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Abstract: In our knowledge economy, workgroup performance is definitely key in leading to a sustainable organisational performance. This research aims to explain collective performance through the understanding of the emergence of routines within workgroups. We try to answer the following questions: How do routine emerge within workgroups? How does routines' emergence affect group's performance? We argue that the group's internal social capital affects how members interact. Consequently, it influences the emergence of working routines. We propose a conceptual model of workgroup performance which links social capital and routines' emergence. We illustrate our model and five propositions with highlights from the French national handball team. Between 1995 and 2012, this team has been ensuring a lasting performance, which can be explained by a noticeable mode of organising. Our conceptual research brings a contribution to the study of the internal antecedents of routines' emergence and collective learning, and to their link to workgroup performance.

Keywords: Social capital, routine, collective learning, workgroup, performance

Social capital and routinisation as immaterial drivers of workgroup performance: a conceptual contribution

INTRODUCTION

Between 1995 and 2012, the French national handball team won twice the European championship (2006, 2010), twice the Olympic Games (2008, 2012) and four times the World championship (1995, 2001, 2009, 2011). Two coaches would manage the team during this period. Although they gave various explanations for such a lasting performance, they both highlighted that the main one was the team's ability to build collective capabilities. Unfortunately, such capabilities were challenged in January 2012, when the national team was defeated at a very early stage of the European championship. The team lacked stamina and seemed disorganised. The coach at that time, Claude Onesta, explained this counter performance by the group's difficulty to collectively question its ways of playing. Quite soon, however, a gold medal at the 2012 Olympic Games sounded like revenge and was added to the team's records.

Explaining such a lasting performance and linking it to the team's inner organisation is an issue of some importance, not only for the French handball team's management, but also for any organisational workgroups' managers. Whether task forces, project teams, or communities of practice…, workgroups are indeed today's most frequent form of organising within firms, and a privileged locus for knowledge sharing and knowledge creation (Fong, 2003; Adenfelt, 2006).

However, workgroups are not readily manageable. Their organisation and their coordination are key issues and present specificities (Jehn *et al.*, 1999). In this paper, we try to understand workgroup performance through the lens of tasks routinisation, that is emergence of routines. The ability of a group to routinise its activities is indeed a good indicator of its ability to integrate knowledge (Grant, 1996), to learn (Argote, 1999; Miner *et* al., 2008), and finally to perform its tasks more rapidly and more efficiently (Tsoukas, 1996). However, routinisation may occur more or less rapidly, and may concern a various amount of the tasks performed by group's members.

Few studies have tried so far to investigate why and how some workgroups succeed in routinising their collective behaviours while others don't (Felin and Foss, 2005; Becker, 2008; Salvato and Rerup, 2011). Hence our research questions are: Why do workgroups routinise

their collective behaviours differently? How does routines' emergence affect group performance?

Because routinisation is a collective learning process, we assume that social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) is a useful concept to understand the emergence of routines within group. There is indeed a growing body of research that uses social capital as an antecedent to knowledge creation and learning. Moreover, the concept of social capital allows for accounting for many variables that explain group performance, such as interpersonal commitment (Lazega, 2006), cognitive diversity (Jehn *et al.*, 1999; Hope Pelled *et al.*, 1999), and so on. The level of social capital influences behaviours and perceptions within workgroups and it affects work organisation. As such, we assume that social capital is a key variable to understand - paraphrasing March and Simon (1958) - the delicate conversion of individual actions into repetitive collective actions, i.e. into routines. Our goal is to help managers to use groups' internal social capital to promote or prevent routinisation, and thus to influence group performance. The ability of a group to routinise its activities indeed predicts an organisation's ability to make its routines evolve and to learn.

Following this argument, our paper proposes a conceptual model of relationships between social capital and the emergence of routines (routinisation), and their impact upon workgroup performance. We illustrate the model and our propositions with the case of the French national handball team. To do so, we collected secondary data about the team's organisation and functioning from 1995 until 2012. We contrasted our data with existing literature in an abductive manner, in order to clarify our model. This illustration highlights the propositions of our model but does not offer empirically validated results.

Our paper is organised as follows. First, we define the key concepts of our research by reviewing previous studies on organisational routines and on social capital. In the second part, we build a model and discuss propositions that link social capital and routines' emergence, and propositions that link social capital, routines' emergence, and group performance. We illustrate our propositions with the case of the French national handball team. Finally, the third part of our paper explores the theoretical and managerial implications of our model.

ROUTINES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN WORKGROUPS

Routines and routinisation

As a source for organisational capabilities, routines are a key concept to understand how firms function and obtain certain outcomes at a macro level (Nelson and Winter, 1982). However, an increasing number of scholars claim that the macro level is not sufficient to develop knowledge about how firms can create, implement and develop routines (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Becker, 2005, 2008). They argue that we need to study routines at a micro level, such as organisational workgroups.

Following Feldman and Pentland (2003, p.95), we define routines as repetitive, collective and distributed processes: "*routines are repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors*". They are situated processes (Lave and Wenger, 1991) that can be analysed through participants' daily activities. As an example, the handling of a plea from a customer, or the preparation of a mailing to promote a new product in a CRM unit, is a routinised process: Their effectiveness relies upon a good coordination of sequential actions performed by interdependent individual actors or group of actors. Such sequences of actions are patterned by organisational standard operating procedures, but they are also subject to local and temporal specificities, such as the particularities of a customer's plea, the specific characteristics of the promoted product, or the particular perceptions of the process by participants (Feldman and Pentland, 2003).

Routines are characterised by two different and interacting aspects: The performative aspect and the ostensive aspect (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Pentland *et al.*, 2010). The performative aspect is defined by the actual and specific actions that individuals "do" when they perform the routine. Recurrence of patterns of activities indicates the existence of a routine (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Pentland *et al.*, 2010). The ostensive aspect encompasses an abstract pattern of underlying norms and values, and of rules for actions. It refers to the abstract idea that people have about what they should do and why.

Past research on working groups use the level of task routinisation as an explanation to individual behaviour within group, or group performance (Jehn *et al.,* 1999; Hope Pelled *et al.*, 1999). However, they leave the question of routines' emergence unanswered. Another stream of research has focused on routines' external antecedents. For example, Perrow (1967)

has argued that task complexity, task interdependence, time pressure and uncertainty are key variables influencing whether routines will appear or not in a specific work setting. However, as argued by Feldman and Rafaeli (2002), routines involve multiple actors that may not be equally willing to engage in routine performance, or that may not share the same perceptions of working routines. Therefore, research about routinisation should take into account internal factors (Felin and Foss, 2011), in particular those related with individual behaviour, cognition, and emotional and social contexts (Salvato and Rerup, 2011). In line with those arguments, we focus on internal factors (e.g. mutual trust between people or past collective experience) rather than on external factors (e.g. environmental dynamics or complexity, technological change). The question is therefore to understand why some workgroups succeed in routinising their collective behaviours while others don't. Our main argument here is that the group's social capital plays a significant role.

Group social capital

Historically, the concept of social capital has been used by anthropologists and social scientists to study nuclear families, individuals in social communities, or problems linked to collective action. More recently, research in knowledge management has shown that social capital eases collective coordination and cooperation (Chiu *et al.*, 2006; Sagris Roussel and Deltour, 2012). It has a prominent role in learning, and it should therefore affect routines' emergence. Until now, however, few studies have attempted to explicitly link routines and social capital.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, p. 243) define social capital "*as the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network*". Management literature analyses social capital at both individual and collective levels of analysis (attributes of communities and networks) (Payne *et al*. 2011). At the collective level, Adler and Kwon (2002) make a distinction between internal and external social capital. Because workgroup patterns depend on the people involved within the group, we focus our attention on internal social capital. Payne *et al.* (2011, p. 497) define internal collective social capital as "*assets and resources made available through relationships within the social structure of the collective (i.e., group or organization) that can be utilized by the collective*".

In line with Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), we consider that social capital is a multi-dimensional construct, based on structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions. The structural dimension refers to the connections between actors, their interpersonal network, its density, and its hierarchical structure. The cognitive dimension refers to the content of interactions: The representations, interpretations, and common languages shared by the group's members. The relational dimension describes the nature of the relationships between members, such as trust, respect, reciprocity…

Group performance

Numerous definitions of group performance exist. They can be classified along three categories: The group's own perception of its performance; its manager's perception; or objective and measurable criteria. Regarding a group's own evaluation of its performance, van Emmerik and Brenninkmeijer (2009) used three dimensions: Team effectiveness, team in-role performance, and team satisfaction. Oh *et al.* (2004) used six variables to assess group's effectiveness according to their manager, and compared to other groups: "*quality of work, quantity of work, group's initiative, group's cooperation with other groups, ability to complete work on time, ability to respond quickly to problems*" (p. 867). Within the field of knowledge management, Huang (2009) used five objective criteria to asses R&D group's performance: Quantity and quality of outputs, time management, deadline meeting, respect of budget. Finally, following those sets of variables, we assume that group performance encompasses both the ability of the group to meet its objectives (effectiveness) and its ability to do so using a limited set of resources (efficiency).

PROPOSITION OF A MODEL LINKING SOCIAL CAPITAL, ROUTINISATION AND GROUP PERFORMANCE

Routines are built upon the repetitions of sequences of individual activities that contribute to the emergence of a collective behaviour. We build on the three concepts discussed above (routinisation, social capital and group performance) to propose an analytical model of the social construction of routines and of their effect upon group performance (see Figure 1). Rather than an independent variable affecting emergence of routines, social capital must be understood as a perspective that helps conceiving how workgroup activities are embedded in the social context carried out by its members.
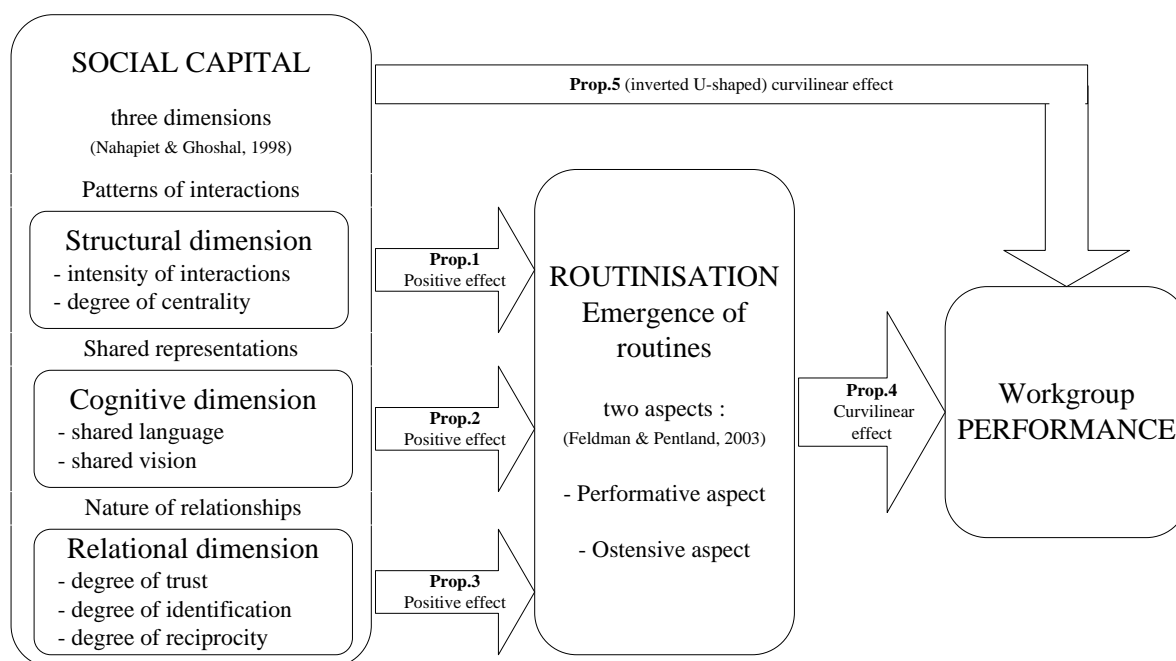
Figure 1. Routines' emergence and group performance: a social capital perspective

Our model is illustrated by the case of the French national handball team. This case is a good illustration of the links between routinisation and performance, because handball is a very fast playing game, with numerous disruptions (faults, times out) that break teams' rhythm, and with unlimited allowance of players substitution. So players have to rely on collective automatisms (routines) in order to perform fast playing, but they also need to quickly adapt to changes in rhythms and in opponents' play.

We collected secondary data about the team's organisation and functioning from 1995 until 2012. The sources are specialised sports newspapers, videos of the team's coaches' press conference and lectures to professional audiences, and an academic article that uses the French national handball team as a case study (Picq, 2005). We first analysed the data with the concepts used in our model. We then followed an abductive reasoning to support our propositions to contrast existing literature with verbatims from the data. This method gives an illustrative status to the French handball team case, but does not empirically validate the conceptual propositions. The box 1 below presents the case, and links verbatims with the model's variables. In the following sections, we detail our arguments for each proposition.

From "les bronzés[1]" to "les experts": When the French national handball team's social capital is worth gold

An unparalleled performance until 2012

Olympic champion in 2008 and 2012; European champion in 2006 and 2010; World champion in 1995, 2001, 2009 and 2011. Social capital and routine's emergence help explain such a recurring success.

A developing internal social capital

Structural dimension. Daniel Costantini was the French national team's coach from 1985 until 2001. In a interview by Picq (2005), he explained how he assumed within the national team interactions should be (p. 79): "[…] *players are spread all over France all year around […] they rarely meet for more than one week, it is always punctual. However, what is important is frequency […] We need to build a group memory. As far as I am concerned, what we need is phased gatherings. What is most important is regularity. It is useless to spend a whole month together if players have not met many times before. It is too late*".

The coach patterns interactions between players, and structures interpersonal communications. Claude Onesta (who has been the coach since 2001) explains that "*all players are involved in building and evaluating the project. I am the one who makes decisions. Still, decisions come from a collective process of thinking*"[2].

Cognitive dimension. The team was repeatedly able to set a common goal and a common vision: "*2001 was the first time when France welcomed the World championship. We had to succeed. All players had only one picture in mind: Them singing the Marseillaise[3] in Bercy Arena with a gold medal around their neck*" (Costantini, in Picq, 2005, p. 79).

Relational dimension. Costantini (in Pick, 2005, p. 79) underlines the reciprocity within the team: "*In collective sports, if a player punctually slows down, he can be offset by a motivated player […] Even if there is some doubt spreading over, it is not perceived similarly by all*

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[1] There is an untranslatable play on words here. "Les bronzés" (the suntanned ones) refers both to the bronze medal the team won at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, and to a 1978's French movie (translated with "French fried vacation" for the English release), which has been very popular in France for more than forty years. It satirizes a group of middleclass holidaymakers in an all-inclusive resort during their summer holidays. Being nicknamed "bronzé" means that one is a sympathetic yet idle amateur.

[2] www.lesechos.fr, August 3, 2012

[3] French national anthem.

players. This is another thing players learn in a team: It's not only about technique [...] It is of vital importance that players are able to anticipate their team-mates' doubts, and react appropriately so that they continue to perform well at a collective level [...] It's all about group dynamics: A kind of interactions, of compensations between team-mates".

Group social capital favours routines' emergence

Daniel Costantini (in Picq, 2005, p.80) says that repetition "*leads to automatisms that help to carry out actions without effort [...] During training, we would relentlessly repeat important game combinations, like beginners. Some guys would feel frustrated but I would explain them that the more they internalise collective automatisms, the more they'll be able to improvise effectively when they have to*". Such game routines may follow different patterns: Picq (2005) refers to implicit know-how, to game combination set upon automatisms, to the fact that team-mates "sense" each other on the playing field without even seeing each other, and to a "*non verbal common language*".

Structural dimension of social capital and routines' emergence

The structural dimension of social capital refers to the shape of actual interactions between group members: The intensity of interactions, and the structure of the network. This dimension highlights the network configuration within the group, and what connections are made available through the structure.

Within a group, intensity of interactions between members creates opportunities for repeated interactions. The strength of interactions and the amount of time spent in interacting ease the performing of daily activities (Chiu *et al.*, 2006). Intensity of interactions helps to solve problems through trial-and-error learning processes (Rerup and Feldman, 2011) that end in routinising activities: Members gain experience and construct sequences of actions that are commonly shared. That is why Daniel Costantini wants to expand opportunities for interactions between players rather than having only one (even long) gathering.

In addition to intensity of interactions, the degree of centrality within a relational network influences routines' emergence. Individual centrality eases the sharing of more helpful knowledge to the group (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Network's centrality strengthens the probability that a group leader and hierarchical relationships emerge. Previous studies have shown that vertical power relationships ease routines' emergence (Mork *et al.*, 2010; Howard-

Grenville, 2005; Belmondo and Sagris Roussel, 2012). A group leader promotes some elements of a routine to other members. Those elements are less subject to debate, so the adoption of a collective solution is fastened.

Proposition 1: *A high structural dimension of social capital (high intensity and high centrality) favours the emergence of group routines*

Cognitive dimension of social capital and routines' emergence

The cognitive dimension of a group's social capital is based on narratives, values, languages, and goals that members share with each other (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). They ease the understanding, sharing, and performance of activities within a group.

Shared language is based on the common keywords that people use to communicate or to retrieve information (Sherif *et al.* 2006). It helps reducing tasks and interactions' complexity, and thus it facilitates the repetition of sequences of activities (performative aspect) hence the emergence of routines (Levin, 2002). Shared vision refers to the members' level of adhesion to the group's objectives. Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) underlined that members with a highly shared vision minimise misunderstandings while interacting. Thus, a high level of shared language and of shared vision raises the similarity of members' perception of a given situation or problem.

In his review of the evolutionary literature on routines, Knudsen (2008) underlines that routinisation occurs as an answer to problem-solving activities, and from the repetition of similar sequences of behaviours in front of similar situations. A group with a higher level of cognitive social capital will more likely have a limited set of interpretive schemes. So its interpretation of a given situation will be of a lower complexity, and it will consider a more limited range of solutions. This will ease and hasten the reach of a collective agreement on the selection of a particular sequence of actions, because people and organisations solve problems in a rationale of *satisficing* rather than of *optimising* (March and Simon, 1958). A limited range of solutions and quick reaches of shared agreements speed up routines' emergence.

D. Costantini gave a striking example of what is a shared vision of the team's goal at the 2001 World championship: The gold medal around each player's neck in front of a French audience. He also noted that the players' shared vision and individual commitment influenced

the performance of actions: "*To make a good team, it is not enough to have good players. Above all, they have to be able to change their game combination very quickly, at the same time, in a continuous motion*" (in Picq, 2005, p 78).

Proposition 2: *A high cognitive dimension of social capital (high levels of shared language and shared vision) favours the emergence of group routines.*

Relational dimension of social capital and the routines' emergence

The relational dimension of social capital concerns the nature of the connections between people (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The nature and content of interpersonal relationships within a group lead members to identify themselves with the group, and to develop relationships of trust and of reciprocity between each other (Chiu *et al.*, 2006). This generates social control within the group (Hirsch *et al.*, 2010), which in turn favours routinisation (Levin, 2002). Routines' emergence indeed implies that participants have reached a minimum level of collective agreement about how to divide work and coordinate. Work division and coordination entail that some sort of control occurs, be it formal or social (Ouchi, 1980).

As said before, the relational dimension of social capital encompasses three complementary aspects (Chiu *et al.*, 2006): Trust, identification, and reciprocity. Trust has been recognised as an antecedent for cooperation in workgroups, which prevents from opportunistic or free-riding behaviours (Jones and George, 1998). It contributes to the creation of shared norms, and eases coordination and the setting of objectives (ostensive aspect). Consequently, control and evaluation of what has been done during past sequences of actions should be easier and faster, hence speeding up their stabilisation and the emergence of a working routine.

Identification refers to the process by which individuals consider themselves as being linked with another person or a group (Cooper and Thatcher, 2010). It speeds up routinisation by favouring similar manners of performing activities, by encouraging repetitive patterns of actions (performative aspects) and shared agreements (ostensive aspects). The French national handball team would reinforce identification by deliberately setting up nicknames for the team. The first one - Les Bronzés (see note 1) - was happenstance. However, the following

ones - "Les Barjots" (the nutters), "Les Costauds" (the sturdy guys), "Les Experts" (the experts) - were purposely set up and communicated to media.

Reciprocity encompasses the obligations and expectations that exist between a group's members (Coleman, 1988). A high level of reciprocity implies a strong sense of equity regarding participation. Thus it patterns individual actions through what members perceive as fair (ostensive aspects), and it favours the multiplication and repetition of actions (performative aspect). In the case of the French national team, D. Costantini and C. Onesta both highlighted the fact that trust and reciprocity between the team's members played an important role in the repetition of sequences of actions during competitions, because it would give team-mates the ability to compensate for each other during a championship with many rounds.

Proposition 3: *A strong relational dimension of social capital (high levels of trust, identification and reciprocity) favours the emergence of group routines.*

Routine's emergence and group performance

Many studies have documented the influence of routines on collective performance. They agree on their *economising* role: Because routines allow automatic selections and executions of sequences of actions, processes are performed more quickly and more efficiently (Cyert and March, 1963; Nelson and Winter, 1982). However, this increased efficiency may be detrimental to process flexibility, and to individual and collective creativity (Lazaric, 2008; Kyriakopoulos and De Ruyter, 2004). The latter define routines as being part of procedural memory (Cohen and Bacdayan, 1994[4]). They show that the relationships between procedural memory and organisational performance (financial and innovative performance) have an inversed U-shape.

Actually, at the collective level, a high level of routinisation hinders the group's ability to make sense of new unfamiliar information (Lazaric, 2008), and to adapt routines according to performance feedback. A fast process of routinisation implies a fast learning, which means that the group made incremental changes in a particular sequence of actions rather than

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[4] Cohen and Bacdayan (1994, p. 557) define procedural memory as "*patterned sequences of learned behavior involving multiple actors*".

explored various ones (March, 1991). Now, Levitt and March (1999, p. 91[5]) argue that exploitation may lead to sub-optimal behaviour and that it is necessary to *"[overcome] the redundancy of experience and [assure] adequate variety of experience"*. A fast routinisation is likely to limit the variety of situations met by the group, and therefore will impede its ability to build effective ways of working. Claude Onesta indeed explains the unexpected failure of his team at the 2012 European championship by the fact that they would unconsciously carry such a logic of satisficing to an extreme when they would have to face new problems: "*We were pretty well organised, but we would stay inactive. We lacked danger, so we would put up with small problems*" (www.lexpress.fr, 07/29/2012).

On the opposite, a slow routinisation process prevents the group benefiting from the economising property of routines. Members spend more time to select an appropriate mode of working, which induces problems of coordination and tasks redundancy. Daniel Costantini (in Picq, 2005) underlines the economising effect of rehearsals of game combinations during training: They create automatisms *"that helps to carry out actions effortlessly. The energy we save is used for innovation and progress"* (p. 80).

Proposition 4: *A too fast or too slow routinisation limits group performance.*

Social capital and workgroup performance

Past research on group performance led to various results regarding the role of group's homogeneity or heterogeneity. Group members tend to interact more with members that share demographic, ethnic, or language similarities. This tendency increases efficiency. On the other hand, some scholars have shown that diversity favours creativity and effectiveness (Jehn *et al.*, 1999). So there is a non-linear relationship between members' cognitive characteristics and group performance. However, diversity studies did not integrate social capital theory into their models, and mostly focused on individual characteristics.

Other studies have linked social capital with performance (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998; Oh *et al.*, 2004, among others). For example, Moran (2005) assessed the impact of managers' social capital on their performance, and focused on the structural and relational dimensions.

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[5]The original paper is Levitt and March (1988).

The former plays a stronger role in explaining routine- and execution-oriented task performance, whereas the latter better explains innovation-oriented tasks performance.

Oh *et al.* (2004) argue that the relationship between social capital and performance is not linear: "*There are multiple conduits for group social capital that lead to greater group effectiveness and that researchers need to consider in more complex models, such as optimal configuration models. Having too much of one source of group social capital (strong closure within a group, for example) can negatively affect the group's effectiveness*" (Oh *et al.*, 2004, p. 872). Di Vincenzo and Mascia (2012) confirm the inverted U-shaped relationship in a study of project groups in the construction field. They show that project effectiveness has a curvilinear relationship with the social capital of project groups.

Daniel Costantini highlighted the importance of team building a number of times: "*It is useless to spend a whole month together if players have not met many times before. It is too late*" (in Picq, 2005, p. 79). Conversely, a too strong social capital can lead to team's failure. Claude Onesta assigns the French national team's defeat at the European 2012 Championship to its difficulty to adapt to its opponents' new game plays: "*Trusting each other, respecting each other, being responsible may sometimes lead to a lack of decision making, of lucidity. […] Each player would individually take over a part of the activity, and he would keep to himself. They would stop interacting, because everybody trusted each other, and it was not a team anymor*e". This quote illustrates how a too strong social capital prevents the group from performing better, because it limits the members' willingness to challenge themselves.

Proposition 5: A too high or too low level of social capital limits group performance

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our research participates to the theoretical understanding of workgroups' dynamics by taking into account the dynamics of inter-individual interactions within workgroups and by questioning the pertinence of the concept of communities of practice (see below) in learning processes.

First, our model implies that, in future research, scholars should take into account not only the variety of individual characteristics but also the characteristics of inter-individual interactions. So far, literature has questioned the nature and the composition of workgroups,

and has developed recommendations about the management of groups' homogeneity or diversity. Studies taking into account the dynamics of inter-individual interactions to explain workgroup performance remain underdeveloped. Nevertheless, individual interactions are important, as illustrated by the articulation of individual and collective objectives within the French national handball team: "*If you develop the core strength of a particular player, you ought to do it visibly. I mean, everybody will know that developing a particular player's core strength will lead all of us very very far*" (D. Costantini, in Picq, 2005, p. 79). This is all the more important since we can recall numerous examples of failures in building sport teams and team spirit, even though "divas" have been bought at very high prices.

Second, our work leads us to question the limits of communities of practice for the management of process innovations. A high level of social capital can indeed limit the reappraisal of existing routines, and thus lead to increased inertia. Communities of practices are more suitable for exploitation than for exploration (March, 1991). Their high level of social capital eases the efficiency of everyday activities, but generates a high level of myopia that limits the group's ability to seize opportunities. Consequently, managers of communities of practice need to implement facilities and processes that allow breaking a possible identity trap (Josserand and Dameron, 2009).

Our research also brings managerial recommendations for group managers that echo some of our theoretical contributions: Beyond group's diversity, managers have to organise interpersonal relationships to ensure that the group's social capital remains intermediate. Diversity within a group gives access to various experience and knowledge. Yet it needs to be managed because it can lead to conflicting understanding of tasks and of processes. Managers should stabilise groups' social capital, which in particular means that they should give attention to the adequate timing for introducing or retrieving members. This recommendation is of importance at various organisational levels, from shop floor groups to expert committees, to boards of directors.

CONCLUSION

Our paper aims at giving a complementary light on workgroups' performance by jointly mobilising the concepts of social capital and routines at a group level. In building our model, we call upon two well-developed streams of knowledge management research that

have not been so much integrated so far. Because workgroups are a most frequent form of organising, we need to investigate the antecedents of their performance.

In our paper, we consider that the concept of routinisation (routines' emergence) is useful to explain workgroup performance. The ability of a group to routinise its activities is indeed a good indicator of its ability to perform its tasks on a more rapid and efficient manner. However, routinisation means stabilisation of the activities that group members perform (performative aspects), and of the meaning that they assign to those activities (ostensive aspects). Therefore, we assume that groups' internal social capital plays a significant role in routinisation, because it shapes interpersonal interactions and thus both task realisation and communications within the group.

Our argumentation encompasses the three dimensions of social capital: Structural (patterns of interactions), cognitive (shared representations), and relational (nature of relationships). We formulate five propositions that form our conceptual model. We illustrate this model with the case of the French national handball team, and discuss each proposition by confronting the case with existing literature. Altogether, our research has both theoretical and managerial contributions, and pleas for a dynamic fine-tuning of social capital within groups.

Our future work will consist of a quantitative test of the relationships that we have elaborated in this paper. Their validation will allow us to add further developments to the management of group dynamics. It is important for management studies to clarify the optimal level of group social capital. Most studies on socialisation advise to maximise groups' social capital. However, as illustrated by the case of the French national handball team, high levels of social capital may be detrimental.

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