athlete’s shooting technique or physical test results, for instance.

⁵⁶ The data revealed that there are at least three levels on which a coach can get to know her athlete (and vice versa): (i) how she is as an athlete (or a coach) in the given sport, (ii) how she is otherwise doing in her everyday life and (iii) what she roughly thinks about the fundamental questions of life. Successful interdependent teamwork appeared to presume reaching the furthest level.

“Conversations are always useful. The more the athletes tell, the more I can help them. In many of the most breathtaking discussions I’ve had with my athletes, we’ve actually not been speaking about our sport at all.” [a]

Second, by their daily behavior, the coaches have fostered three common values: (i) high standards, (ii) openness and (iii) rightness. High standards refers to the requirement to continuously strive for becoming the best one can, not accepting any half-baked action. It would be naïve to assume that every athlete could perform in her own prime all the time, but the coaches have anyway presupposed that the athletes always give all and commit themselves to the team. Openness means that the coaches have taken the necessary time to justify their actions and decisions, openly and honestly, both in good and bad. Even if a certain matter would have been unfavorable, Finns are used to frankness, i.e. not sweeping anything under the carpet.

Rightness, the third value, has according to the coaches often been most challenging to attain because of two reasons. On the one hand, athletes often form their sense of rightness from a different and narrower perspective than coaches, possibly overrating the personal and not grasping the bigger, team-level picture. On the other hand, due to the typical differences between team members, rightness does not imply treating each athlete similarly, even in an identical situation. This has naturally necessitated deep enough knowledge of each individual; otherwise, the coaches might have made wrong interpretations, resulting in suboptimal consequences for both the individual athletes and teams.⁵⁷ Thus, the coaches in the sample teams have succeeded in balancing between being consistent and considering each individual separately.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ In all the sports under investigation, athletes consider their role and playing time as the ultimate measure of appreciation from their coaches. Thus, particularly when it comes to decisions about roles and playing time, openness and rightness turned out to be of utmost importance. The coaches stressed that failing in these dimensions represents one of the quickest ways of breaching a team’s atmosphere.

⁵⁸ According to the interview data, this need for balancing consistence and individuality has had at least two focal practical implications. First, it has meant that the better the athlete, the higher must the bar have been set (and vice versa); otherwise, the coach would have required less from the better athlete, therefore having been righteous neither to this athlete and her development nor to the whole team and its success. Second, in this context of world-class sports, rightness has sometimes (though not consistently) called for the use of questionable methods, for example conscious provocation and primitive outbursts of rage, to momentarily generate as much negative energy as possible to help the team defeat a difficult challenge. Overall, suitable application of such methods appeared to stand for a valuable coaching skill. However, the harsher the methods, the more the coaches must have worked for being completely sure that the team members have understood that the methods have been used only for their comprehensive development and not for bullying or hurting them.

“The world of an eighteen-year-old athlete is obviously different than that of a forty-year-old. People are different and so are the requirements set for them. You’re righteous when treating them fairly and honestly considering their own world.” [h]

Third, the coaches have been able to set the tone for tight collaboration and taken the ultimate responsibility for their team’s performance. They have shown direction by establishing the necessary frames and guidelines, covering in principle all the aspects that eventually result in seamless teamwork, presented in the following three sections (6.5–6.7) of this chapter. Above all, the coaches have been responsible for creating and nurturing the right atmosphere and sense of community, which has stood for a distinctive feature of the teams in the sample. The coaches have been aware of their position as the ultimate decision-maker and leader, knowing that if the team happens to be unsuccessful, they have to look in the mirror and carry the responsibility. As such, this area corresponds to the traditional paradigm of external leadership that views team leaders as coordinators of operations (Zaccaro et al., 2001) and as having responsibility and authority for the team’s performance (Mathieu et al., 2008).

“Although we work very closely as a team, being a head coach is a lonely position in the face of the decisive moments. Before the last world championships final, for example, I felt physically sick because I was aware of our potential and wanted so much that the team would get what it deserves. At that point, when you look back and reflect the whole journey, you can really feel the weight of the responsibility.” [j]

6.4.2 Athletes and the Finnish team player taxonomy

“A nice aspect in this occupation is that you usually can choose the people you spend your time with; that’s something you cannot do elsewhere so often. I don’t want to waste my time with difficult people, even if they would be skillful players.” [l]

The athletes in the inspected teams featured certain common attributes as well. Overall, the interview data indicated that in such interdependent teams—perhaps contrary to less interdependent teams—possessing merely superior technical expertise (or the potential to acquire such expertise) has simply not been enough. The athletes must have exceeded a certain threshold in terms of both sport-specific and teamwork skills, where the coaches often considered the latter pivotal. This finding is in line with the wide range of evidence suggesting that teamwork skills and team

orientation contribute to team effectiveness more than individual technical skills and abilities (Baker and Salas, 1992; Driskell and Salas, 1992; Stevens and Campion, 1994; Mathieu et al., 2008; Humphrey et al., 2009). Occasionally, the coaches have allowed some minor exceptions in the case of otherwise unusual talents, but having too many such athletes would have seriously hindered successful teamwork.

"I'm completely sure that a less proficient but more motivated and team-oriented athlete pushes the team further than a talented asshole." [c]

More specifically, the analysis of the interview data identified three groups of athlete attributes. These attributes turned out to be hierarchical so that the absolute majority of the athletes have had some of them, while only few athletes in each team have had all of them. Therefore, as depicted in Figure 8 and explained below in more detail, they can be viewed at three distinct layers that constitute *the Finnish team player taxonomy*. Here, attributes at a given layer automatically encompass also those at the lower layer(s); the higher the level, the less athletes there have been at that level. The taxonomy does not discuss merely personality traits, which has been the focus in earlier team composition research (Salas et al., 2015), but pieces together the crucial practical teamwork-related knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics that emerged from the data. Moreover, the taxonomy does not presume that all athletes (or recruiters) should strive only for becoming (recruiting) Level Three; having the right mix of athletes at each level appeared to be integral among the sample teams.⁵⁹

At the first, elementary level in the taxonomy, Level One athletes have made sure that they carry out their own tasks extremely well⁶⁰ and understand their role in the entirety, without viewing themselves as larger than the team or the sport. They have always done their best as well as understood how the team output results from collaboration and how they can personally contribute to that output. In short, they have brought out their best for the team all the time. Their actions have been aligned with the team values and concept, both on and off the court; during the final

⁵⁹ For example, a team consisting of Level One athletes alone would have lacked leadership, direction and drive, whereas a team comprising of merely Level Three athletes would have been subject to a shortage of humble and reliable foot soldiers.

⁶⁰ Strictly speaking, as explained in Section 2.1, carrying out one's own tasks refers to *taskwork*, as a distinction to *teamwork*. However, because excellent team outputs presume also excellent individual contributions, I find it relevant to consider these taskwork-related aspects here to a certain extent.

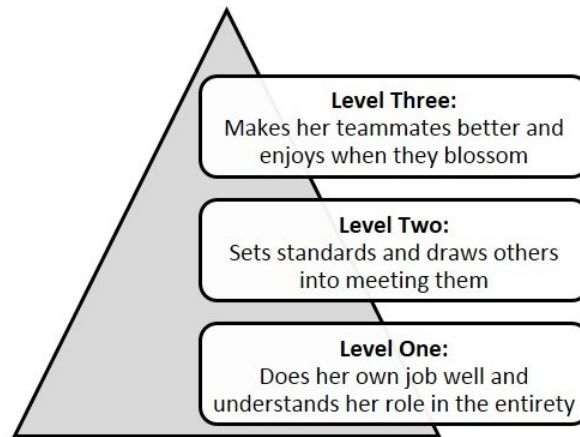


Figure 8. The Finnish team player taxonomy.

moments of a match that their team has been leading, for instance, they have understood that it has been more beneficial to the team to possess the ball instead of necessarily trying to score and improve one's personal statistics. In addition, they have been adaptable and got along with all kinds of personalities. Even if some of them would have not been talkative at all, they have anyway been rather active than passive members in their team and their body language (concerning for example facial expressions) has contributed to the team rather positively than negatively.

“Players who drive the team forward are well prepared and come on time, stick their necks out and do their job while having a smile on their face. You don't have to be smiling all the time, but you'll surely do things better with smile.” [h]

Moreover, regarding their role and development, Level One athletes have been patient, persistent and flexible. Even if their role at a given time has not fully matched their expectations, they have accepted their prevailing role assigned by the coach and kept on developing themselves, counting on that the coach will give them another role as soon as they deserve it and it is in the best interests of their team. In this respect, they have been truly interested in their development and done their part in establishing a constructive dialogue with the coach. In a way, athletes playing minor roles have delineated the state of affairs of the whole team; they have determined the height at which “the bucket has started to leak.” Furthermore, Level One athletes have been humble, committed and prepared to work hard without taking too much for granted. They have thought independently and asked the coach for reasons why things have been done in a specific way, but have wasted neither their

own nor their team's time and energy in unnecessary questioning. Altogether, these attributes correspond to team conscientiousness, one of the "Big Five" personality traits proposed by the literature,⁶¹ underlining that "greater conscientiousness should help each team member to contribute more to the overall team outcome regardless of the team member's specific role, tasks or relationships" (Barrick et al., 1998, 380).

Beyond Level One, Level Two athletes have shown the way for others by setting high standards for the remaining team and by helping their teammates meet them, positively and constructively, regarding both on-court activities and off-court lifestyle. As such, the attributes at Level Two concern the sense of responsibility for other members' behaviors (Kiggundu, 1983) and, more broadly, shared or distributed leadership, i.e. the emergence of leadership from within the team itself (Day et al., 2004; Mathieu et al., 2008; Morgeson et al., 2010). These athletes have formed the core of the sample teams and given direction to the whole. They have not only demanded a lot from themselves—known as leading others by own example—but they have also supported, encouraged and inspired their teammates to reach new heights, making a mentally significant impact on the team. These athletes have made the remaining team follow them; of particular importance has been their behavior at decisive moments as well as their reactions to successes and failures. They have lifted their team by being optimistic and at their best—reflecting the Big Five personality trait of emotional stability—during the most important competitions. Thereafter, given that they have remained insatiably motivated after a triumph, they have dragged the whole team along to additional development and titles.

"It's crucial which kind of leading players you have in terms of mental strength and attitude. Although the coach ultimately sets the standards, optimally players themselves set them. When it comes from within, being a coach is much easier." [f]

Thus, Level Two athletes have acted as a bridge between the other athletes and the coaching staff and led the team when the coach has been absent. Both the actions and manner of speaking of Level Two athletes have centered around the pronoun *we*, in line with the Big Five attribute agreeableness that maintains harmony and reduces

⁶¹ The extensively examined Big Five attributes of personality, all of which have been found to relate to team effectiveness, include agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion and openness to experience (see, e.g., Bell, 2007).

within-group competition (Bell, 2007). Little by little, there have been less members claiming that they cannot reach the standard required by others. The coaches underlined that it has made a difference who has given the order; if given by a fellow teammate, words have penetrated more effectively, due to the mutual respect among teammates and the urge not to disappoint them by missing their standards.

A player's point of view: Responding to a linemate's unsuccessful pass

Besides operating as a whole team, lines, i.e. the smaller group of players who are supposed to play with each other (quintets in basketball, ice hockey and floorball and sextets in volleyball), stand for another basic unit of action in all the ball sports included in this study. In a way, lines can be considered as teams inside a team; in a match, one at a time, lines represent the whole team on the court, and a large share of development efforts around the game takes place within one's own line. When taking a closer look, each line in a team might actually have a different kind of chemistry and divergent ways of doing things. Despite these conceivable differences, each line must find their chemistry and, as Hackman (1987, 332-333) already points out, apply its members' knowledge and skills. In an effective team, there is no place for dysfunctional lines, and this is where Level Two membership is highly valuable.

One practical way of demonstrating the power of the Level Two mindset within a line relates to an everyday situation where a linemate makes a mistake, for example gives an unsuccessful pass (which per se even should happen, because if you do not make mistakes you are not doing anything). Although it at first sight seems like a lapse made by an individual, there is often a more interdependent reality behind the lapse. The game of floorball, generally, is so interdependent that my linemates can make me shine when they have a great day and I have a worse one; on the other hand, I am not looking good either if I am doing well but all my linemates are out of tune. In the case of the failed pass, it might actually be that the other players on the court have moved themselves in a way that has left the passer without a good route to deliver the pass or, due to insufficient collaboration and chemistry within the line, that different linemates play a different kind of game. Given these circumstances, Level Two linemates react in ways that push the line further most and provide useful insights into the vast amount of shared leadership involved in all the successful teams to which I have belonged. Understanding this source of leadership, as Day et al. (2004) suggest, is crucial to gain a complete picture of the leadership processes and capacity in interdependent teams.

Therefore, when it comes to setting standards, which makes up the core of Level Two membership, I have learned that the only things you ultimately can (and should) demand from your linemates—or get angry at them if they miss these things—include (i) doing one's best, (ii) staying positive and (iii) looking in the mirror. The first guarantees that the possible unsuccessful passes take place because of the line's skill limitations (which is educational) rather than sloppy behavior (which is inexcusable as it does not reveal much about the line's potential). The second paves the way for continuous positive and encouraging words and gestures and, when failed passes or other challenges emerge (as they always do), people remain optimistic and constructive towards together working out the line's chemistry and flow to their game. The third

assures that instead of blindly blaming the one who gave the failed pass, each member will reflect what she could do better to help the passer; in such an interdependent context, there is always many such issues. Put differently, whereas Wooden (Wooden and Jamison, 2005, 229) reminds that “you are not a failure until you start blaming others ... for your results,” the idea developed here extends that of Wooden by suggesting that one is not a failure until she starts blaming others either for *their* results.

In addition to covering the features at the preceding layers, Level Three members have met the criterion for an absolute top athlete in interdependent team sports: they have made their teammates better. Their skills and understanding in the given sport have been so wide and deep that other players have begun to look better as the others have been able to focus more on utilizing their own strengths. Moreover, while aiming at performing well individually, athletes at this level have striven for their teammates performing well and, specifically, enjoyed as this has occurred.⁶² They have understood that each athlete in their team has her own strengths and weaknesses and managed to figure out how they could be of best use to the team. Overall, these attributes are not widely discussed in the academic team composition literature, despite being occasionally mentioned in public discussion.⁶³ In a way, Level Three combines exceptional knowledge, technical skills and abilities with the possession of many Big Five personality traits and, further, several aspects of servant leadership (Russell and Stone, 2002) and Collins’ (2001) level 5 leadership.

A player’s point of view: In the flow with Level Three teammates

During my sports career, I have been honored to play in the same team and line with several players that I would classify as Level Three athletes. These include (but are not limited to) goalie Henri Toivoniemi, defenders Emil Johansson and Tatu Väänänen as well as forwards Harri Forsten, Mikael Järvi and Mika Kohonen. When looking back to moments when I have been at my best, the existence of these players is interdependence in action in its purest form; without them, I would clearly not have become as good as I did. Ultimately, how good one is as a player is determined in matches, and playing matches with these guys has allowed me to give a better impression of myself. Take Mika as an example. Widely recognized as the greatest in the relatively short history of floorball, he is most likely the first I would mention if I will some day have children and a chance to tell them about the people I have played

⁶² To identify such a player in practice, for instance, one may look at a contest in any of the sports mentioned in this study, keep an eye on the athletes that are known to be very good and watch their reactions when their team makes a goal to which such an athlete has strongly contributed (e.g. by giving a superb pass). If she rather celebrates the goal scorer and what the team has just done than trumpets her own virtuosity, one might have found a Level Three team athlete.

⁶³ Magic Johnson, one of the all-time greatest players in basketball, stands for an excellent example of a player who was generally considered to make his teammates better.

with in my earlier floorball life. Although we never played in the same club team, we played in the same line in the national team for more than a decade. Without doubt, I must have mastered something also myself, but it is equally clear that without him I would not be holding the record for the number of goals scored in the Finnish national team, for instance. In short, particularly in such an interdependent context, you are not what you are without others, which I see as one of the key lessons from my career.

How does it, then, feel to play and be a teammate with these Level Three athletes? On the court, my primary feelings relate to ease and pleasure. These guys make my (as well as the whole team's) game clearer and more enjoyable both defensively and offensively. Defensively, in my typical role as a goal-scoring left wing, this means that they constantly instruct me how to move (since due to my position lots of things are happening behind my back). Offensively, they do not deliver difficult balls that would force me to hard-pressed situations; they enable a game where I always have some simple passing alternatives that I can utilize and thereafter move myself to a new position to which they finally give me a premium scoring chance (whose utilization, relatively speaking, has been one of my strengths). When it comes to providing these chances, Level Three players see things that others cannot see and, if I score, they are happy for me, even though they have often done the trickiest part on the way.

I remember a moment during the 2012 world championships in Zürich, for example, when I scored with a one-timer after a (once again) brilliant pass from Mika. In those days, I already knew that we would have less time together ahead of us than behind us and decided to particularly enjoy these remaining unique moments. Directly after the ball had reached the net and we started to celebrate with our line, I shook my head and said to Mika with a more than usually serious face that "it's an extreme honor to receive that kind of passes." Mika started to laugh. Okay, you do not hear such a comment at that point too often, but it somehow distilled how important he was to me. In teams where you are strongly dependent on others, Level Three team members act as a catalyst for reaching the optimal performance state that since Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has been referred to as flow.

6.4.3 Attentive supporting staff

"What I like in my current team is that I can focus fully on the athletes. Earlier, in another team, I had to spend an enormous amount of energy on preparing the supporting staff so that it would be on the right track during the decisive moments." [h]

The final yet important part of the people involved in the sample teams consists of the supporting staff, including for example team managers, physiotherapists, material keepers and publicists, i.e. other members than the coaches and athletes, with varying tasks supporting the team. These persons, who together with the coaches often form a separate management team within sports teams, have been less visible outward but anyway had a crucial role in the inspected teams' ability to function—and have been

highly respected for their part. The attributes of the supporting staff in the sample teams appeared to combine some of the key aspects presumed above from the coaches and athletes. On the one hand, this staff has had the athletes and the team in the center, with proper motives and a genuine desire to do everything to help the team. On the other hand, similar to Level One athletes, they have managed to carry out their own tasks very well and humbly understand their role in the entirety.⁶⁴

Perhaps most importantly, the supporting staff has acted as an additional glue and antenna within the teams and between the coaches and athletes. For instance, some athletes have rather talked to other kinds of personalities than those represented by the coaches, in which case an hour spent on the massage table has actually denoted not only a physiological but also a significant mental reloading event.⁶⁵ In this respect, it has been essential that the staff has held a completely consistent view with the coaches on the team's direction, values and mindset, referred to in the literature as team cognition or shared team knowledge (Salas et al., 2015). Moreover, whenever relevant, the supporting staff has brought new viewpoints to mull over in the management team. Thus, according to the coaches themselves, the supporting staff should ideally be chosen by the head coach, paying careful attention to employing personalities who bring suitable variance but who provide a good match with the personalities in the remaining part of the whole team.

Overall, besides the attributes of being helpful and team-oriented, the analysis brought out two important aspects regarding the people in the sample teams. First, leadership in these teams have taken many shapes and forms. The coaches appeared to have exercised mainly coaching, but have assumed external leadership as well when necessary. At the same time, a significant deal of shared leadership have arisen among the athletes and the supporting staff. Second, excluding the few attributes above, the teams have featured much diversity in several dimensions—the effect of

⁶⁴ Despite being crucial in helping a team become the best it can, tasks of the supporting staff are typically such that their importance does not necessarily become apparent at all when everything is working smoothly. In this regard, it turned out to be vital that the remaining team has anyway been aware of the significance of this staff and continuously demonstrated appreciation for these people.

⁶⁵ For an excellent example of such a close relationship between some athletes and the supporting staff in the 2016 Finnish ice hockey world junior championship team, see Pirinen (2016, 69–73).

which has yielded mixed results in the literature (Mathieu et al., 2008)—as long as the members have been able to comply with the collectively agreed team concept.

“There are all kinds of people in the locker room. As long as you’re doing something good for the team and giving your best, it’s ok that you’re different.” [f]

A player’s point of view: Winning despite the head coach

To win, having a proficient head coach is essential but perhaps not always necessary. This can be the case if and only if the remaining team and particularly its leading players are sufficiently mature and self-directed to compensate for the weaknesses of the coach, corresponding to the wider discussion on shared team leadership that “emerges from members’ collective knowledge, skills and abilities” (Mathieu et al., 2008, 450). I learned this myself as a team to which I belonged won a title rather despite than thanks to the head coach. It was a period during which me and many other players felt that the team lacked a common thread, both spiritually and relating to what we actually did on the court. Under the leadership of this coach who was rather pragmatic than noble-minded and good with people, feelings of being relaxed, confident and cohesive—our previous sources of competitive advantage—had been replaced by senses of insecurity, compulsiveness and obscurity. In the Collins’ (2001, 20) widely known typology, we perhaps now had a head coach who resembled more a competent manager instead of an effective leader or a level 5 executive.

Since this team had long been close to my heart, noticing that the ship now lacked a clear direction because of its incapable and insecure sea captain often made my heart bleed, particularly as I felt that the coach was not able to establish a proper dialogue through which we players could have helped him with viewpoints and encouragement. We were tilting at windmills; we knew the shortcomings but had no proper chance to improve the situation. At the same time, I was questioning myself whether it was just my limitedness and fallacious nostalgia that made me feel that way, but after several discussions with my teammates who felt the same, I concluded that that was not the case. “Please tell me this is just a nightmare,” said one of the boys at a training event.

At that point, it would have been easy to turn our backs to the coach completely, but that was not really an alternative. “Okay, the setting isn’t optimal, but it’s anyway we who’re doing the job on the court, not him,” we thought. “And the assistant coaches and the supporting staff are anyway brilliant,” someone added. Although the odds were not good, our ambition was to remain loyal and supportive to the coach while taking care that we players would compose a deeply cohesive bunch that could go through the issues that the coach did not see or catch by ourselves. Little by little, things got better. Furthermore, at an off-court activity close to our main event, the coach finally also opened up himself, revealing some sensitive issues about his life, which at one stroke—which Flanagan (1954) would call a critical incident—increased the team’s trust and respect towards him and even made us want to play for him.

Later, our performance in the most important matches was not stable and impressive all the time, but at the last minute, it was actually pretty good and we got the title. From

a broader perspective, we were not successful and did not realize our entire potential. Winning is not necessarily equivalent to performing optimally, but we learned a lot about how great things can emerge from within.⁶⁶ In this respect, my own answer to Hayes' (2002, 104–106) speculation on whether self-managing teams need a leader would be: not necessarily. Anyway, I am extremely happy for the coach for his personal growth story that resulted in a trophy. Moreover, while Bandow (2001) reminds that personality and task issues should be considered separately, I cannot underline enough how human dignity should also always be separated from capabilities to work in a given position. The coach should be respected for being a good human being and for doing everything in his power to work in his role as well as possible. His capacity was just not high enough for acting as a head coach, but it was not his fault that he was chosen to the position—rather, it boils down to the decision-makers (who hire the coaches) in the organizational context (discussed in Section 2.5) that should work effectively.

6.5 Generation of extraordinary respect and trust

“Building a team, interaction between the members, respect, trust, collaboration, striving for a common destination... All these are surely universally applicable.” [j]

As described in Section 6.2, the teams in the sample have comprised of athletes who have performed at their personal best but also reflected unity and willingness to sacrifice themselves to their team. At heart, the analysis of the interview data exposed that this combination of individual blossoming and team-level unity has emerged in an atmosphere of exceptional respect and trust, which constitutes the third perspective on flourishing Finnish teams. These two constructs have stood for the cornerstones of a game based on tight and fruitful collaboration—which has been characteristic to the teams—and, as explained earlier in this study, is pivotal in highly interdependent teams where team effectiveness depends primarily on having the best possible team, not necessarily the technically most skillful individuals.

Both respect and particularly trust have attracted attention in the recent teamwork literature. Hayes (2002, 23), for example, notes how teamwork “runs contrary to many established management practices” and how the shift “from a centrally-controlled structure to a fully team-oriented one” involves a fundamental transition

⁶⁶ I have also wondered whether the coach actually behaved purposely (and therefore very proficiently, i.e. contrary to what I have suggested here) the way he did in order to force us to take responsibility and think by ourselves. Helping their athletes become self-directed and realize what really matters, namely, was an aspect that often came up in the interview data.

in terms of respect and trust. However, the suitable atmosphere develops only with specific interventions (Webber, 2002). This section describes the core process through which the sample teams have created respect and trust that has gone beyond the ordinary and presents the implications of such an atmosphere, building on a few human premises introduced in Subsection 6.5.1. As portrayed in Figure 9, the process has begun from getting to know oneself (Subsection 6.5.2) and proceeded to getting to know others and gaining shared experiences with them (Subsection 6.5.3). Respect and trust, then, have had two fundamental consequences: the members have had the courage to be themselves and been willing to commit themselves to the team (Subsection 6.5.4), ultimately resulting in a team in which members have been able to realize all their potential and devote it wholly to their team.⁶⁷



Figure 9. The core process of generating respect and trust and its main implications for teamwork.

6.5.1 Some essential human premises

When it comes to building profound respect and trust within a team, three important human premises arose from the data. The first—however obvious—is that we all are remarkably different with our own characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. Due to the genotypic background and the individual life history of each member of a team, they all perceive and act in the world more or less differently, however homogeneous

⁶⁷ Undoubtedly, all the other perspectives presented in this chapter have also contributed to the atmosphere and the different phases of the process are somewhat overlapping than segregated, but the process depicted in Figure 9 anyway highlights the most essential issues relating to respect and trust.

the team as a whole may appear at first sight. When taking a closer look at how we think and behave, there are notable differences, though without any rights and wrongs; there is always a reason for thinking or acting in a specific way, stemming from everything that has happened to the given person earlier. Realizing and taking into consideration these micro-level differences and reasons behind them turned out to be essential for successful interdependent teamwork. Without truly knowing and understanding our fellow human beings, we can neither respect nor trust them and, consequently, collaborate to achieve something that is beyond our personal scope. As reminded by Seikkula and Arnkil (2014, 191), “people are not like, nor are contexts; one size does not fit all, and this is the fundamental fact to come to terms with.”

Second, we are insecure. Partly consciously but even more unconsciously, we spend substantial resources on pondering what others, both within the team and elsewhere, might be thinking about us, which restrains our blossoming. As also proposed by Seikkula and Arnkil (2014, 29), we are “masters of anticipating.” To allow each team member to realize her potential, teamwork must minimize such potential insecurity.⁶⁸ Third and related to the two other premises, we do often not know ourselves—let alone others—fully enough. Even though getting to know oneself surely stands for a lifelong and incomplete process, at any point in time we could know ourselves better than we actually do. Since we must be aware of ourselves before we can become aware of others and begin to work passionately to become as good as we can, teamwork calls for assistance in increasing one’s self-knowledge. To achieve interdependence, we must first achieve independence, only after which we can be “satisfied, productive and respectful of each other” (Blechert et al., 1987, 582).

6.5.2 Getting to know oneself

“Knowledge of oneself is crucial in world-class sports. A mature human being is also a mature athlete. The coach must help the athlete to know more about herself so that everything in her life is well and in balance.” [e]

⁶⁸ Put differently, the assumption of us being insecure is consistent with the fact that *we all have more good inside us than is visible to others*, a cornerstone in e.g. Esa Saarinen’s philosophy. Therefore, according to the idea proposed here, successful teamwork can do its part to make that good visible.

Building on the above premises, in the generation of extraordinary respect and trust, the first phases deal with increasing the knowledge of team members, which can be further divided into increasing the knowledge of oneself and that of others. Although we are discussing teamwork, i.e. collaborating with others, it is vital to begin with knowing oneself, both on and off the court, both physically and mentally. This includes a variety of issues such as one's values, objectives, dreams, traits, strengths and weaknesses, optimally even one's idea of man. For Gardner et al. (2005, 347), "gaining self-awareness means working to understand how one derives and makes meaning of the world around us based on introspective self-reflective, testing of our own hypotheses and self-schema." Dealing with and improving own weaknesses, for example, is possible only after one becomes aware of them; thereafter, one might understand that others have their own weaknesses that one must accept.⁶⁹ Overall, only after a team member knows and respects herself as the person she is, she will be able to truly get to know and respect others with their own strengths and weaknesses. As put by Ferris (1988), one must first be honest with oneself—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually—and only thereafter with others.

To increase their athletes' self-knowledge, the interviewed coaches have employed numerous practical methods. On the one hand, as brought out in Section 6.4.1, they have strived for establishing a continuous and deep dialogue with their athletes. On the other hand, initiated by the coaches, the athletes have carried out many kinds of inquiries and tests, ranging from physiological lifestyle tests measuring how their body has been doing⁷⁰ to varying personality analyses and, further, to individual assignments in which the athletes have been asked to answer to different questions about themselves. While these methods have increased the coaches' understanding of their athletes, an even more important purpose has been to facilitate the athletes to think and become better aware of themselves. Altogether, focusing on knowing oneself has resulted in more self-aware and self-confident team members who have respected life and been capable of taking care of themselves in their everyday living.

⁶⁹ In this respect, while people in many fields appear not to have time to stop and explore themselves, the need for taking these measures is even more urgent in sports than in the working life, due to the relatively short time frame for doing sports at the top level. This feature of sports has also contributed to making the coaches realize the importance of helping the athletes know themselves as quickly as possible and take the best out of their (in any case short) sports careers.

⁷⁰ These tests have studied the athletes' daily manners of eating, sleeping and body care, for instance.

A player's point of view: Philosophical questions in a hangover

In 2004, Petteri Nykky, one of the interviewees of this study, began his journey as the head coach of the Finnish national team (to which I also belonged). In our first event under the new coaching staff, we did not have floorball sticks with us at all but travelled to the Åland Islands, an archipelago at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia, to get to know each other (which is the subject of the next subsection) but also ourselves. The trip was important and educational in many ways, as Saari (2011, 47-71) describes.

On the way home on the ferry—when a part of the team was still recovering from the festivities on the previous evening—the whole team received a new kind of task (and, as it later turned out, we were going to receive several more during the years to come). On a blank sheet of paper, every member was asked to answer to a few essential questions: (i) “Who am I?”; (ii) “My dreams as an athlete?”; (iii) “My life dreams?”; (iv) “Things that I appreciate?” and (v) “People who I respect?”. The answers remained confidential between the coaches and each individual member, but since the purpose of the coaches was to establish a reciprocally open atmosphere, they also disclosed their answers to the remaining team.

At that point, I was 22 and quite a weakling, which I have realized later when looking at my answers back then (at the end of Nykky's first mission in 2010, we repeated the task and I am glad to observe some personal development when comparing these two answers). Even though I am pretty sure that I had been pondering on the fundamental issues about life more than my peers, I had never before gone through those specific questions so systematically, let alone written the answers in black and white. However essential, among others Aki Hintsa (Saari, 2015, 85-98) notes how such questions are typically ignored. In this respect, particularly because we were on a cruise ship on the day after a full-scale celebration, the assignment was surprising.

Anyway, after overcoming some starting problems and getting a grasp on my thoughts, it did not take long to realize the importance of such tasks. Before we know who we are, which ultimately determines what and how we think and do, the commonplace questions about our sport-specific skills or goals, for example, remain unquestionably secondary. When contemplating the philosophical nature and meaning of teamwork, Gaffney (2015) also underlines that we need to distinguish two issues, why we participate and what we are doing, and that the latter too often enjoys a priority. Thanks to the experiences initiated on that cruise ship, I am convinced that I want to employ similar questionnaires in my conceivable future leadership positions, besides updating my own answers on a regular basis, which Gardner et al. (2005) view as essential determinants of authentic leadership and followership, respectively.

6.5.3 Getting to know others: off-court activities and shared experiences

“First of all, before we go on the court and become afraid in front of an audience, we should learn to respect one another simply as human beings.” [i]

After one has become better aware of oneself, the generation of respect and trust has required becoming deeply enough aware of others. In the beginning, namely, people with different backgrounds and world views might be considered “as unknowns, perhaps even less trustworthy” (Webber, 2002, 204).⁷¹ Similar to assisting the athletes with their self-knowledge, the coaches have realized the importance of arranging unprejudiced encounters where the members have been able to tell each other who they really are behind the scenes, keeping in mind the traditional Finnish tendency towards taciturnity introduced in Section 6.3.2. The purpose with these efforts has been to enable the team to awake to the individual personalities and unique stories behind them that, when taking a closer look, have differed from each other considerably. Since it is natural to feel naked and vulnerable when laying all the cards on the table, the encounters have been such that the threshold for openly and honestly revealing personal issues has been as low as possible. Off-court activities, which range from formal to very informal, represent the specific measures to get to know one’s team, whereas shared experiences denote a broader term referring to everything the team goes through together in the longer run.

“I believe very strongly in the power of the team revealing some personal issues to each other. Doing so has an incredible effect on strengthening the team.” [a]

At the formal end of different off-court activities, the coaches have used many of the methods employed in getting to know oneself also with the whole team, disclosing individual answers and discussing what the observed differences might imply for successful collaboration. Even though talking about such issues in front of a group has been demanding for many at first, sharing the information and the experience has

⁷¹ Generally, before being able to trust (and respect) others, people need information about them, whereas values have an influence on the experience of trust and might even enhance the propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Individuals emphasizing honesty and loyalty, for example, strive for achieving honesty and loyalty in their relationships with others (Jones and George, 1998). Thus, given that people with different backgrounds, experiences and personality types vary in their propensity to trust (Hofstede, 1980), the fundamental Finnish values might provide a head start for Finnish teams.

anyway driven both individuals and whole teams forward and closer to each other.⁷² At the more informal end, the coaches have arranged a variety of activities in contexts completely different from their ordinary, sport-specific contexts, which have assisted in ridding the teams of their regular roles, responsibilities and configurations. As such, the activities have enabled the members to encounter each other without the burden of their everyday on-court performance and with more time to discuss all kinds of issues outside their everyday work.⁷³ Ultimately, specifications of these activities have been limited to the teams' imagination, as long as they have brought the teams closer together and increased the acceptance of weaknesses and being fragile.^{74,75} Overall, as Mayer et al. (1995) identify three broad sources of trust, including ability, benevolence and integrity, the off-court activities have mainly aimed at boosting the latter, generally understood as "the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable" (p. 719).⁷⁶

"By generating a true chemistry between the members, the team's effectiveness can be improved dozens of times more than for example by running extra the whole summer and gaining a two percent increase in the oxygen uptake." [k]

Whereas off-court activities refer to powerful one-off occasions to help a team become acquainted with each other, they form only a subset of shared experiences, i.e. everything that the team goes through together, which also contribute to getting

⁷² For example, to increase the team's common understanding of the behavior of each member, one team went through the results of a personality analysis together. Each member was assigned to ponder on the personality-related things that tended to happen when he lost his touch in a competition and to promise something personal he would do to help the team in similar situations in the future.

⁷³ Among the sample teams, such activities have ranged all the way from going out to make burgers under the supervision of a professional cook or spending a day at the historically significant Lake Tuusula to travelling abroad to a holiday resort for a whole week before a major competition.

⁷⁴ Thus, the activities must have been planned carefully, being sure that they have somehow related to the teams' bigger picture. For instance, the athletes in some of the sample teams had already been so close friends with each other and/or had such a hectic daily life that arranging a particular off-court activity would have not provided any added value. Moreover, off-court activities cannot have been arranged at the expense of the regular preparations of the team; instead, once the team has laid a solid on-court foundation, the coaches underlined that these activities might have assisted in turning the atmosphere of the team from good to great.

⁷⁵ Concerning weaknesses, for instance, the more deeply a couple of teammates know each other, the easier it will become for them to go through their individual flaws, regardless of whether relating to technical skills or personality, and, eventually, to realize how they can support and compensate each other. As a result, these teammates will build a firmer tie and become stronger together. The more such ties there are between the members of the team, the stronger will the whole team become.

⁷⁶ According to Mayer et al. (1995), ability denotes "skills, competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain" (p. 717), while benevolence indicates "the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor" (p. 718).

to know each other. In the longer run, the level of trust and respect evolves as the members interact (Mayer et al., 1995; Jones and George, 1998). For the sample teams, obviously, the mere off-court activities have not been enough. Their stories have proceeded and got richer along with their regular activities where the members have shared and learned from various moments, both small and large, ranging from everyday laughter to living through a major championship. For example, a successful move by a coach has improved the team's trust in her abilities, whereas an altruistic act by a teammate has boosted benevolence. Alternatively, when a team has failed in a competition, a proper processing of the (under)performance has constituted an essential unifying experience. Overall, to generate respect and trust, the coaches have employed various measures that have both created more shared experiences and made better use of them. Many such measures are covered in Sections 6.6 and 6.7.

A player's point of view: The wow insights after a sauna evening

While off-court activities can take various forms, organizing a *saunailta* (in Finnish), a sauna evening, stands for a classic among many kinds of Finnish groups, not least among sports teams. Usually connected to some other collective activities before taking a sauna and to going out clubbing after, the basic idea with a sauna evening is simple: to relax and have some fun together outside the team's regular context, boosted by suitable refreshments. From the getting to know each other point of view, sauna evenings have traditionally provided two main advantages: the use of alcohol lowers the threshold of revealing who one really is and the sauna—where everyone is sitting literally naked—denotes an excellent, spiritual milieu to discuss all kinds of issues.⁷⁷ As Chaker (2011, 38) suggests, having a sauna “opens the mind of Finns and acts as a social equalizer and a distinctive catalyst for open and frank communication.”

Afterwards, when reflecting on everything that happened during a sauna evening (or any other successful off-court activity), I personally often end up in similar wow insights concerning my teammates, which signifies the power of such activities. “What a great guy he actually is—how could I earlier think that we can't find any common ground?” “Damn, if I'd have known those details of his personal life, I'd have better understood why he behaves as he does and felt much less irritated about it.” “Having that chat with our line in the sauna and calling a spade a spade was many times more useful than our normal meetings in the training facility.” “I didn't realize that they respect me so much for me being me.” Chaker (2011, 39) sums up brilliantly how “in the sauna, all are equal and what you see is what you get: just another human being like you.”

⁷⁷ However, at least in my opinion, to get the most out of such an evening, the aim should be to maximize the amount of meaningful conversations and experiences, not the amount of alcohol consumed; indeed, beyond a certain quantity of alcohol, the correlation between these two turns negative. Without doubt, to my disappointment, this has not always been the case, but during the years I have noticed a welcomed positive development; on average, the younger generation of players has a lower desire to drink abundantly than the generation of old school players.

All these insights are definitely important and drive the team forward, but at the same time they are humbling. Although I meet my teammates in our regular context every day, have a continuous intensive dialogue and even quite a lot of time to discuss extra-curricular issues during our trips to away matches, these insights also expose my prejudices and lack of judgment. When I discover that I would have never believed that a teammate actually is the kind of guy he now appeared to be, it means only that my initial impression of him was flawed. As Hayes (2002, 56) reminds, a team can work well only after team members can truly identify with one another. Put this way, off-court activities play a crucial role in the creation of more in-depth impressions, which inevitably promotes the emergence of extraordinary respect and trust.

6.5.4 Respect and trust: earmarks and implications

“Trust is needed to attain something larger than oneself.” [e]

Only after having got to know oneself and others as well as awaking to how different and unique stories there have been behind all the personalities, the members of the sample teams have begun to respect each other and the opportunity to collaborate with such a diverse group of people. When reflecting respect, diversity in terms of both personalities and technical skills has been accepted and seen as an asset, not as a source of jealousy or discord. On the court, respect has meant that regardless of the role of a member, she has been conscious of the value of the inputs of the athletes in other roles. Star scorers, for example, have realized the importance of players with strong defensive skills, let alone that of material keepers or massage therapists. As Hayes (2002, 23) also underlines, effective teams have a “basis of mutual respect.”

Off the court, respect has denoted acceptance of the characteristics, opinions and peculiarities of each team member as well as understanding of the background from which these issues stem, given that the particular member has anyway followed the team’s mutually agreed concept. To operate successfully as a team, the coaches emphasized that the members have not necessarily become best friends forever—some members have naturally been more attached to each other than others—but it has in any case been essential that all the members have got along and worked equally effectively with everyone.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Put differently, this notion implies that the members have been able to respect others’ capabilities and serve the team, realizing how valuable it has been to have each other in the same (and not in the opponent’s) team.

Besides respect, trust, defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, 712), is a well-known determinant of effective teamwork (Webber, 2002; Salas et al., 2015). On the court, trust has meant in the investigated teams for instance that players have passed the ball to the free player with the best chance to score, thereby driving the team, not only a single member, forward most. According to the coaches, performances of their teams have been based on trusting that all roles are executed diligently according to the concept, without needing to doubt for example whether a teammate has been able to defend the opponent she has been supposed to defend.

Off the court, trust has meant in the sample teams that the members have been able to speak up, frankly and honestly, knowing that other members understand that it is in their and the team’s best interests to do so. When giving critical feedback, for example, a team reflecting trust has realized that the aim has not been to insult or hurt anyone personally but to maximize the team’s development.⁷⁹ Moreover, trust has signified that the athletes have relied on the coach’s capability to make decisions that have been in the best interests of the whole team. Overall, among the three distinct forms of the trust experience by Jones and George (1998), including distrust, conditional and unconditional trust, the state of trust described in the interview data resembles unconditional trust that “is something to strive for in important social situations” (p. 537), where others’ trustworthiness is assured through confidence in their values and is backed up by constant empirical evidence.

Beyond the above practical indications of the atmosphere of respect and trust, the analysis of the interview data revealed fundamental and interconnected implications visible in Figure 9. On the one hand, by realizing and trusting that they are respected completely as the persons they de facto are without any need to pretend something else, the members have dared to be wholly themselves. Only after reaching such a state of mind, they have been provided with a milieu to be familiar with the team,

⁷⁹ Alternatively, when the athletes have told the coach that a specific training session should be lighter because they feel tired after an earlier session, trust has denoted that the coach has believed that this really is the case instead of imagining that the athletes would just be lazy and inadequately motivated.

blossom and release their entire potential.⁸⁰ Since Edmondson (1999), the literature has called this state psychological safety, “a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (p. 354), stemming above all from mutual respect and trust.

“The question is about whether I make a fool of myself for example by fast and furious rushing for a ball if no one else is doing it.” [i]

On the other hand, by having figured out how unique personalities there have been in the team and how they have been able to trust each other to achieve something greater than anyone could achieve by herself, the members have gained willingness and meaning for sticking together and committing themselves to the team. As explained by Jones and George (1998), unconditional trust changes the nature of the relationship so that members feel more colleagues or friends instead of coworkers or business acquaintances, resulting in collaboration that entails “considerable personal costs and self-sacrifice” (p. 539) and in a desire to invest in the common good. In the literature, such willingness to commit to the team relates to cohesion, i.e. a bond between the members, which emerges from interpersonal attraction, task commitment and group pride (Beal et al., 2003).⁸¹ Cohesion stands for an extensively examined emergent state (Mathieu et al., 2008) and has been shown to contribute to team effectiveness (Webber and Donahue, 2001; Chiochio and Essiembre, 2009).

Ultimately, also illustrated in Figure 9, the combination of courage to be oneself and willingness to commit to the team has laid the foundation for the sample teams to become greater than the sum of their parts and the best they can be in important competitions. As described in Section 6.2, the members in the teams have blossomed individually, strictly following their team’s game plan even if not completely aligned with individual interests, but the inputs of the different members have also been unified. However, the mere foundation for individual blossoming and team-level

⁸⁰ As underlined earlier, the idea of being truly oneself with one’s own personality, strengths and weaknesses has anyway presumed that one has followed the team’s concept. In other words, the teams have allowed each member to be the one she truly is given that she has all the time given her best effort to the team.

⁸¹ More precisely, interpersonal attraction denotes “a shared liking for or attachment to the members of the group,” task commitment “the extent to which the task allows the group to attain important goals or the extent to which a shared commitment to the group’s task exists” and group pride “the extent to which group members exhibit liking for the status or the ideologies that the group supports or represents, or the shared importance of being a member of the group” (Beal et al., 2003, 995).

unity would naturally have been inadequate; the next section exhibits the key processes the coaches have utilized to transform the foundation into concrete actions.

6.6 Effective dialogue and decision-making

While the generation of respect and trust has laid the basis for channeling one's thoughts and energy wholly to serving the team as well as possible, the analysis of the interview data revealed that the sample teams have also employed powerful processes to concretely determine *what* they have been striving for and *how*. As a whole, these issues relate to team cognition, which enables “teams to enter into a team performance episode with a shared understanding of how the team will engage in the task at hand” (Salas et al., 2015, 609) and coordination, i.e. “orchestrating the sequence and timing of interdependent actions” (Marks et al., 2001, 363).

These processes comprise the fourth perspective on flourishing Finnish teams and entail the characteristics of the dialogue (Subsection 6.6.1) and decision-making (Subsection 6.6.2) that the teams have used to jointly specify their direction and roles (Subsection 6.6.3) as well as concept, including standards and tactics (Subsection 6.6.4). As depicted in Figure 10, to determine what the team is supposed to strive for and how, a thorough and continuous dialogue has stood for the effective medium to gain shared understanding and meaning, whereas participative decision-making has enabled higher-quality decisions to which the whole team has been able to commit.

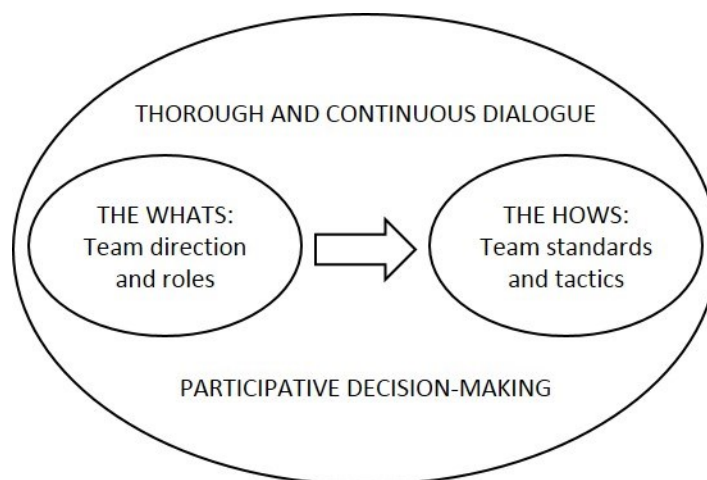


Figure 10. Determination of team direction, roles and concept through dialogue and decision-making.

6.6.1 Thorough and continuous dialogue

“What makes teamwork really interesting is to explore the means by which we begin to see a situation on the court and react to it similarly. Because in reality, if we haven’t gone through these issues, each player will see the situation differently.” [k]

As already brought out in Section 4.3, communication, i.e. conveyance of intended meanings between different persons, stands for a critical and overarching teamwork issue, relating to all interaction between team members. Besides being essential in getting to know others and building a dialogic relationship between a coach and an athlete, which have been covered above, communication is needed to determine and understand the team direction and the means to go towards that direction (Salas et al., 2015). The pattern of communication in the sample teams has resembled a deep and thorough dialogue, characterized by a careful and open analysis of viewpoints, which has resulted in a solid common ground and shared meaning, and replaced the series of monologues involving incompatible perspectives.⁸² As such, it is strongly linked with open dialogue, an approach originally developed for psychotherapeutic crisis work, emphasizing among others tolerance of uncertainty, listening and understanding as well as polyphony of voices stemming from all the team members who are involved, allowing each member to participate in her own way and always with a right to comment (Seikkula and Olson, 2003; Seikkula and Arnkil, 2014).⁸³

The emergence of this dialogue, regardless of whether the topic at hand has concerned defensive on-court situations, fundamental philosophical questions or the siblings of a teammate, has been closely connected to the generation of extraordinary respect and trust. Speaking out one’s own standpoints and listening to those of others without judging has become possible only after laying that foundation; on the other hand, the proper dialogue has further boosted both respect and trust. The atmosphere

⁸² In this respect, as understood here, dialogue makes up a subset of communication and, following Puhakainen (1995, 176), a medium where individuals encounter each other by letting others be themselves, with their unique characteristics and personal history, instead of considering them beforehand as particular types of human beings. Only after entering such a medium, a team can begin to find out whether it has any common thoughts and what these thoughts actually are.

⁸³ More broadly, instead of seeing it as a method, Seikkula and Arnkil (2014) view dialogism as “an outlook based on acknowledging and respecting—and reaching towards—the otherness of the Other” (p. 37) and suggest that “dialogical practices are effective precisely for the reason that they resonate with some very basic qualities of human life” (p. 103), some of which were presented in Section 6.5.1.

has also enabled to give critical feedback so that it has optimally driven the team forward, without anyone finding it as a personal insult or desperately sticking to her own viewpoint. In this respect, the most powerful aspects of the dialogue in these teams, partly relating to the Finnish values, appeared to be straightforwardness and honesty, combined with a principally positive and constructive flavor.

“Things will get much easier when you tell everything openly, honestly and in time.” [f]

In addition to being straightforward and honest, the dialogue in the investigated teams has reflected three specific attributes. First, the dialogue has been kept as continuous and rich as possible and extended to all kinds of (particularly informal) circumstances. Because world-class team sports makes up an intensive and dynamic context where a shared understanding must be (re)discovered all the time, for example between two world championship matches on consecutive days, it has been better to discuss rather too much than too less. Due to a variety of more or less practical constraints, however, the coaches admitted that the dialogue has never been flawless or completely sufficient, particularly concerning the extent of discussions between them and the individual athletes; they have still too often assumed that they have been on the same page with their athletes even if that has not been the case.⁸⁴

Second, the dialogue has presumed deep enough knowledge of other team members as well as empathy. Even though the purpose has always been to establish a continuous and rich dialogue between each member, the exact means for doing it have varied between different individuals; some have naturally been more emotional, shy or touchy than others. From the coaches' point of view, then, knowledge of others and empathy have enabled to detect *coachable moments*, i.e. occasions when the athletes' antennas have been sensitive to certain important issues. Regarding the dialogue between a coach and an individual athlete, for example, a scheduled feedback discussion might have been useless if the athlete had just had a dispute at home, whereas their most effective discussion during a whole season might have taken place spontaneously in a baggage hall at an airport.

⁸⁴ To make sure that every member of a team has contributed to the dialogue at desired intervals, some of the coaches have also used practical tools such as updating a spreadsheet template that has included all the exchanges of thoughts their team has been carrying out between the coaches and athletes.

“I’d claim that it’s challenging for many coaches to have a one-on-one discussion with an athlete and honestly say how things are. For example, to disclose the real reasons why she isn’t in the line-up. Finns usually accept the reasons and continue to serve the team as soon as you’ve been able to speak them out.” [i]

Third, when describing the dialogue within these teams, the coaches conceived it as a good ball game in itself. From this perspective, it corresponds to a situation where all participants have spoken the same understandable language (i.e. had a similar view on how the game should be played) and the member who speaks (possesses the ball) has been capable of bringing out her point concisely and enthusiastically (delivering a high-quality creative pass that drives the game and the team forward). Meanwhile, all the other participants (the players without the ball) have been present and truly listened to the teammate who speaks (actively moved themselves to find opportunities to receive a pass and demonstrated with their body language that they eagerly want to have the ball). Once the other participants have begun to bring out their points (received the ball), they have built on the previous points, challenging and/or adding new insights (making their moves with the ball to approach the opponent’s goal), ultimately resulting in an improved collective understanding of the issue at hand (a goal). Altogether, when pictured this way, it is easy to see how the dialogue has involved every member and driven the team towards its direction. Moreover, the ball game perspective highlights the need for energy and engagement, which according to Pentland (2012) are two essential aspects of communication in successful teams.

6.6.2 Participative decision-making

“Of course it concerns also how I choose my words, but it’s more about meaningfulness in the process; that they begin to think that it’s their matter and I’m only the facilitator.” [d]

Generally, depending on the methods of the coach, there are various potential ways to decide on the whats and hows. Among the sample teams, participative decision-making, which Arnold et al. (2000) define as “a leader’s use of team members’ information and input in making decisions” (p. 255) and locate under the broader

concept of empowerment,⁸⁵ has been in extensive use for two main reasons. On the one hand, since the athletes in fact do the job on the court, the coaches have believed that the athletes possess valuable insights and understanding about it, and allowing them to participate has increased solution quality. As formulated by Black and Gregersen (1997, 864), team members “have relevant content knowledge and process skills to contribute to the decisions,” which results in increased effectiveness.

On the other hand and perhaps even more importantly, the athletes’ involvement has strengthened their commitment to the decisions as they have gained an opportunity to more deeply realize how an issue at hand has been useful for them and even because of the positive social pressure connected to the joint solutions. The coaches were confident that even though they would have at some point known for sure how a certain issue should be done and that the team would end up in the same solution, it has anyway been worthwhile to let the whole team obtain the solution whenever possible. Moreover, by doing so, some minor issues that the coaches had not grasped have often tended to come up. Such positive impacts of participation on team member motivation and commitment have been demonstrated earlier for example by Korsgaard et al. (1995) and Black and Gregersen (1997).

“I very often try to fish for the answer I want to hear by asking the right questions. In a way, coaching is about tricking the athletes, either through the front or the back door, into catching ideas that you’ve found important.” [a]

At the same time, however, the coaches underlined that participative decision-making must have been used with care, depending on the available time frame, athlete characteristics and the hypothetical knowledge gap between the coaches and athletes. If, for example, a team has consisted of analytical experienced athletes and there has been no immediate time pressure for a decision, it has been definitely useful to let the athletes participate, whereas during an intensive competition with a much less experienced team such participation would have been less advantageous

⁸⁵ Team empowerment refers to the approach of assigning administrative autonomy to team members regarding leadership responsibilities, resource allocation, decision initiation and work process regulation (Manz and Sims, 1987; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999). Overall, empowerment has been associated with improved team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2006; Jiang et al., 2016).

and perhaps even impossible.⁸⁶ Therefore, the employment of participative decision-making at right moments has stood for an important coach skill. Furthermore, even though the whole team would have been involved in the process, the coaches have typically made the ultimate decisions, based on all the information available to them. Even from this point of view and in line with Manz and Sims (1987), despite assigning some autonomy to the rest of the team, there has still been an important and legitimate—although differing from the traditional—role for external leaders.

6.6.3 *The whats: overall team direction and meaningful individual roles*

“Objectives... I don’t use that word, I don’t remember when I’ve used it last; it’s an oppressive word. Because it presumes that you seize something, and in a game you can’t seize anything. Neither you can seize life, whatever objective you may have. It’s better to speak of dreams.” [e]

By definition, as introduced in Section 2.1, teams work inherently towards common objectives, which highlights the importance of setting the objectives and making sure that the team is aware of its *raison d’être* (Morgeson et al., 2010). While the sample teams have set team-level objectives, employing the dialogue and decision-making as portrayed above, instead of concrete and exact competitive goals they have often spoken only more broadly of their direction—sometimes even dreams—thereafter throwing themselves completely into the daily work, following the team’s concept. Thus, even though the direction and concept have determined the teams’ own way of life both on and off the court, they have otherwise had less concrete goals whose fulfillment would have been dependent on their opponents. As explained in Section 6.1, the coaches viewed success primarily as becoming as good as one can, and strict competitive goals were commonly seen potentially restraining the teams from ultimately reaching this objective. Overall, this approach to objectives somewhat contradicts with the goal-setting theory assuming that specific and difficult goals yield higher team effectiveness than do-your-best goals (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006) but is consistent with the findings suggesting that in some highly interdependent team contexts the theory might not actually hold (Van Mierlo and Kleingeld, 2010).

⁸⁶ Moreover, it has obviously made no sense to involve the whole team and use its energy to agree upon very simple issues that have not been significant in the bigger picture of the team.

At the individual level, as discussed in Section 2.4, team members have different roles (and goals related to these roles). Successful interdependent teamwork, obviously, calls for well-functioning roles that maximize the performance of the whole team (Morgeson et al., 2010). According to the interview data, two main factors have resulted in every member of the sample teams possessing a clear, coherent and meaningful role, which for its part has enabled the collective performances that have made the teams' outputs greater than the sum of the outputs of their single members.⁸⁷ First, between the coaches and individual members, the roles have been rather created in a sufficient dialogue than defined top-down.⁸⁸ In the beginning, in particular, the coaches have made sure that both parties have been on the same page regarding the role; without a shared view, it has not been reasonable for the member to be part of the given team. Furthermore, since roles are subject to many kinds of changes, the dialogue has been continued throughout the team's journey. In the longer run, namely, roles have been determined rather by the athletes themselves by demonstrating what they can (and cannot) do, given that the coaches are all the time operating fairly and righteously, serving the best interests of the team.

“When choosing the team, it’s optimal to go through the situation with the athlete, telling what I’ve thought about his role and asking what he thinks about it himself. I’ve also had occasions when I haven’t gone through these issues, which have resulted in major problems during the tournament.” [k]

Second, the coaches underlined that the atmosphere of respect and trust has simplified the discovery of meaning in any given role. Without such an atmosphere, many roles would have been much more challenging to assign. Since human beings in general and athletes in particular have a desire to perform and feature as well and noticeably as possible, it has been crucial that especially those members with a less visible role have been shown respect, helping them find a meaning for what they do and feel proud of doing that for the team. Altogether, the two factors contributing to well-functioning roles relate to impact, understood as a belief that work in a given

⁸⁷ Seen from a different perspective, as already discussed in Sections 6.3.1 and 6.4.2, members in these teams have also had an ability to see their role in the entirety relatively easily.

⁸⁸ As an example in interdependent sports teams, individual athletes are sometimes assigned on-court tasks that differ from the athletes' wishes and strengths. By using a thorough dialogue, an athlete will much more likely understand and buy the idea that (at least temporarily) it is valuable and important to the team that she has a slightly different task than that in which she would be at her best.

role has an influence on team effectiveness, and meaningfulness, a sense that the role is important, which represent two different dimensions of the psychological approach to team empowerment (Kirkman and Rosen, 1999; Mathieu et al., 2006).

“I’m rather an idealist and believe in good, that there’s a place for everyone as soon as you’re able to find a meaning for the person.” [e]

6.6.4 The hows: plausible team concept

“Absolutely, the tactical side must be in order as well; without a useable tactics, you can’t get the team committed.” [i]

After establishing objectives and performance expectations, teams must naturally determine their courses of action to reach these aims and form a solid foundation for their collaboration (Morgeson et al., 2010). Optimally, everything that the team does together, from off-court behavioral aspects to on-court practice drills, are connected to the team’s *raison d’être* and all team members understand how and why things are done in a specific way. When it comes to these hows of teamwork, the analysis of the interview data brought out two aspects common to the investigated teams, one relating to the behavioral principles of collaboration, which will be here called team standards, and the other pointing to tactics, i.e. the strategy for the team’s on-court performance, which in the case of the sample teams has rested on tight collaboration. Put together, team standards and tactics can be called the team concept.

Concerning team standards, the teams have spent considerable time on discussing their values and/or developing the related principles of treating each other, facing different situations and conducting their daily practice.⁸⁹ Whereas the coaches have often given some simple rules that have left no room for compromise, the teams have mainly created their standards themselves. The following section presents various examples of everyday routines and rituals that are connected to these standards and that have been employed in the given teams. Altogether, this aspect of emphasizing collaboration standards is somewhat ignored in the extant literature. In their

⁸⁹ The coaches also highlighted that this footing, which has supported both the individuals’ and team’s development, has been brought up in the beginning of the team’s journey rather than in later phases, i.e. before the possible crises have begun to emerge.

extensive review, Morgeson et al. (2010), for example, suggest that the structuring and planning of a team's work should result in "an integrated work plan that directs the team's performance, coordinates team efforts, develops task performance strategies and standardizes team processes" (p. 15), but they do not mention the need for agreeing on the guidelines for treating other team members.

Regarding team tactics, three issues, all of which necessitate a thorough dialogue and participative decision-making, mirrored the investigated teams. First, more often than vice versa, their tactics have been based on the athletes' strengths. Since the teams have been forced to operate with a limited talent pool, the tactics could have not been created without taking into consideration the type of athletes available. Second, relating to the passion for details in daily work, each athlete has had a profound knowledge of what she has been supposed to do on the court.⁹⁰ Third and finally, the tactics have been developed so that the athletes have believed that a given tactic has been optimal, which has further improved team efficacy and commitment.

A player's point of view: 2-1-2, 2-2-1, 1-2-2 or 1-3-1?

The above sequences of numbers represent the most common defensive tactics of floorball in a numerical form. To a certain extent, all top players are able to play by any of these tactics, but at a more nuanced level different players might have completely different notions of how to conduct a specific tactic. These issues around tactics have provided me with important lessons on the need for a thorough dialogue, passion for details and for really being on the same page with one's teammates, all of which relate to tacit knowledge that for example Nonaka and Von Krogh (2009, 635) define as "knowledge that is unarticulated and tied to the senses, movement skills, physical experiences, intuition or implicit rules of thumb."

"Ok guys, let's go with our basic defense. Any questions?" It was autumn 2010 and we were in the middle of a nice championship streak with my club team SSV, where the core posse of players had been playing together already for a long time. However, for that season, we had got slightly more new faces in the team than previously, and in the beginning of the season we were struggling with our game, especially with our defense. The above order was made by our coach before a match and there were no questions. We were supposed to play with a steering variant of 1-2-2, and even though the new guys were high-class players and had an impression of what that tactic implies, they did not know what it implies in our team. Our "basic defense" was self-evident for many but not for all, and the coach and we others failed to see that at first.

⁹⁰ In fact, it is important that the athletes have assimilated this knowledge to an extent that during a performance they have not had to stop and think what they have been supposed to do in a particular situation. In all fast-paced sports, having to think results in missing the task and/or opportunity.

After the match that once again included defensive unclarity, we were showering and talked about the match in general and the goals we had allowed in particular. In other words, we were conducting something that Cannon-Bowers and Bowers (2006) would call an informal post-performance self-correction session. “When he approached me with the ball, I took the steps towards him, but it somehow opened up lots of space behind me,” wondered one of the new guys. “Yes but shouldn’t you have waited some tenths of a second more so that the others would’ve had time to take care of that space,” asked one of my older teammates. And so, as the conversation went on, we realized that at an intangible and detailed level—where even tenths of a second count—our basic defense was all Greek to the new. Thereafter, in tactical meetings, we spent more time on building a shared view of various on-court situations and, in particular, said that “it anyway pays off to go through it one more time” each time our coach asked whether there were any questions. This way, by making tacit more explicit through knowledge conversion, we strived for an improved “collective understanding of problems, solutions, tasks and actions” (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009, 646).

Altogether, there were no right or wrong answers regarding how the steering 1-2-2 should have been conducted. In this case, there were just two (or more) impressions and an initial mismatch between them. There are surely occasions when a particular tactic suits a team better than others, but overall I would claim that in such an interdependent context, the choice of tactic matters surprisingly little. It is much more important that all players are on the same page regarding what they are supposed to do on the court and trust that the chosen system works for them. Put simply, instead of what the team does, it is more significant that everyone does the same thing. In this respect, it would be misleading to propose that a team was successful because of its splendid tactic; it would be more fitting to say that they triumphed because of their high-quality on-court cooperation that, in turn, results from a thorough dialogue and passion for details. Ultimately, as Mohammed et al. (2010) remind, even an ostensibly effortless execution of a beautiful play in team sports presumes shared team cognition.

Eventually, we concluded the season by winning the game five, the last and decisive final of the Finnish championship, after a harmonious and excellent performance. Out of all important matches I have played, I remember exceptionally well my thoughts when driving to Hartwall Arena in Helsinki before that particular match. Thanks to our rigorous preparations during the latter part of the season in general and between the game four and five in the finals in particular, I felt I could not know our game plan and our opponent any better. Being aware that we had done everything we could, both in the longer and shorter run, yielded a very liberating, confident and peaceful feeling when entering the arena and made us deliver a masterpiece that night.

6.7 Elevating daily routines and rituals

“In Finland, we’re ahead in the way we act as a team.” [j]

The fifth perspective on flourishing Finnish teams collates a variety of visible everyday routines and rituals that emerged from the interview data. As noted by Orlikowski (2002), competences are “grounded in the everyday practices of organizational members” (p. 249) and do in fact exist neither “out there” (e.g. in external objects or systems) nor “in here” (e.g. in human brains or bodies); instead, competences can be thought of as an “ongoing social accomplishment” (p. 252), which is constituted and reconstituted through daily practices. On a related note, from the work design point of view, the social characteristics of jobs including relationships, interactions and connections between team members, have recently gained attention as essential elements of work (Grant and Parker, 2009). Routines, i.e. “recurring patterns of behavior of multiple organizational members involved in performing organizational tasks,” create opportunities for connections between members (Feldman and Rafaeli, 2002, 311), whereas rituals serve many important functions such as provide meaning, manage anxiety, communicate important values, enhance solidarity and signal commitment (Smith and Stewart, 2011).

The analysis of the data identified four categories of daily routines and rituals that have contributed to the way the members of the sample teams have treated and interacted with each other, resulting in elevation, understood as an uplift of realities and possibilities (Saarinen, 2012) and as “upward spirals toward optimal individual and organizational functioning” (Fredrickson, 2003, 163). These slightly overlapping categories include (i) facilitators of social identification, (ii) facilitators of mental presence, (iii) appreciative and uniting nonverbal behaviors (NVBs) as well as (iv) team-oriented and positive verbal behaviors (VBs). Table 6 exhibits various concrete examples of the measures that have been in use in the teams. While each team has employed at least one measure from each category, no team has naturally used every example listed in the table. Overall, even though many of these routines and rituals might seem trivial at first glance, they have all stood for conscious measures, initiated and supervised by the coaches, to contribute to the teams’ success.

“By daily behavior we show them... If the words aren’t visible in everyday acts, they don’t mean anything. It’s my task to make sure that we stick to them.” [a]

The first category of elevating daily routines and rituals concerns different facilitators of social identification. As already explained in Section 6.5, trust and respect within a team evolve also little by little as members gain shared experiences and interact in various ways (Mayer et al., 1995; Jones and George, 1998). One aspect of such shared experiences relates to social identification, which Hayes (2002, 56) describes as a state in which “team members can identify with one another” as well as “see their team as *us* rather than just a collection of individuals.” Since it is essential for successful teamwork, Hayes also underlines the need for creating different conditions that boost social identification. The sample teams have employed a variety of routines and rituals that have assisted the teams in identifying one another, the examples of which are presented in the first column of Table 6.

“When you live together with someone for ten days, there’s a risk that you’ll know and understand something about your roommate.” [h]

While the first category consists of measures that have increased the number of chances for social identification in the teams’ everyday life, the second category, labeled as facilitators of mental presence, is comprised of routines and rituals that have played a role in getting the most out of these chances to be together. As highlighted throughout this chapter and suggested by Seikkula and Arnkil (2014), “dialogue is the primary way for human beings to become connected with each other” (p. 104), but “being present in the moment as comprehensive embodied living persons” (p. 105) is challenging and might result in missed opportunities for dialogical relationships (p. 103–126). In this regard, the teams have taken measures that the authors call “simple guidelines for improving skills for being present” (p. 123), listed in the second column of Table 6. These routines and rituals have helped the members become connected and concentrate on the most essential issues at hand. Even if two teams would physically spend a similar amount of time together, the coaches emphasized how the team that is able to be mentally more present and alert during that time gains a competitive advantage, which will be ultimately reflected also in the team’s on-court performance.

Facilitators of social identification	Facilitators of mental presence	Appreciative and uniting NVBs	Team-oriented and positive VBs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting at a same table with the whole team when having a meal whenever possible • Having a meal at the same time with the whole team and not rising from the table before everyone around the table has finished eating • Various sanctions for breaking the team rules such as being late for a practice; e.g. monetary or candy fines or wearing “the latecomer’s strings” during the session • Designating roommate pairs so that players who do not yet know each other so well share a room; e.g. placing a rookie and an experienced player in the same room • Having hotel rooms close to each other and holding room doors open always when possible and suitable • Uniform and strict dresscode during training, meals, traveling etc. • Rookie shows and other special responsibilities (e.g. helping the material keepers) for newcomers • “Memorial day” with coffee and cakes after the season for skaters who have tumbled in competitions during the season; skaters having to bake one cake for each tumble • Conducting stretching collectively in the bus on the way home from an away match, despite the very limited space available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphone ban during meals, meetings, match preparations and other collective events; use allowed only in one’s own hotel room • Choosing an accommodation that includes fewer outsiders and/or external distractions; e.g. preferring a farm type hotel to a high-class hotel at a premium location • During a training camp, revealing only what happens next; no daily program disclosed to the team • Beginning and concluding every camp by sitting in a semicircle and looking at a picture of the globe, reminding of the dream to be the best in the world and what it requires at every moment • Beginning and completing every practice and match with standing in a circle, saying some words and shouting the team’s name in unison • After an unsuccessful ball and/or a teammate’s mistake, calmly spending a few seconds tightly together in a close circle, breathing and beginning to focus on the next ball • Meditation in various forms, e.g. spending a moment on breathing and thinking about an abstract issue before a match or simply taking a couple of deep breaths before an important play during the match • Not reading what the media is writing about the team during a championship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive use of high-fives and fist bumps in many circumstances • Helping a teammate who has fallen on the floor as soon as possible • Looking in the eye when talking • Hugging in various occasions, e.g. in different match situations and when meeting/leaving after/for a while • Celebrating wildly on the bench when a teammate sacrifices himself on the court and makes an important defensive block or takes responsibility and scores in the offense • Shaking hands with every member of the team always when arriving at a team event • Players taking care of the equipment that their teammates have forgotten somewhere so that material keepers do not have to do that • When playing during a practice, assigning minus points to teams if not communicating thoroughly enough or if not putting all in for a ball • Comforting a teammate instead of blaming her after tumbling and ruining the team’s performance, viewing the whole team (not any single member) as responsible • Having hands on each other’s shoulders instead of only standing next to each other during the national anthem before/after a match 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The we-talk, e.g. ”we can improve our scoring” instead of ”our forwards should score more goals” or ”we had good goaltending” instead of ”our goalie played well” • Positive wording instead of negations, e.g. ”get along” instead of ”tolerate” and ”pass your teammates” instead of ”don’t fail any pass” • Always saying thank you, good morning and good night to everyone • Constant praise and encouragement, e.g. “good shot”, “wow”, “you will use the next scoring chance you get” • Speaking of “coming girls” instead of “reserves” • Speaking fairly of every player during a practice, i.e. not speaking e.g. of “the first line” and “others” or “the ordinary squad” and “substitutes” • Speaking of best possible daily work instead of winning, i.e. of issues that might lead to winning • Forbidding the words “perfect” and “perfection” • As a coach, never blaming the team publicly after a poor performance but always giving credit to the team after a good performance • Preparing a symbolic painting; e.g. getting everyone’s palmprints on a painting under the theme “it takes ten hands to make a basket”

Table 6. Examples of elevating daily routines and rituals. NVBs and VBs denote nonverbal and verbal behaviors, respectively.

“When we’re tapping our smartphones, we’re in a way present physically but not mentally. ... As a coach, it’s important to sense and spot those situations and require mental presence; that has a major impact on whether we’ll end up on the same page.” [j]

The third category consists of appreciative and uniting nonverbal behaviors and includes cues, physical gestures and procedures that have reflected respect and doing things for the team. Different NVBs, which represent a ubiquitous but previously underrated form of communication, have recently gained attention also in the organizational and team literature as they have been shown to serve several functions such as displaying personal attributes, promoting social functioning, fostering high-quality relationships and displaying emotions (Bonaccio et al., 2016). Above all, NVBs are claimed to develop rapport (Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990), i.e. experiences when members “in the interaction form a cohesiveness, become unified, through the expression of mutual attention to and involvement with one another” (p. 286). For example, touch, which is involved in several NVBs listed in Table 6, promotes trust, collaboration and team functioning and has even been shown to predict improved individual and sports team performance (Kraus et al., 2010). The coaches highlighted that each concrete touch that teammates have done to each other has driven the teams forward, slowly but steadily, more than neglecting the touch.

“Based on my experience, most teams that fail do so because of individual strong personalities who don’t behave as agreed by the team, without a good reason. While single persons can rouse a whole team, they can also damage the atmosphere very seriously with their words and actions.” [b]

The fourth and final category of elevating routines and rituals deals with different verbal behaviors. Similar to NVBs, verbal communicative practices have not been extensively explored in the team literature, but they have been lately shown to have a significant impact on team effectiveness through emotional contagion, emotional extension and emotional cycles, which refer to the ways in which a single verbal act is produced and then reproduced within a team (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2011). Moreover, it has been suggested that teams should be more sensitive to the ways members talk (and listen) to each other (Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). Exemplified in the fourth column of Table 6, the sample teams have used diverse verbal behaviors that have promoted the desired mindset, mutual respect and the importance of every

member of the team. Similar to touch, for instance, the coaches insisted that every positive word has elevated the teams more than keeping one's mouth shut.⁹¹

A player's point of view: The tiny but decisive cues

It is the final minutes of another tight match. We are leading by one goal and our opponent is pressuring us hard. They possess the ball while we are primarily focusing on protecting our own goal by blocking as many shots and winning as many duels as possible. Since defense often takes more energy than offense, I and we are already tired, but should somehow endure a couple of more minutes (yes, I know, winning is not everything, but at this point it is anyway an indisputable short-term objective). In my current position as a left defender, I manage to throw myself in front of a shot and make a block. I hear my teammates on the bench celebrate. Instantly thereafter, I succeed in protecting the ball and an opponent's player makes a foul on me. We get a free hit, which means that we have a chance to make a substitution and have fresher players on the court for the following sequence. When jogging those ten meters exhausted from the corner of the rink to our bench and passing the few reserve players (who have not been playing at all during the match) on our bench, they quickly clap me on the back and say: "Brilliant, Tero." These cues stand for examples of nonverbal (Bonaccio et al., 2016) and verbal (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2011) displays that—I would say surprisingly—have only recently received scholarly attention.

Is this irrelevant, because as Fredrickson (2013, 2) suggests, the cues might appear "too soft, frivolous, or ethereal?" Hardly. Do the consequences differ from an alternative including neither any touch nor words? Definitely. Even though the elevating effects of such seemingly small behaviors are valid in everything an interdependent team does together, they culminate in close competitive situations. In fact, after earlier composing a good team, establishing an atmosphere of respect and trust as well as gaining a profound shared understanding regarding the team's direction, roles, concept and tactics, for instance, it is specifically these behaviors that might be fully decisive at that point and give me the necessary additional energy to last a couple of more shifts, stand the opponent's pressure and help me give everything.

I find at least two reasons why the cues are so vital. On the one hand, they deliver and generate positive emotions that according to Fredrickson (2013) "widen the array of thoughts, action urges and percepts that spontaneously come to mind" (p. 17), as well as are linked to both the current and future levels of "resourcefulness and optimal functioning" (p. 25). On the other hand, the fact that they are delivered by the reserves has an additional elevating and unifying impact since it makes me feel that we are truly in the same boat. As Kraus et al. (2010) insist, the use of right cues "bolsters inferences that group members are cooperating for the good of the group," not "intending to engage in selfish actions" (p. 745). Thus, it always pays off to do the little deeds rather than skip them, presuming that they are genuine and come from our hearts.

⁹¹ At a more detailed level, due to the individual differences within a team, both the NVBs and VBs have naturally been used slightly differently with each member of the team. In this respect, once again, the optimal utilization of these behaviors has called for thorough knowledge of each other (information about who the others are and how they behave) and empathy (capability to use the information to understand things and feelings from their perspective and act accordingly).

6.8 Towards the Finnish culture of success

“Within a culture of success, winning is a normal state of affairs.” [e]

Beyond the above reasons for successful teamwork, the prerequisites for continuous team effectiveness constitute the last perspective on flourishing Finnish teams. Given that the other perspectives include one influencing condition (that is associated with our national culture) and four emergent states and processes that are “products of team experiences ... and become new inputs to subsequent processes and outcomes” (Marks et al., 2001, 358), many propositions in the above sections can be painlessly considered cultural. However, the analysis of the interview data indicated that long-lasting better-than-expected performance highlights a distinct set of cultural issues.

Therefore, this section introduces three additional features required to establish a longer-term culture of success⁹² into a shorter-run flourishing Finnish team, building on the five perspectives presented in Sections 6.3–6.7. There are two main reasons for considering the features separately here. First, the culture of success takes a longer-term perspective on successful teamwork than that employed earlier in this chapter. The second reason relates to the fact that even though all the sample teams have flourished at some point during the recent decade, it is questionable whether they all have embodied a culture of success, i.e. flourished continuously throughout this period. In this respect, the interview data on the culture of success concerned more about *how things could* than *how things have actually been* in these teams.

6.8.1 Time and team permanence

“A winning culture implies that a certain spirit has developed within the team and that the spirit is also supervised by someone... Otherwise it will run off easily.” [e]

Already by definition, generating a team culture takes time. Given that it stands for “particular sets of values, norms, beliefs and assumptions that are internalized,

⁹² Along with the concept *the culture of success*, another term often mentioned by the interviewees and dominant in public discussion is *the culture of winning*. However, given the definition for *success* and its fundamental difference to *winning* in Section 6.1, it is in place to apply the former concept.

shared and enacted by team members” (Lai et al., 2013, 1039), the culture of success is generated little by little within a team itself by thinking and acting in particular ways that lead to the desired outcomes and, further, by collectively realizing what is important and valuable. To allow this to happen, obviously, the composition of the team, concerning both the coaches and athletes but preferably also the supporting staff, must be somewhat unchangeable over a longer period, enabling more shared experiences and a deeper shared cognition to emerge.⁹³

The coach must oversee the winning spirit of the team in its everyday work. As each team essentially embodies a unique story, replacing a coach who understands the cultural fundamentals of a given team with a coach who does not realize them and cannot cherish and preserve the right things might easily make the team’s unique winning spirit to disappear.⁹⁴ Low athlete turnover, on the other hand, contributes to deeper friendships and cohesion as well as boosts the adoption of winning patterns, presuming that the team is on the right track in its daily work. At the same time, however, team permanence is not a panacea; it is optimal to replace persons who do not do their part in building the daily winning mentality with persons who do so.

6.8.2 Ability to look beyond results

“When a team wins, it easily misses the lucky bounces that led to the victory. The same bounces that the team would see if it had lost. Both the athletes and coaches should learn to look beyond a win in the same way than they look beyond a defeat.” [h]

The second distinctive feature of a culture of success deals with a continuous ability to realistically and critically inspect the team’s own performance, in a way that is not dependent on previous results, particularly on the previous titles the team has won. Put differently, the ability to look beyond results stands for not getting dazzled by them. As explained in Section 6.1, although the final result or rank is important and highly underlined by spectators and media, it is always in relation to the opponents

⁹³ Due to many reasons, in fact, this requirement is these days challenging to meet in several world-class team sports, especially in club teams. However, in national teams, which have been the primary focus of this study, there are greater chances of team permanence.

⁹⁴ Such a drain of a team’s winning spirit is something I also partly referred to when earlier describing my own experiences about winning despite the head coach in Section 6.4.

and their performance, thereby providing only limited (albeit useful to a certain extent) information about how the team itself has actually performed. At the worst, concentrating purely on the scoreboard and neglecting the underpinnings of the result leads to a serious downfall, as the Icarus paradox partly suggests (Miller, 1992).

Generally, the coaches highlighted that human beings tend to take more corrective actions when a certain mechanism reports that everything is not as it should be. This is often appropriate, but from the culture of success point of view, using the simple numerical result as the sole feedback mechanism is deceptive. Sometimes it might happen, for instance, that a team that performs below its true potential wins a championship by a very small margin (i.e. when chance plays a powerful role) against an overperforming team. Although the difference in potential between these two teams might be large at that point, getting dazzled by the result would mean that the winning team would continue to underperform and, ultimately, get defeated by the losing team that, after the defeat, would presumably strive even harder for getting better. For many, winning the championship is enough (and indeed it should be celebrated in either case), but given that the fundamental purpose of doing sports is to do meaningful things and become the best one can in a longer term, the culture of success implies that a good result has no dampening effect on the team's inner flame.

6.8.3 Love to the daily work and people

“Since we see each other ten times each week and know each other so well, I or the team captains can see from the faces if worries begin to emerge. First talking and then taking the proper measures can solve all kinds of worries. We have a sisterly culture where even bad days, fiery opinions and sisterly quarrels are allowed.” [d]

The third and last essential feature of a culture of success concerns the required type of motivation. As Ryan and Deci (2000) remind, in addition to different levels of motivation, people vary in their orientation of motivation. According to the interview data, there are two kinds of team athletes. Some are driven primarily by winning and achieving good results, whereas others are more driven by living like a top athlete to maximize their own and their team's performance. As such, these groups exemplify the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. For the former group, two

focal challenges arise. First, when they happen to win, their desire for additional hard daily work necessary to achieve consecutive titles might be reduced. Second, when they happen not to win—and no team wins every possible title—they might begin to question their existence as an athlete and have difficulties in motivating themselves for the following season. Nevertheless, above all spectators and media, which commonly focus on winners, have an inclination to mislead athletes into becoming extrinsically motivated and losing their “beginner’s mind” (Suzuki, 2010).

Athletes belonging to the latter group, on the other hand, make up the core of teams that reflect a culture of success as they do what they do “for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence” (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 56). At the heart of a culture of success lies love—a high level of intrinsic motivation—to the diligent work that makes both individual athletes and whole teams better day by day. Moreover, since we are discussing highly interdependent teamwork, loving the daily work also includes loving the people team members are doing the work with. In addition to existing within individuals, as suggested by Ryan and Deci (2000, 56), “intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities.” While understanding, respecting and trusting one’s teammates has been emphasized already earlier in this chapter, in a culture of success the issues take a yet deeper meaning; teammates love to carry out the work together with that particular combination of people. Ferris (1988, 42) defines such (organizational) love brilliantly as “a feeling of caring or deep respect for yourself and others, of valuing and believing in yourself and others, and of helping to achieve the best of which everyone is capable.”

Of course, in a culture of success, winning is not disregarded completely either. Such teams also want to win, know how to win and are wholesomely worried about their performance in the upcoming competitions. The driving force, in any case, is their love to the work itself and to the daily development opportunities on which sporadic results cannot have an impact. By winning something, instead of becoming replete, these teams gain only more understanding of the requirements and direction they should adopt for further improvement. Thus, perhaps ironically, to win several successive titles, it seems that the primary focus should not lie on winning those titles.

A player's point of view: a fruit of first-class teamwork

It is in place to conclude the chapter with a player's point of view that nicely encapsulates many issues brought out in the above sections. Some of the readers might even be familiar with this story. It was December 2008 and I was playing with the Finnish national team in the world championship final against Sweden in Prague. Thus far, despite being pretty close earlier—closest in the previous final in 2006 when we lost in the overtime and among others I had a post shot right before Sweden made the decisive goal—Finland had not won any men's world championship. Anyway, our core bunch, which had been roughly the same for years, remained perseverant, humble and loyal and continued to reach our dream. Now, we had a new chance ahead of us.

The final turned out to become an extremely fluctuating episode. We started the match brilliantly and took a 4-0 lead, but Sweden got into the game, running away almost unbelievably to a 4-6 lead in the third period. (Some of my friends had been so frustrated when Sweden made the sixth goal that they had turned off their TV, without seeing the rest of the match. This perhaps reflected the flawed but tenacious Finnish view on our inability to succeed as a team.) However, we stuck to our concept and equalized the match at 6-6, among others thanks to amazing individual performances by Lassi Vääntinen. Lassi, known for his splendid bohemian personality and lifestyle, started the match on the bench but scored three goals on power play. Without having among others an appropriate off-court activity during our last training camp in Spain before the championships, I am not sure whether Lassi would have been able to throw himself into the game the way he did, despite starting on the bench.

So, we ended up again in the overtime. Although both teams had a few decent scoring chances, the first minutes elapsed without a goal. Later, in the middle of the overtime, there was a sequence including a shot by us, a counter-attack by Sweden and an immediate counter-counter-attack by us, which ended up me receiving a pass from my linemate Rickie Hyvärinen with an open net in front of me. I scored and we won the world championship for the first time.⁹⁵ It was a historical moment in many respects.

Although I practically made the goal, it would be far too naïve to insist that I was the hero. The hero was the team and the goal was a fruit of first-class teamwork. When taking a closer look at the goal, each of our six players on the court touched the ball during the sequence and was at the right place and time. Rickie, an utterly charismatic forward who liked to score goals, could have made a shot himself but trusted me when seeing me in a better position. Although I had one of the shortest odds for making the goal, I was still strongly dependent on my teammates. Flourishing teams make their individual members blossom. While I obviously still find the goal thrilling, I get even more goose bumps when seeing how the team worked together.

After the celebrations, while it naturally felt amazing to open the floodgates, we were aware of the fluctuations in our performance and eager to improve our game further. Ok, we had certainly played decently since we had won all of our main opponents during the tournament, but we knew we could do better in the forthcoming championships two years later at home in Helsinki. Thanks to the culture of success we had built in the team, additional fruits of excellent teamwork were yet to come.

⁹⁵ A clip of the goal is available e.g. at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heP85xVWPUo>.

7 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKPLACE TEAMWORK

The above perspectives provide a variety of interconnected reasons for the recent flourishing of the given Finnish sports teams. On the one hand, their better-than-expected performance can be explained by the profound national values and the attributes of the people involved in these teams. On the other hand, the creation of an atmosphere that reflects exceptional respect and trust, as well as the application of a thorough dialogue and participative decision-making, appeared to be essential. Moreover, the everyday procedures that have contributed to the manner in which the team members have treated and interacted with each other offer an additional lens shared by all the teams in the sample. Altogether, no reason is more important than another and should either be considered separately; all the reasons affect one another and, to understand successful teamwork, they must be conceived in their entirety.

While at a more detailed level each team and sport had its own unique reasons and recipe for successful teamwork, the perspectives compile the common factors that held across all the teams and sports. Even though it would be naïve to claim that the teams have flourished merely because of their first-class teamwork, the results indicate that the different components of teamwork, as depicted above, have together comprised a major source of competitive advantage against teams from larger nations with a broader and deeper talent pool. In highly interdependent contexts, contrary to less interdependent contexts, high-quality teamwork plays an integral role and underlines a distinctive set of issues in the formation of successful teams. The given Finnish teams have been able to realize these issues and compose teams that have become considerably more than the sum of their individual members. Such a competitive advantage can presumably be sustained as long as larger competitors do not place premium collaboration higher on their agenda.

This chapter discusses the findings in the previous chapter and explains in more detail how the above perspectives on successful teamwork could be utilized in Finnish interdependent workplace teams. Section 7.1 centers around the applicability of the perspectives in the workplace, whereas Section 7.2 presents a few conceivable

exceptions and cautions with relation to the applicability. Section 7.3 focuses on the theoretical contribution of the study. Lastly, Section 7.4 evaluates the study and brings out the main limitations.

7.1 Establishing flourishing Finnish workplace teams

“I see them going strongly hand in hand. Regarding both individual athletes and teams, the question is about taking advantage of human resources. In other areas of society, people don’t face these issues in the way we face them in team sports. That’s why we have a significant opportunity to contribute to teamwork in companies and organizations.” [k]

While Chapter 6 explained the common reasons for successful teamwork among the specific Finnish sports teams, thereby answering to the first research question, the second research question concerned the potential to utilize these perspectives in similar Finnish interdependent workplace teams. According to the interview data, the perspectives could be widely applicable, with only some minor exceptions.⁹⁶ Overall, the perspectives underline maximal utilization and cultivation of human resources and potential, at both the individual and team level. As such, the findings correspond strikingly well to the areas where the literature assumes that team sports can most effectively contribute to workplace teams, including for example optimal orchestration of human resources (Keidel, 1984) as well as different team-building activities and daily interaction within a team (Katz, 2001). Team sports stands for an accessible and inspirational “living laboratory” (Keidel, 1987, 608) concerning these issues that are equally essential but perhaps less visible and obvious—and therefore often disregarded—in workplace teams. More specifically, the same holds for Finnish teams that could gain competitive advantage from high-quality teamwork.

At the individual level, the perspectives approach human beings, not subject matters, comprehensively and aim at nurturing their well-being so that they find belonging to a team in a given role as meaningful, important, developing and enjoyable. At the

⁹⁶ Here, I consciously use the wording *could be applicable* rather than *are applicable* because, as will be explained in Section 7.4, the study has not involved a test of transferability per se from team sports to the workplace. In other words, it has not been investigated whether the perspectives found in the former are relevant in the latter by also employing a sample of workplace teams. Instead, the assertion regarding the workplace relevance is based only on the interview data and on the literature proposing that there are strong similarities between interdependent sports and workplace teams.

team level, the perspectives emphasize treating every member of the team respectfully, trustfully and helpfully, as well as highlight working together for the common good, building on the individual differences, unique capabilities and viewpoints of the members. In the aggregate, as suggested by both the earlier literature and the interviewees, all these aspects are of utmost importance also in interdependent workplace teams. At the same time, however, it is impossible to provide any silver bullets; since every team ultimately comprises its own micro-level context and story, the perspectives must be implemented with care, taking into consideration the unique features of that particular team.

“I wouldn’t use any general rules. I think that all the courses of action are in relation to the culture in which you are. You must first recognize the culture before you begin to act.” [e]

Each perspective presented in Chapter 6 encompasses its own implications for workplace teams. While the fundamental Finnish values represent an influencing condition, i.e. has had an impact on the premises of teamwork, all the other perspectives stand for emergent states and processes, i.e. attributes, behaviors, procedures and cognitions that have been determined by the sample teams themselves, and can therefore be widely applied in shaping teamwork within workplace teams as well. Concerning each perspective separately, Table 7 compiles various practical advice on establishing flourishing Finnish workplace teams.

When it comes to workplace teamwork more generally, the study does not reveal whether the perspectives could be relevant elsewhere and in workplace teams featuring another degree of interdependence. On the one hand, as the study has focused only on Finnish teams, it remains unanswered how the principles would be applicable in foreign (or cross-cultural) teams and other national cultures, let alone virtual teams. On the other hand, since the study has centered around highly interdependent teams, we do not know whether the insights would hold in less interdependent teams. Regarding both the questions, we could presume that the perspectives would elsewhere be partly but not completely relevant, due to the differences in national traits and requirements for successful teamwork at different points on the interdependence continuum.

Perspective	Practical advice for Finnish interdependent workplace teams
<i>Fundamental Finnish values</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster and build on honesty, loyalty, perseverance and humility • Understand how the values are and should be reflected in everyday situations • Create courses of action that eliminate the conceivable negative Finnish traits
<i>Helpful and team-oriented people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit people whose attributes boost teamwork • Team leaders: have the regular members and the whole team in the center and help the members develop themselves by knowing each member holistically, cherishing the specific leader values and by carrying the uppermost responsibility for the team's collaboration and performance • Regular members: follow the principles of the Finnish team player taxonomy, always meeting the minimum criterion of performing one's own task diligently and understanding one's role in the entirety • The supporting staff: see yourself as an important quarter that can look after the vitality of the team and the development of its members in several ways
<i>Generation of extraordinary respect and trust</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help each member become comprehensively aware of herself, both physically and mentally and both behaviorally and professionally, employing e.g. the Circle of Success by Aki Hintsa (Saari, 2015) as a starting point • Invest in a variety of encounters where members are able to get to know each other broadly and deeply, both inside and outside the typical work context • In particular, organize events where members are able to share sensitive issues • In the longer run, gain all kinds of shared experiences with the team and optimize their impact on respect and trust by processing them properly and collectively
<i>Effective dialogue and decision-making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reach a common ground and specify what the team aspires and how, establish a deep and continuous dialogue with a straight and honest exchange of thoughts • Involve the whole team in decision-making to enhance both the quality of and commitment to the decisions • However, still consider the team leader as the ultimate decision-making authority • Besides agreeing on the team direction and operational strategy, put much effort on deciding on the principles of collaboration and behavior within the team • Regarding operational strategy, make sure above all that the team understands the strategy exactly similarly and believes that it is the optimal strategy
<i>Elevating daily routines and rituals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize the chances for social identification by utilizing the above and/or developing own practical procedures and conditions • Similarly, maximize the degree of mental presence when being together • Moreover, establish both nonverbal and verbal routines and rituals that are appreciative, positive and team-oriented • Overall, understand the importance of the seemingly irrelevant ways of treating and being with each other daily and oversee that all the members act accordingly • For example: (i) ensure that the members have a respectful contact with every other member at the beginning and end of each workday; (ii) create a ritual of standing in a circle having hands on each other's shoulders before an important client meeting; (iii) prepare a symbolic poster that highlights the need for high-quality teamwork during a project
<i>The Finnish culture of success</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ the above perspectives consistently in the longer term • If possible and suitable, hold the team composition rather permanent • Always look beyond the bottom-line results, focus on the actual process and performance behind the result and be hungry for detecting areas of improvement • Be driven first and foremost by the love to the daily work and the people • Foster the emergence of intrinsic motivation towards the above issues, employing e.g. the framework and tools by Martela (2015) • View success as an enjoyable process of becoming the best one can in the chosen direction, instead of placing too much emphasis on reaching a specific result

Table 7. Practical advice on establishing flourishing Finnish workplace teams.

7.2 Pitfalls to be avoided in the workplace

Despite the suggestion that the findings in Chapter 6 are highly applicable also in Finnish interdependent workplace teams, a few exceptions might require special attention when employing the perspectives in the workplace. The analysis of the interview data detected three such pitfalls, which relate to (i) members' preliminary level and type of motivation, (ii) typical time frame of recruitment and feedback as well as (iii) the amount of informal time spent together.⁹⁷

“In sports, you're allowed to work with people to whom it is a passion. On the other hand, one might purposely seek into an expert organization as well, but those organizations include anyway people who have motivational problems.” [i]

The first possible pitfall concerns the level and orientation of motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000) for work, touching on the Adler and Adler (1988) observation about the disparities in the innate degree of loyalty between sports and workplace teams. According to the interview data, world-class athletes are typically involved primarily due to their love to the sport and to the development opportunities, sometimes with no or very limited pay, thereby reflecting a high level of intrinsic motivation.⁹⁸ In the workplace, on the other hand, extrinsic motivators such as earning a decent living, besides some other factors, often play a more significant role. Put differently, while one very rarely ends up doing sports for economic reasons, it is equally uncommon that one would have a regular work without any compensation at all. When it comes to successful interdependent teamwork that necessitates committing oneself to the common good and leaving no stone unturned, this exception calls for additional effort in the workplace for example in relation to understanding and dealing with the varying macro-level motivational backgrounds of the employees.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Whereas Section 3.3 introduced some general points of divergence between sports and workplace teams highlighted by the literature, the exceptions mentioned here refer more closely to the observed points of divergence between *interdependent* sports and workplace teams.

⁹⁸ However, according to some of the interviewed coaches, even in the sports under investigation here it is sometimes challenging for players with at least a six-digit yearly income to put all in daily and contribute to their team (as they will earn the money anyway). However, such players do not commonly reach the national teams, which were in the primary focus in this study.

⁹⁹ Even though earning a decent living naturally stands for a relevant reason for working, employees in all workplaces could anyway aim at becoming more intrinsically motivated for what they do or, after becoming better aware of themselves, finding another workplace that suits them better. In this respect, the ideas and tools proposed by Martela (2015) offer an excellent starting point.

“If you recruit a wrong person in the working life, it’s more difficult to get rid of her. In our sport, since we have temporary contracts, it’s easy to put one aside, which in a way keeps up the standards.” [f]

Second, interdependent sports and workplace teams might differ considerably in terms of the time frame of recruitment and feedback. In sports teams, from both the team members’ and recruiters’ perspective, a typical major period of inspection is one season (i.e. a year) or one project (usually not more than two years), after which changes in team composition, if necessary for any reason, are rather painless to conduct. Moreover, as reminded also by Ievleva and Terry (2008), performances and results of matches and competitions provide clear and constant feedback. In the workplace, on the other hand, changes to rebuild a team are often more challenging to carry out. This exception calls for even more careful recruitment, additional focus on solving the conceivable teamwork-related problems without recomposing the team and vigilance in observing these problems, as teams do not necessarily possess any concrete and continuous feedback mechanisms to see how they are doing.

“Time constitutes nowadays a major bottleneck. I feel that earlier it was much easier to organize all kinds of off-court activities. These days everyone is terribly busy.” [d]

The third and final potential pitfall is linked to the amount of informal time spent together with the team, which in one sense supplements the Ievleva and Terry (2008) notion of the substantial differences in the temporal ratios of being in training versus performance mode. Sports teams spend a considerable amount of time outside the typical performance and training settings, for example in locker rooms and on trips to away matches and other competitions, which constitutes a fertile premise for gaining many kinds of shared experiences and, consequently, for building up the atmosphere of respect and trust. Workplace teams, on the contrary, typically do not meet so often outside office hours (nor have an opportunity to travel to a holiday resort for a week before an important project, for instance, merely to fine-tune their atmosphere). In this respect, workplace teams must commonly operate with a somewhat narrower toolbox for arranging encounters that result in an atmosphere where each member has a chance to blossom and a desire to devote her potential to the team.

7.3 Theoretical contribution

Although the main contribution of this study is a practitioner-friendly insight into successful teamwork among certain Finnish interdependent world-class sports teams and advice on how the findings could be put into use in similar workplace teams, it is also in place to discuss how the study contributes to the earlier teamwork literature. I will proceed with this discussion in two steps. First, I will contrast the findings with some general considerations on successful teamwork. Second, more specifically, I will consider how the above perspectives contribute to an array of existing literature.

Generally, as highlighted in Chapter 4, the team literature already encompasses a rather extensive view on the components of teamwork and determinants of team effectiveness. However, since Salas et al. (2015) call for a better utilization of this knowledge in unique contexts and for “translating this literature into something practical for organizational leadership” (p. 614), this study assists in filling the gap in three dimensions. First, instead of all kinds of teams, the study has focused particularly on highly interdependent teams. Second, it has drawn from team sports, which the literature finds an educative and inspirational setting for teamwork lessons. Third, even though the results are applicable also elsewhere to a certain extent, the study has centered around Finnish teamwork.

Taken together, the study contributes to the academic teamwork literature primarily by providing the first extensive inquiry into successful teamwork among Finnish interdependent world-class sports teams. Moreover, by discussing how the findings could be used to further enhance workplace teamwork, the study represents an empirical study that investigates the overlap and/or crossover of issues between sports and workplace teams in a more specific domain, which according to Weinberg and McDermott (2002) and Fletcher (2011), among others, have been lacking earlier.

More specifically, looking back to Section 4.3 that introduced six broad themes—cooperation, cohesion, communication, leadership, composition and roles and culture—all of which have been shown to be relevant both theoretically and empirically in many contexts and teams, the results of this study confirm that these

themes are relevant also in Finnish interdependent sports teams. However, in comparison with the earlier extensive reviews by Cohen and Bailey (1997), Salas et al. (2005), Mathieu et al. (2008) and Salas et al. (2015), for example, the current study puts more emphasis on certain perhaps more grass-roots determinants of successful teamwork. These determinants concern how deeply team members know themselves and others, how they continuously treat and communicate with each other and what drives them most in belonging to a team. Furthermore, in relation to the mainstream teamwork literature, this study underlines more the need for conducting teamwork so that it is able to realize the human potential inherent in each member as well as possible and channel this potential into a collective direction. Only after filling this need, an interdependent team can become greater than the sum of its parts.

When it comes to the different perspectives presented in Chapter 6, the findings on helpful and team-oriented people have two distinct contributions. On the one hand, the coaching side of leadership (Wageman, 2001) demonstrated by the coaches answers to the Mathieu et al. (2008) query about examples of conditions under which such type of team leadership has a meaningful impact on team effectiveness. On the other hand, the Finnish team player taxonomy offers a practically accessible extension to the discussion on team member knowledge, skill and ability requirements (e.g., Baker and Salas, 1992; Driskell and Salas, 1992; Stevens and Campion, 1994; Humphrey et al., 2009), also viewing the attributes in a hierarchy and explaining how there should be a different number of members at each level.

Regarding the generation of extraordinary respect and trust, the study sheds more light on the process by which respect and trust might emerge within a team, as well as on their relationship with collaboration, which has been demanded for example by Mayer et al. (1995). In particular, the teamwork literature has thus far largely ignored the need for first becoming deeply acquainted with oneself before one might be able to successfully collaborate with others. Finally, concerning the elevating daily routines and rituals, the findings of this study extend the knowledge of how leaders can improve the social characteristics of work in a highly interdependent team context, recognized as a fruitful area of further research by Grant and Parker (2009).

7.4 Evaluation and limitations of the study

Qualitative studies can (and should) be assessed from a number of standpoints. In her widely used model, Tracy (2010) introduces eight criteria for qualitative research that are universal across different qualitative areas and paradigms, thereby covering also grounded theory and autoethnography, the methods used in this study. These criteria, which compose “a common language of excellence for qualitative research and a useful pedagogical compass” (p. 849), include (i) worthy topic, (ii) rich rigor, (iii) sincerity, (iv) credibility, (v) resonance, (vi) significant contribution, (vii) ethical and (viii) meaningful coherence. Table 8 exhibits the possible ways to fulfill the criteria as suggested by Tracy and describes how the criteria have been primarily addressed in this study. Although the guidelines have naturally been followed neither completely nor flawlessly, Table 8 anyway indicates that the study has taken into consideration each quality criterion to a certain extent.

Overall, the study has four main limitations. The first, relating to Tracy’s criteria of resonance and significant contribution, deals with the fact that the study does not encompass a test of transferability per se when claiming that the perspectives on successful teamwork could be widely utilized also in interdependent workplace teams. Instead, the proposition of workplace applicability is based merely on the (coach) interview data and on the literature on the similarities and differences between interdependent sports and workplace teams. Even if Fletcher (2011) argues that the hypothesized analogies between sports and workplace teams should be rigorously tested within both domains to build credence, due to scope reasons this study leaves the task of gathering workplace evidence to future researchers.

The second limitation touches Tracy’s criteria of rich rigor, sincerity and credibility and concerns the potential researcher bias. Even if I aimed at following the data collection and analysis guidelines diligently and prepared the autoethnographic excerpts only after the analysis of the interview data to keep the outsider’s and insider’s voices separate, it remains a possibility that, due to my long background in one of the sample teams (and much shorter background in grounded theory research), my own conceptualizations have driven the results too much. Mehra (2002)

Quality criterion	Possible means, practices and methods to meet the criterion	How the criterion has been met in this study
<i>Worthy topic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topic of the research is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant and timely ○ Significant and interesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study focuses on the common reasons for successful teamwork among Finnish interdependent sports teams, which have not been investigated yet • Team sports stands for an educative, inspirational and widely familiar setting for improving workplace teamwork and carries personal meaning for the researcher
<i>Rich rigor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate and complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theoretical constructs ○ Data and time in the field ○ Sample(s) and context(s) ○ Data collection and analysis processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially important theoretical constructs were identified before collecting data • The sample consisted of 12 successful Finnish sports teams whose coaches were thoroughly interviewed, besides using the researcher's experiences as a player • The research report describes the procedures for data collection and analysis and explains how the data have been transformed and organized into the report
<i>Sincerity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study is characterized by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases and inclinations of the researcher ○ Transparency about the methods and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of the researcher's background driving the results was identified and mitigated by creating autoethnography only after the analysis of the interview data • The report describes the research process and limitations transparently • The autoethnographic excerpts were aimed to be sincere rather than self-important
<i>Credibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research is marked by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge and showing rather than telling ○ Triangulation or crystallization ○ Multivocality and member reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study employed two methodologies and sources of data, obtaining both data and methodological triangulation as well as a deeper understanding of the topic • The research report includes various interview quotes and multiple voices • Some reflections on the initial findings were collected in the later interviews
<i>Resonance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research influences, affects or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aesthetic, evocative representation ○ Naturalistic generalizations and transferable findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The autoethnographic excerpts represent evocative writing, providing direct and concrete insight into the researcher's lived experiences • The whole research report has been created aiming at accessible writing and rich description to help readers transfer the knowledge to their own team settings
<i>Significant contribution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research provides a significant contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conceptually/theoretically ○ Practically and morally ○ Methodologically and heuristically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study stands for the first inquiry covering a variety of Finnish interdependent sports teams and contributes to the literature on some specific areas of teamwork • The findings are useful for teamwork practitioners both within and outside sports • The study offers concepts and ideas that can be explored in future research
<i>Ethical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research considers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) ○ Situational, relational and culturally specific ethics ○ Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewees were informed about the nature of the study and, as agreed, their answers were kept anonymous • In the report, particular attention was paid to potentially sensitive formulations of individual persons to minimize the risk of unintended and/or unjust interpretations
<i>Meaningful coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Achieves what it purports to be about ○ Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals ○ Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings and interpretations with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and research questions are mentioned early and attended to throughout the report, being grounded in the teamwork literature and actual recent events • The findings answer to the research questions and are interconnected with the literature and data

Table 8. Evaluation of the study against eight criteria for qualitative research. Extended from Tracy (2010, 840).

underlines that the researcher being a member of the group(s) under study introduces a potential bias. On the other hand, as Suddaby (2006) reminds, the grounded theory researcher even *should* be active in the process because the aim is to clarify how research participants interpret reality rather than to generate true statements about it. Moreover, in line with Mehra (2002), my background might have allowed me to build a more trusting relationship with the interviewees and thereby to obtain richer data. In any case, if desired, future researchers could remove this limitation by not having considerable personal background in the subject area and/or sample teams.

Third and also connecting with Tracy's criterion of rich rigor, the reliability of the interview data constitutes a potential limitation. According to Argyris (e.g., 1976), all human action can be viewed through two theories of action: espoused theories of action and theories-in-use. The former denote the ideas that people report, whereas the latter refer to their actual observable behavior and, as Argyris claims, people might be incapable of identifying the discrepancies between the two. Thus, the interview data might have consisted more of the coaches' interpretations on how they and their teams *should have acted* than on how *they actually have acted*. Even if the interviewees' theories-in-use (and the conceivable conflicts with their espoused theories of action) could have been explored by observing directly how the coaches and their teams have behaved, such measures were out of scope of this study.¹⁰⁰

The fourth and final limitation, linked to Tracy's criteria of significant contribution and meaningful coherence, concerns the study's primary focus on successful teams, drawing on positive organizational scholarship that deals with "especially positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and their members" (Cameron et al., 2003, 4). Even though some challenges to successful teamwork emerged from the data and the antitheses of the perspectives on flourishing Finnish teams could be intuitively considered as "perspectives on languishing Finnish teams," the study does not address this "darker side of teamwork" partly introduced in Section 2.2, which would have provided a yet more profound understanding of successful teamwork.

¹⁰⁰ On a related note, particularly because the interview data included only one interview and interviewee per team, without using more informants who would have described the phenomena from different perspectives, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that the data has represented only "retrospective sensemaking by image-conscious informants" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, 28).

8 CONCLUSION AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has explored the common reasons for successful teamwork among specific Finnish teams in six interdependent world-class team sports, including aesthetic group gymnastics, basketball, floorball, ice hockey, synchronized skating and volleyball, and pondered how the discovered issues could be utilized in similar Finnish workplace teams. Employing the approach of building theory from cases and supplementing the findings with autoethnography, the study identified five such reasons that together have constituted a major source of competitive advantage for the teams. First, a set of fundamental Finnish values, consisting of honesty, loyalty, perseverance and humility, which stem from the national culture and determine what is appropriate in various situations, has had a significant positive impact on the tone of teamwork, while the teams have also succeeded in turning around two negative Finnish traits to their advantage. Second, the people in the given teams, comprising of the coaches, athletes and the supporting staff, have shared certain attributes that mirror above all willingness to help and always place the team first.

The third reason covers the teams' ability to generate an atmosphere of extraordinary respect and trust. The process has ranged from getting to know oneself, others and gaining shared experiences to having courage to be oneself and a desire to commit oneself to the team and, further, to a combination of individual blossoming and team-level unity. As such, this process has enabled individual members to release their entire potential but also made them eager to devote that potential wholly to their team's use. Fourth, by a thorough dialogue and participative decision-making, the teams have been able to attain a firm shared understanding and engaging high-quality decisions, concerning everything from the teams' broad direction to on-court tactical details. As the fifth and final reason, the teams have employed various daily routines and rituals that have contributed positively to the way the members have treated and interacted with each other, including procedures for facilitating social identification and mental presence as well as several nonverbal and verbal behaviors.

In addition to these mutual reasons for successful teamwork, the study proposes three additional features required to create a longer-term Finnish culture of success, characterized by consistent better-than-expected performance, into a shorter-run successful team. These features include time and team permanence, ability to look beyond results and, before anything, love to the daily work and people. Altogether, the study suggests that the identified aspects of successful teamwork could be widely applicable in Finnish interdependent workplace teams, though with minor exceptions and cautions that have to be taken into consideration. These potential pitfalls relate to members' preliminary level and orientation of motivation, time frame of recruitment and feedback and the amount of informal time spent together with the team.

Teamwork constitutes a timely and fascinating field with endless opportunities for future research. For example, while this study has provided an overview and covered cursorily many areas of teamwork, each of these areas would also deserve a closer look. Either way, four specific ideas emerge from this study. First and most obviously, while the study identified the common reasons for successful teamwork in Finnish interdependent sports teams and explained how and why the perspectives would be highly applicable also in Finnish interdependent workplace teams, a concrete test of transferability employing a sample of workplace teams was left as a future exercise. Additionally, the theory outlined here could also undergo quantitative scrutiny. Second, and relating to the first idea, further study is needed also in terms of the conceivable similarities and differences between sports and workplace teams, to maximize the impact of lessons taken from sports to elsewhere.

Third, although the study utilized my own experiences as a team athlete besides the extensive coach interview data, the developed theory was anyway (purposely) based mainly on the coaches' interpretations. In this respect, incorporating different team members' viewpoints on a larger scale in an otherwise similar study would provide a more comprehensive understanding of successful teamwork. Fourth and finally, as the study recognized the importance of all the seemingly small everyday manners in which team members treat and interact with each other as a relatively new area of teamwork research, future studies could pay more attention to understanding how these courses of action optimally contribute to effectiveness in interdependent teams.

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10 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sports and teams in the sample

Sport	Team
Aesthetic group gymnastics	Olarin Voimistelijat / OVO Team Tampereen Voimistelijat / Minetit
Basketball	Men's national team Tampereen Pyrintö
Floorball	Men's national team Men's junior (U19) national team
Ice hockey	Men's national team Men's junior (U20) national team
Synchronized skating	Marigold IceUnity Rockettes
Volleyball	Men's national team Kokkolan Tiikerit

Table A.1. Sports and teams included in the sample.

Appendix 2: Interviewees and interview details

#	Sport	Name of the coach	Sex	Date	Duration
1	Aesthetic group gymnastics	Anneli Laine-Näätänen	Female	5.4.2017	2:15
2	Aesthetic group gymnastics	Titta Heikkilä	Female	11.4.2017	2:20
3	Ice hockey	Erkka Westerlund	Male	13.4.2017	1:50
4	Synchronized skating	Anu Oksanen	Female	25.4.2017	1:50
5	Synchronized skating	Kaisa Arrateig	Female	2.5.2017	2:15
6	Ice hockey	Jukka Jalonen	Male	8.5.2017	2:00
7	Basketball	Pieti Poikola	Male	23.5.2017	2:45
8	Floorball	Heikki Luukkonen	Male	25.5.2017	2:20
9	Floorball	Petteri Nykky	Male	31.5.2017	2:10
10	Basketball	Henrik Dettmann	Male	6.6.2017	1:40
11	Volleyball	Tuomas Sammeltu	Male	1.8.2017	1:55
12	Volleyball	Tommi Tiilikainen	Male	1.9.2017	2:50

Table A.2. Interviewees and interview details.

Appendix 3: The interview protocol

PART I: GETTING STARTED

Introduction and background

- Interviewer:
 - Describe the interviewer's background as well as the theoretical background, motivation and purpose of the study.
 - Explain why the interviewee is selected for the study.
 - Explain how the interview will be carried out in a semi-structured manner.
 - Explain what is meant by *a team* and *teamwork* and highlight that they are the focus of the study.
- Interviewee:
 - Describe your background? How have you become a coach?
 - What is most exciting in being a coach?
 - What do you see as your main achievements?
 - From the teamwork point of view, what are the special characteristics of your sport?

Defining success and winning

- Speaking of successful teams, how would you define *success*? What about *winning*?
- When has a team been successful? Could you give an example of a concrete situation when this has been the case?
- Why has your team been successful? What makes the difference to less successful teams?
- How do you weight the journey itself in relation to its final output?
- Why is it important to be successful?

PART II: CONCEPTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL TEAMWORK

- Broadly speaking, what aspects of teamwork have you found important in your team?
- (After the listing, going through each aspect one by one):
 - Why is this aspect important?
 - How is the aspect visible in practice?
 - How can the aspect be established and nurtured?

PART III: COMPONENTS OF TEAMWORK (going through the aspects not covered in Part II)

Collaboration, cohesion and the sense of community

- How can you make a team collaborate optimally?
- Can you give examples of situations when the team is collaborating really well?
- When do you feel that the team is cohesive?
- What are the main obstacles to collaboration? How can you remove these obstacles?
- What actions can you take to boost cohesion?
- Can you give examples of rituals that enhance the sense of community?

Communication

- What kind of communication results in successful teamwork?
- What are the main challenges in effective communication?
- How should you give and receive feedback?

Leadership

- As a leader, what are your main objectives?
- How do you aim to fulfill these objectives?
- What are the most rewarding moments for you as a leader?
- What kind of leadership should other team members embody?
- Can you give examples of (positive) events or phenomena that have occurred in the team without your contribution?

Composition and roles

- What is important to consider when putting together a team? What kind of athletes and staff members make up a successful team?
- How do you weight teamwork skills in relation to sport-specific expertise?
- How do you synchronize individual objectives with team objectives?
- What kind of roles should there be in a successful team?
- How do you make everyone accept his/her role?

Culture

- What underlying values have you considered important with your team?
- What kind of behaviors do you expect from team members?
- How should team members treat each other and outsiders?
- How does our national background affect teamwork?
- How would you define and build a culture of winning?

Transferability from sports to the workplace

- How would all the above aspects of teamwork be applicable in workplace teams?
- More generally, what do you think workplace teams could learn from sports teams?
- What do you think are the main similarities and differences between (interdependent) sports and workplace teams?

PART IV: ENDING QUESTIONS

- How have your views on successful teamwork changed during the years?
- How have you grown as a human being?
- Is there anything new that came to your mind during the interview?
- Is there something else you think I should know to understand teamwork better?
- Is there something you would like to ask me?

Appendix 4: Example of the evolution of a core category

Interview excerpt	Open code	Subcategory	Main category	Core category
“Every moment and person is different.”	Individual uniqueness	Human premises	Getting to know the team	Generation of extraordinary respect and trust
“We’re all insecure. All the time, we mull over what others think about us, consciously and much more unconsciously.”	Insecurity			
“When you learn to understand your weaknesses, it will become much easier to understand your teammate.”	Ignorance			
“The first important thing in coaching is to get a contact with the athlete.”	Coach-athlete relationship	Increasing self-knowledge		
“First of all, it’s about learning to know one’s own personality, I mean concretely.”	Personality analyses			
“The coach must help the athlete know more about herself and make sure that everything is well in her life.”	Well-being			
“Your idea of man or world view anyway determines how you react to everything.”	Idea of man	Increasing knowledge of others		
“I don’t have to be familiar with their updated boyfriend history, but it’s awfully important for them because they’re on the ice together.”	Off-court activities			
“...that we would conduct personality analyses, tell that we’re different personalities and mercifully give everyone a permission to be what he is.”	Personality analyses			
“What happens to them when our game collapses ... standing in front of the team, everyone promised one thing he’d do for the team. It needed to be something deep and personal.”	Off-court activities	Shared experiences		
“You’ll learn to laugh at something together and gain shared experiences, for example by plunging jointly into a freezing cold lake.”	Daily activities			
“The shared experiences with the team and what we’ve learned about each other along the way; it’s a unique journey.”	Story uniqueness			
“I educate them to appreciate their teammates’ good skills that enable us to be at the top.”	Respect	Implications of the atmosphere		
“In a way it also gives you more self-confidence as you can trust your linemate and don’t have to doubt whether he’s able to defend his guy.”	Trust			
“A lot has happened before one can see from our game that we have a good team spirit.”	Team spirit			
“They’ve obviously learned that they’re allowed to be different, which I find wonderful.”	Being oneself			
“Trust makes you give extra effort and truly commit and do the thing for the team.”	Cohesion			
“The atmosphere must allow trying and working at full blast, with everyone in the same boat.”	Giving everything			

Table A.3. Example of forming a core category from the interview excerpts.