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The power of empowerment: The impact of shared and identity leadership on performance and health in sport teams



Prof. Filip Boen

Department of Movement Sciences
Physical Activity, Sport & Health Research Group

Who wants to be the standing secretary?

To elicit the social norm to interrupt your sitting
(ideallly every 30 minutes, for 2 minutes)



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Leading Insights

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As a centre of expertise at KU Leuven, we are eager to help you to harness and take full advantage of the leadership potential in your team.

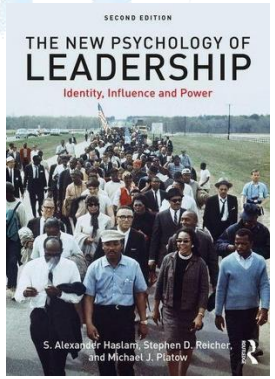
What can we offer you? | Our team



www.leadinginsights.be/en







"It is not only about getting people to do things, but about getting them to want to do things."

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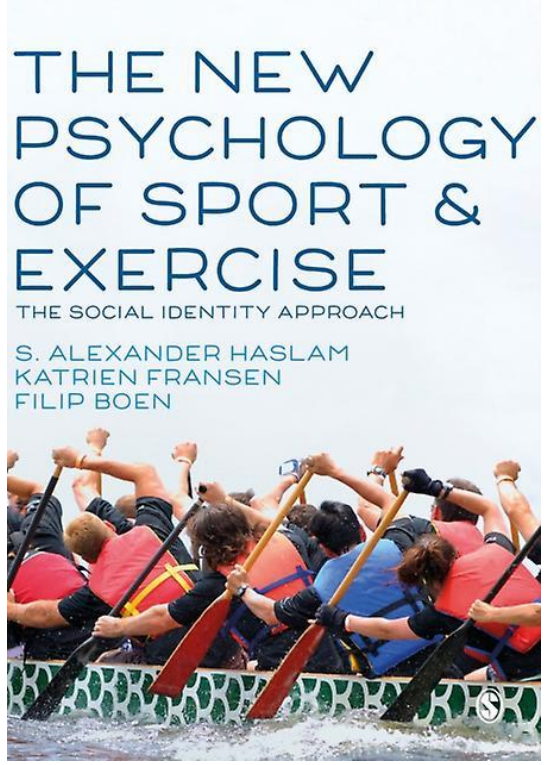
Current approaches to motivation

Psychological approaches to motivation

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)



non-self-determination → self-determination

amotivation	extrinsic motivation				intrinsic motivation
	external regulation	introjection	identification	integration	
"I see no point in taking action."	*"I take action because of a reward or punishment."*	*"I take action because I feel guilty."*	*"I take action because I value the goal."*	*"I take action because it fits with who I am."*	*"I take action because I love what I am doing."*

personal and social identity!

Sources of leadership in sport

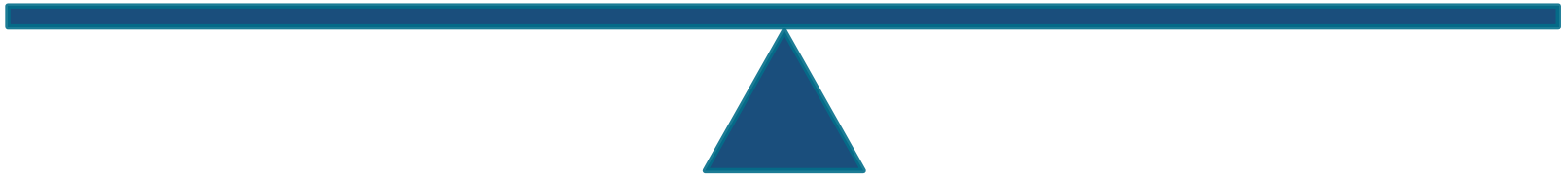




Leadership research in sport



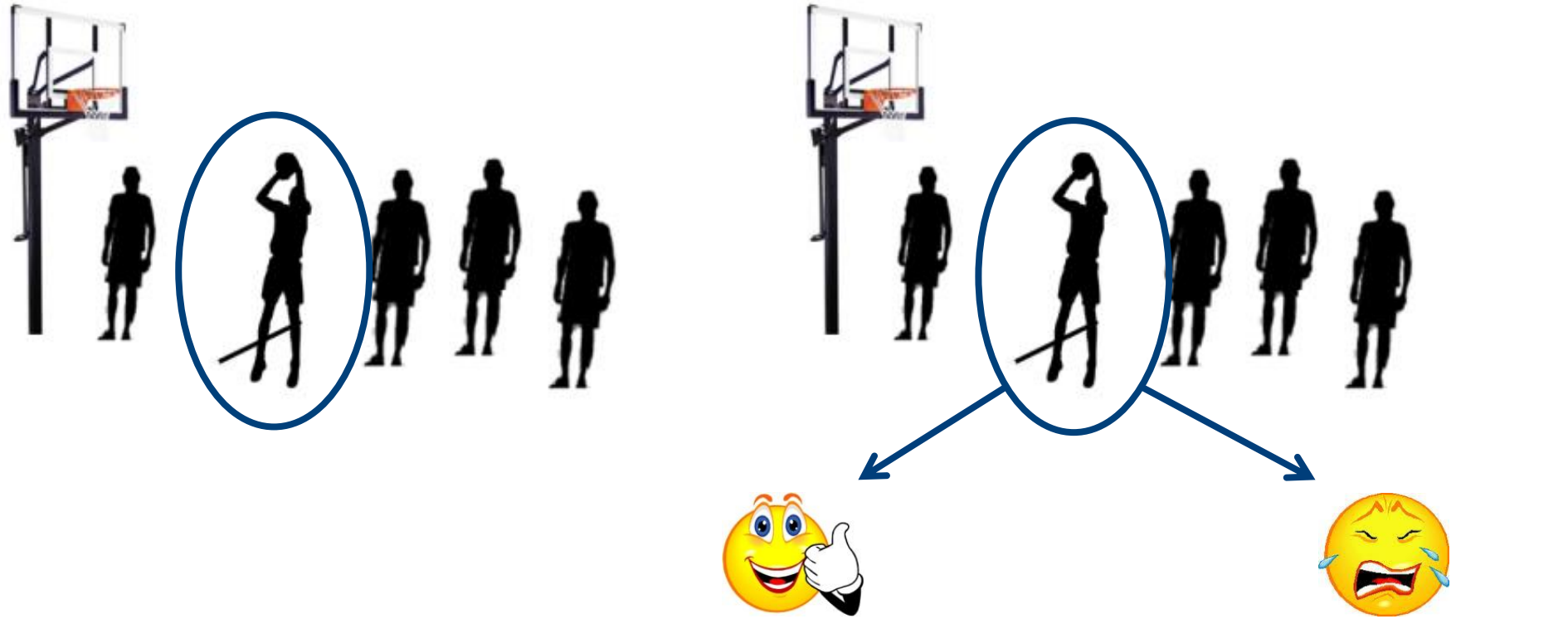




What are the BENEFITS of having good athlete leaders?



Experimental study 1



Fransen, K., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., & Boen, F. (2015). Believing in us: Exploring leaders' capacity to enhance team confidence and performance by building a sense of shared social identity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, 21*(1), 89-100.

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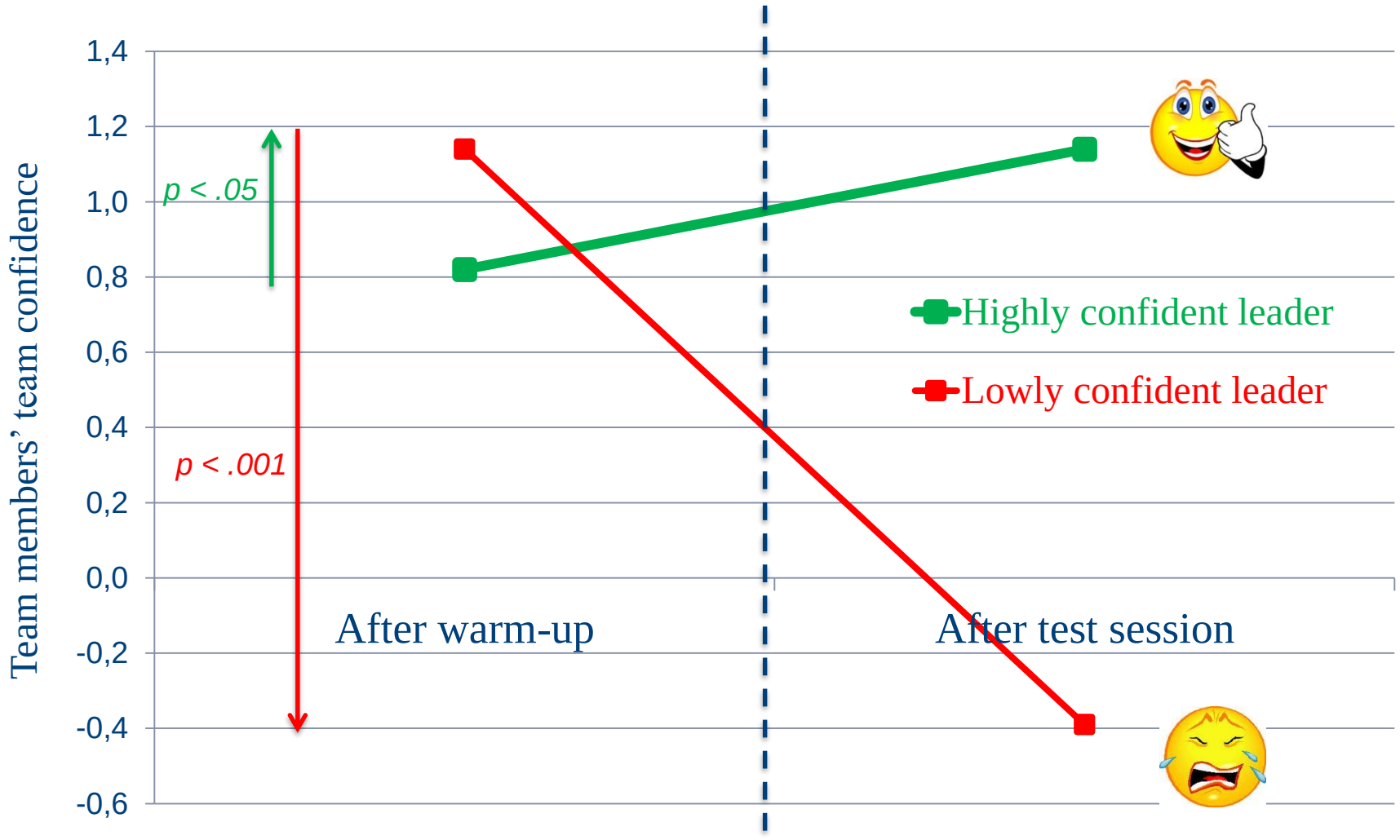
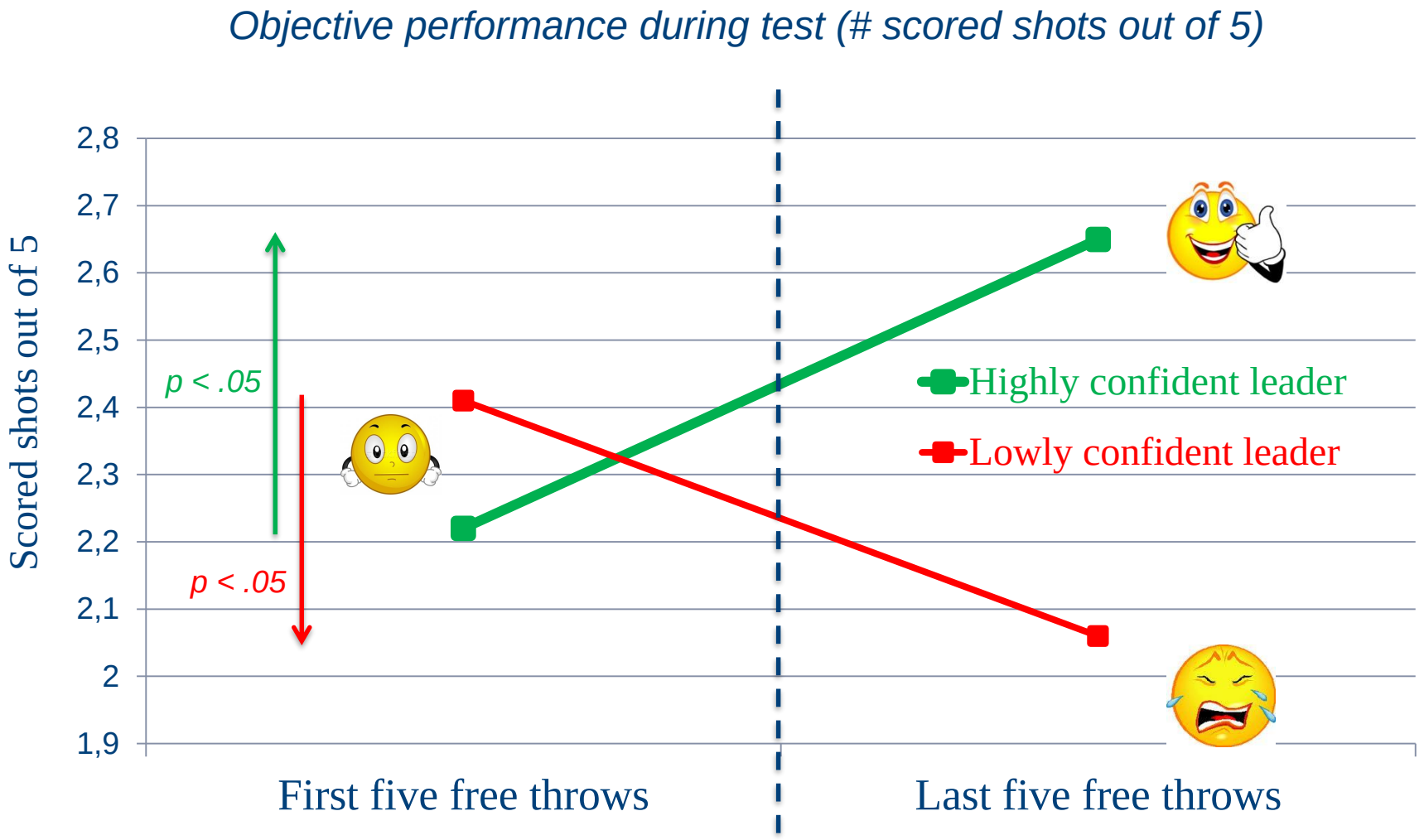
Experimental study 1 – Results: Team confidence



Significant interaction effect: $F(1, 100) = 35.14$; $p < .001$

Experimental study 1 – Results: Performance



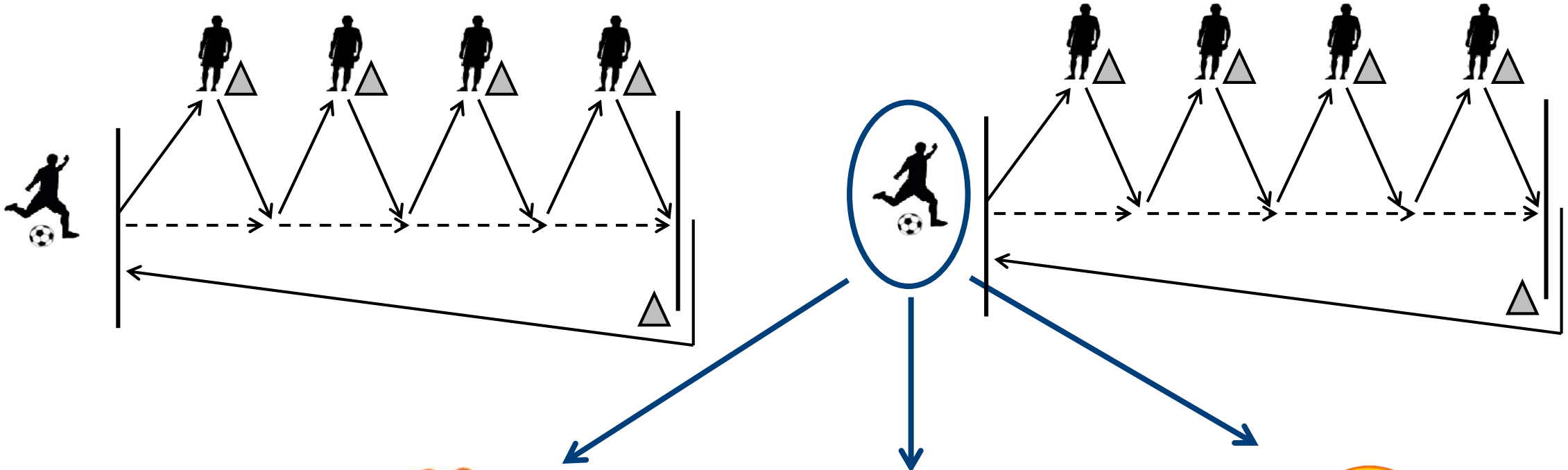
Significant interaction effect: $F(1,100) = 8.00$; $p = .006$

Experimental study 1 – Limitations

- No control condition, in which the leader acts neutrally in the test session
- The task involved only little interaction between team members



Experimental study 2 – Experimental design





Highly confident



Neutral



Lowly confident

Fransen, K., Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Vanbeselaere, N., Vande Broek, G., & Boen, F. (2016). We will be champions: Leaders' confidence in 'us' inspires team members' team confidence and performance. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports, 26*(12), 1455–1469.

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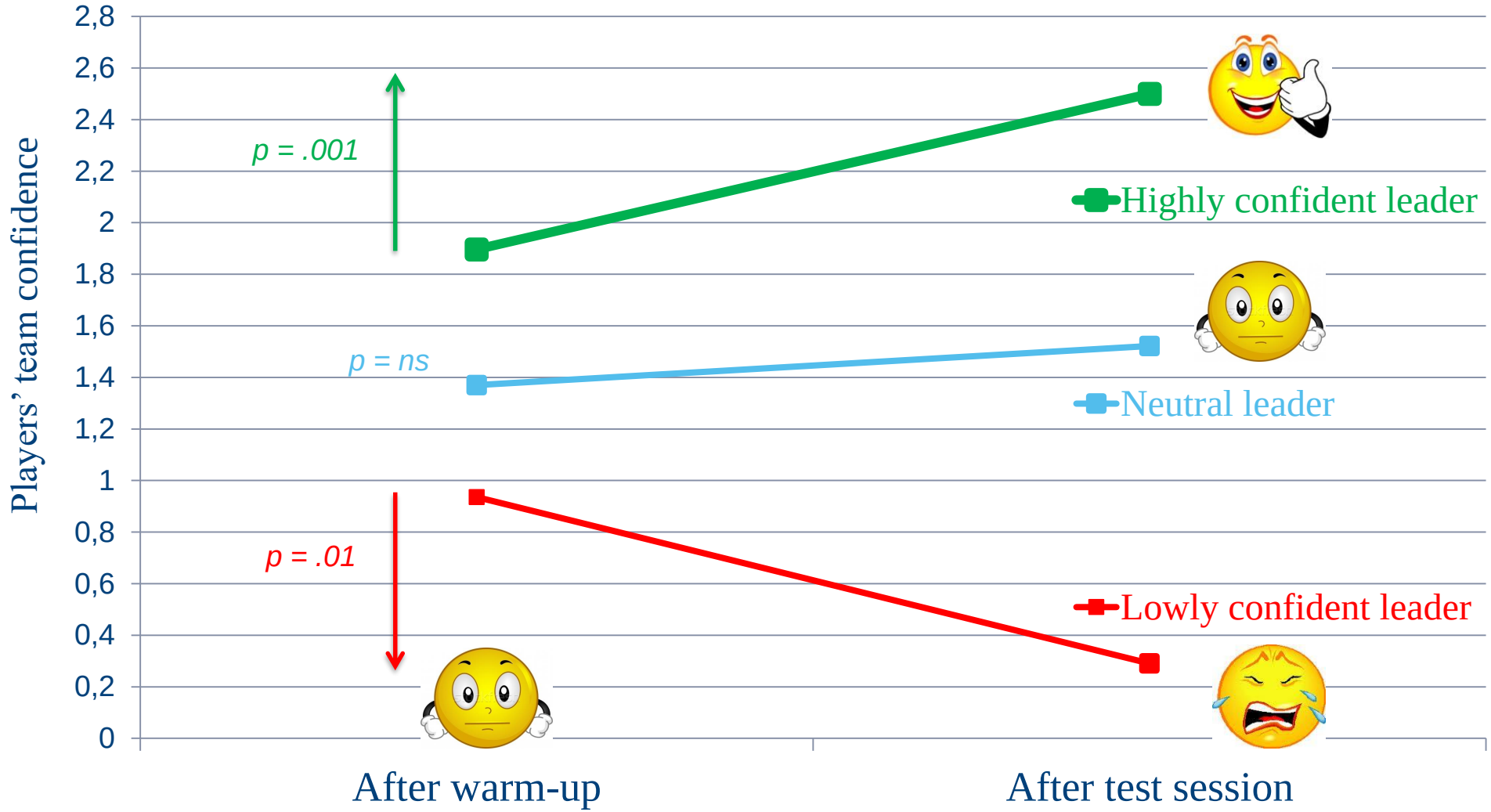
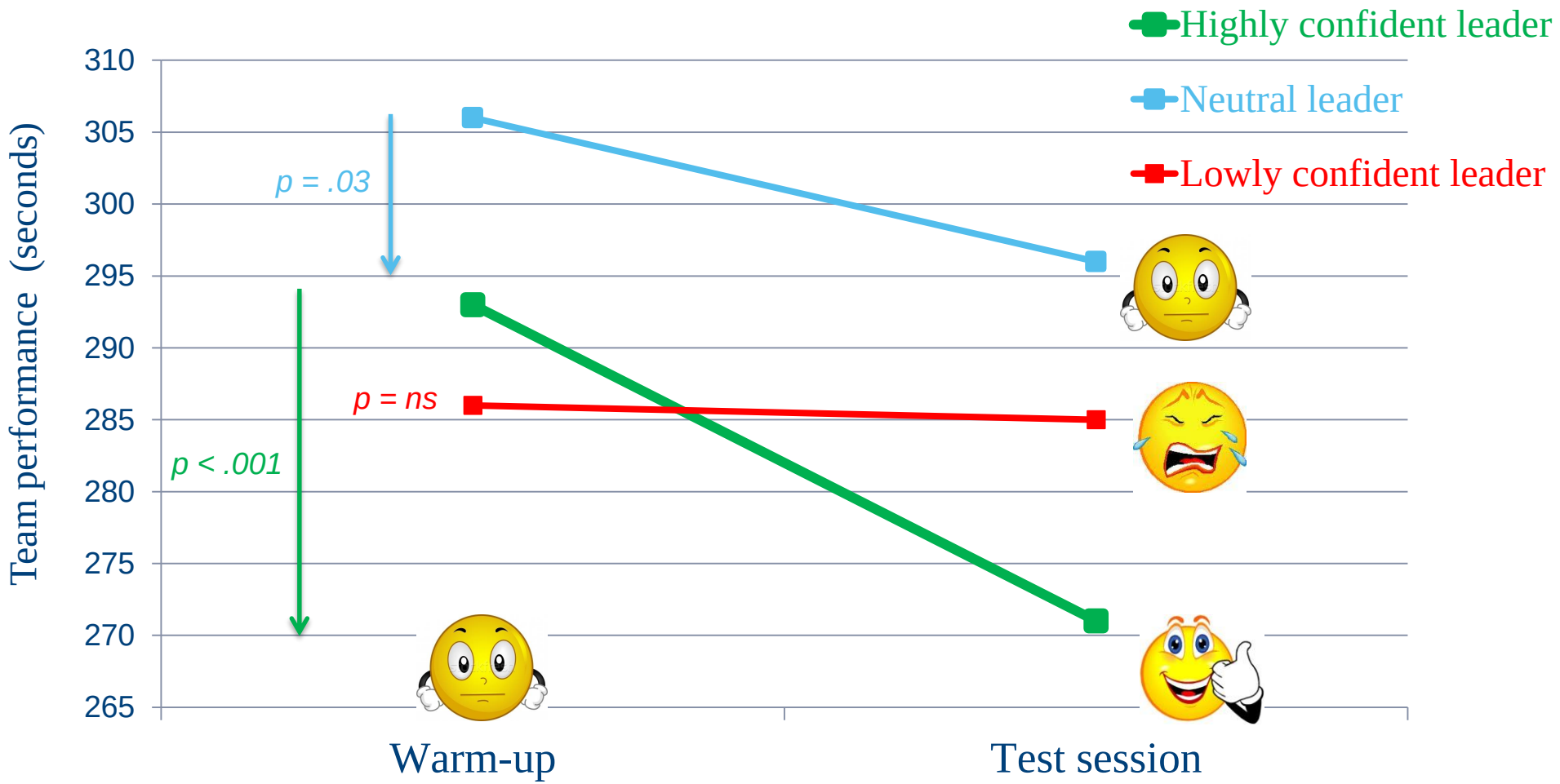
Experimental study 2 – Results: Team confidence



Significant interaction effect: $F(2, 137) = 7.14$; $p = .001$

Experimental study 2 – Results: Performance

*Objective performance during test (**time** to perform the task)*



Significant interaction effect: $F(2,33) = 12.13$; $p < .001$

Scientific evidence on the impact of athlete leaders

Team functioning

- ✓ Team confidence
- ✓ Team identification
- ✓ Goal commitment
- ✓ Team cohesion
- ✓ Task climate
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Team resilience



Team effectiveness

- ✓ Performance satisfaction
- ✓ Objective performance
- ✓ Team ranking

Athlete well-being

- ✓ Psychologically safety
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Reduced burnout

Find out more on: https://www.leadinginsights.be/en/research/the-strength-of-leaders-within-a-team

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Leaders within the team are important,

but … Who are they?





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What does an ideal captain do?
What is expected?





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Leadership categorization

Task leader



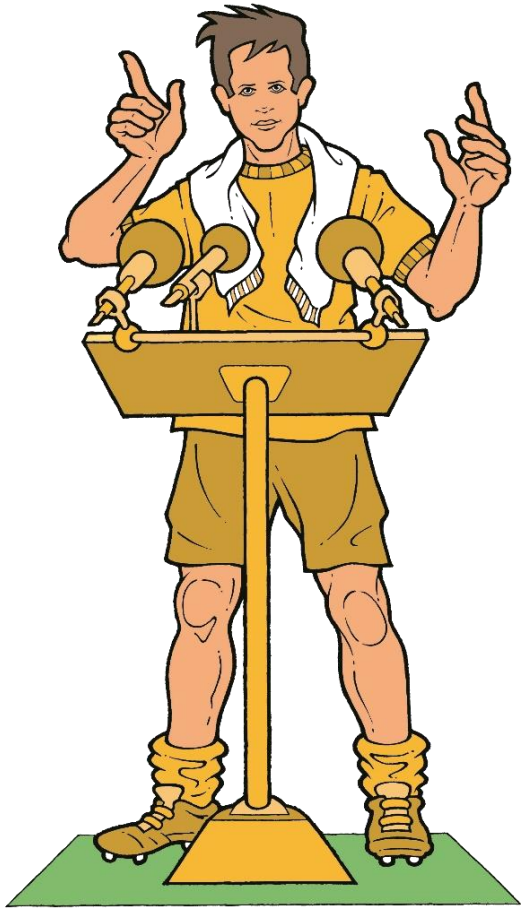
Motivational leader



Social leader



External leader



Fransen, K., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., Vande Broek, G., & Boen, F. (2014). The myth of the team captain as principal leader: Extending the athlete leadership classification within sport teams. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 32*(14), 1389-1397.

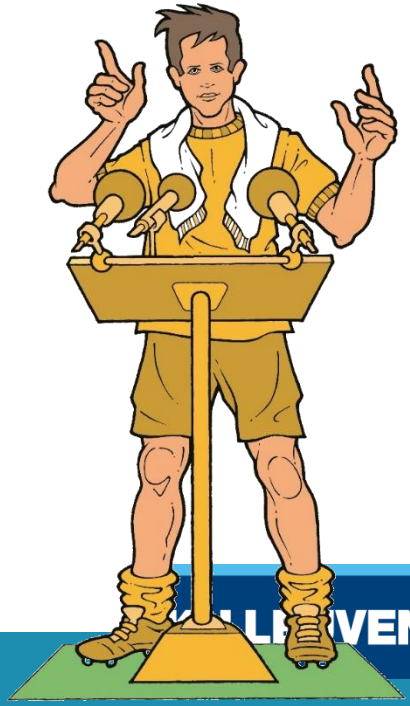
The team captain





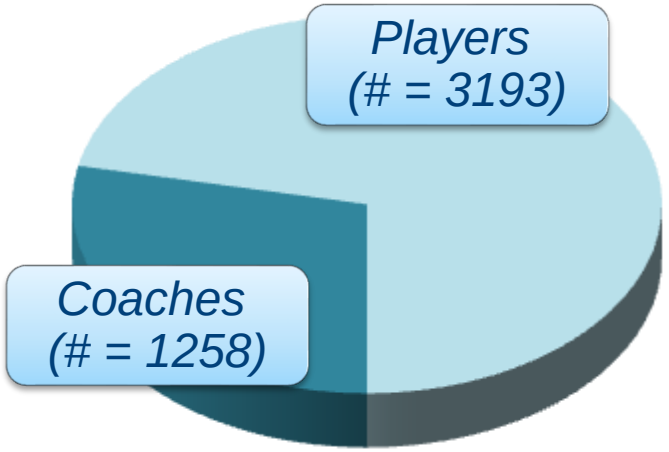


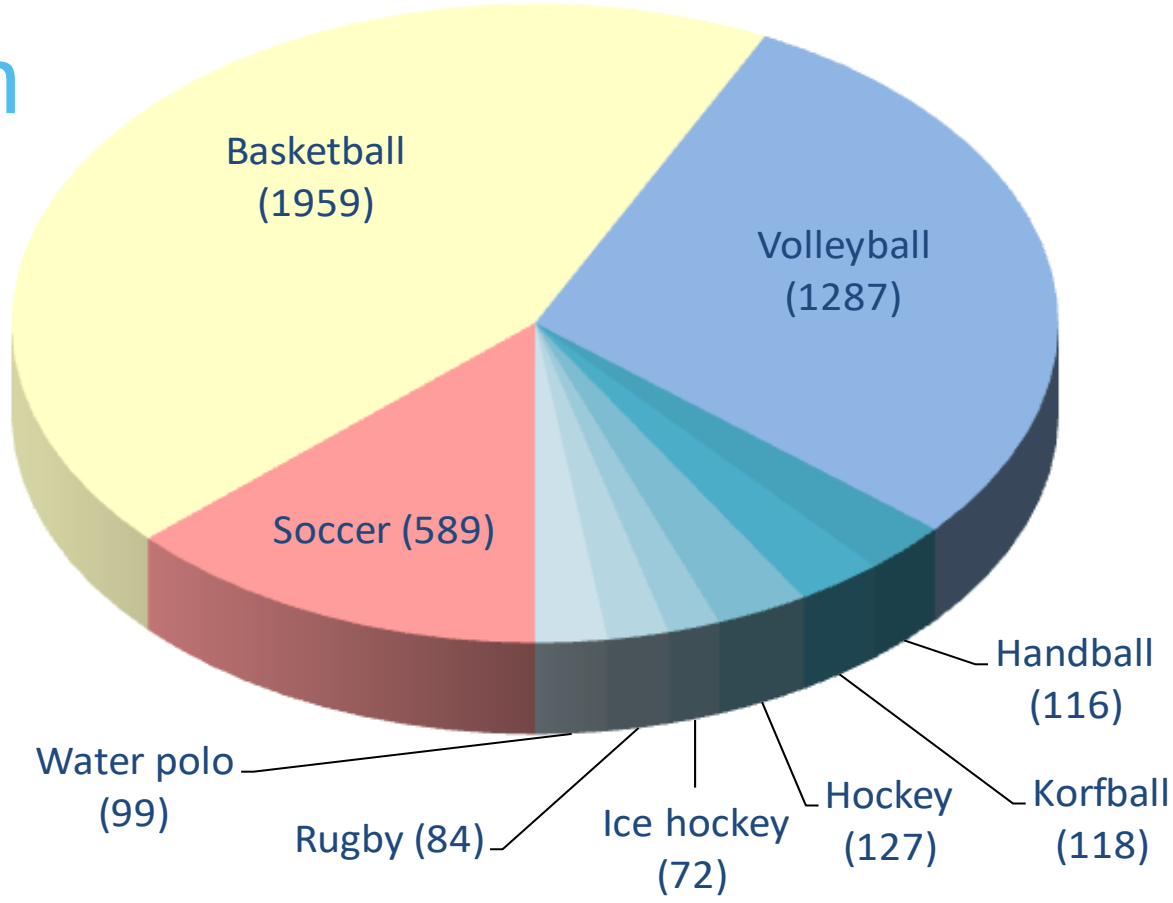




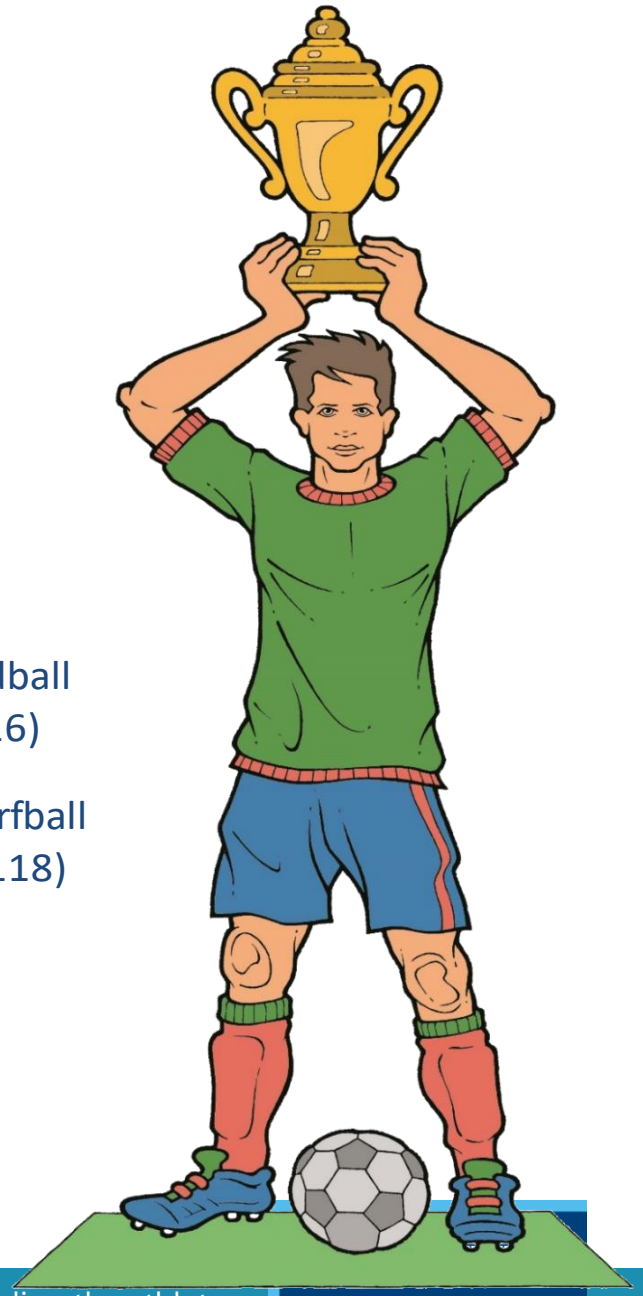
The team captain

Total response:
4451 participants









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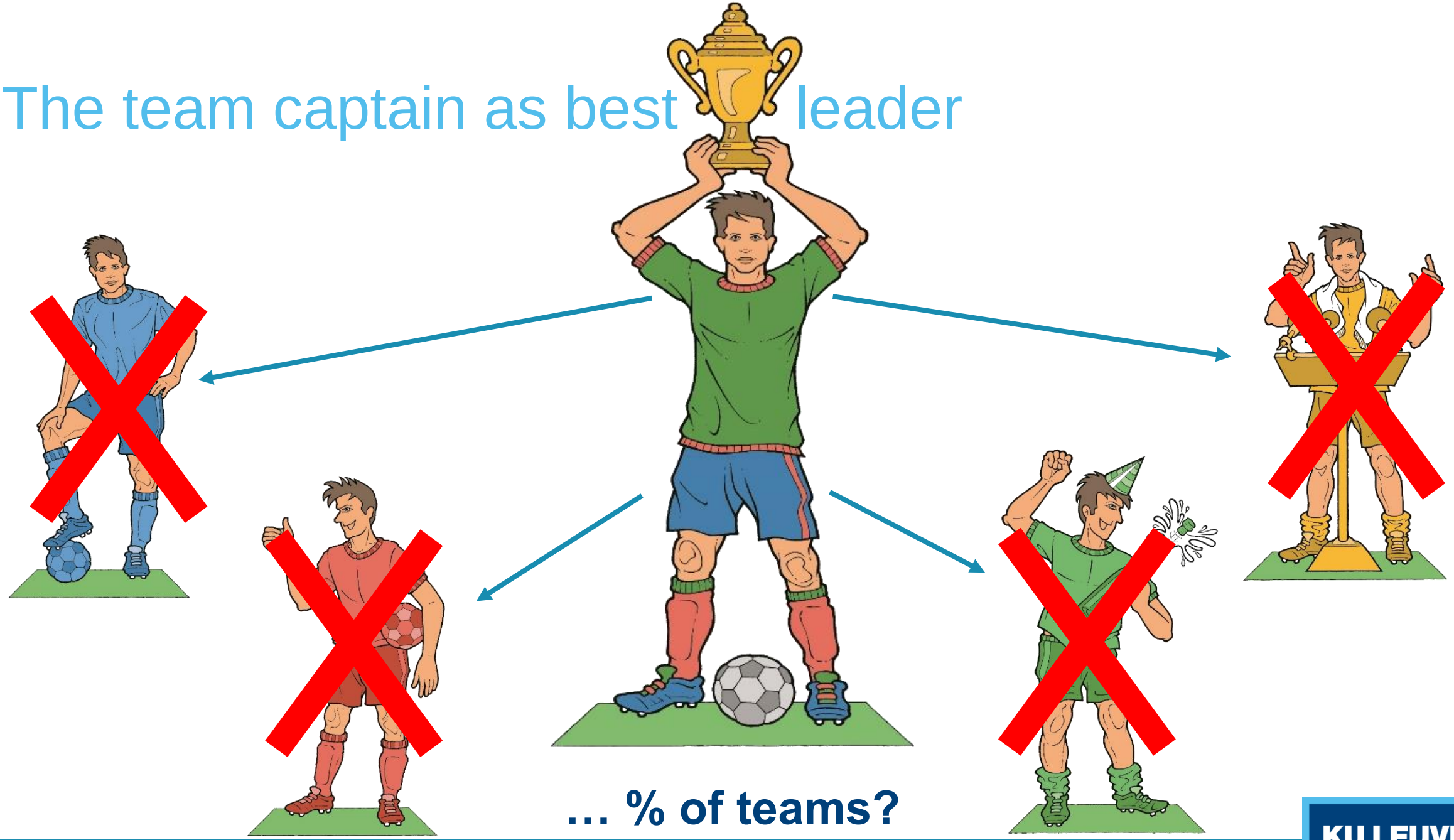
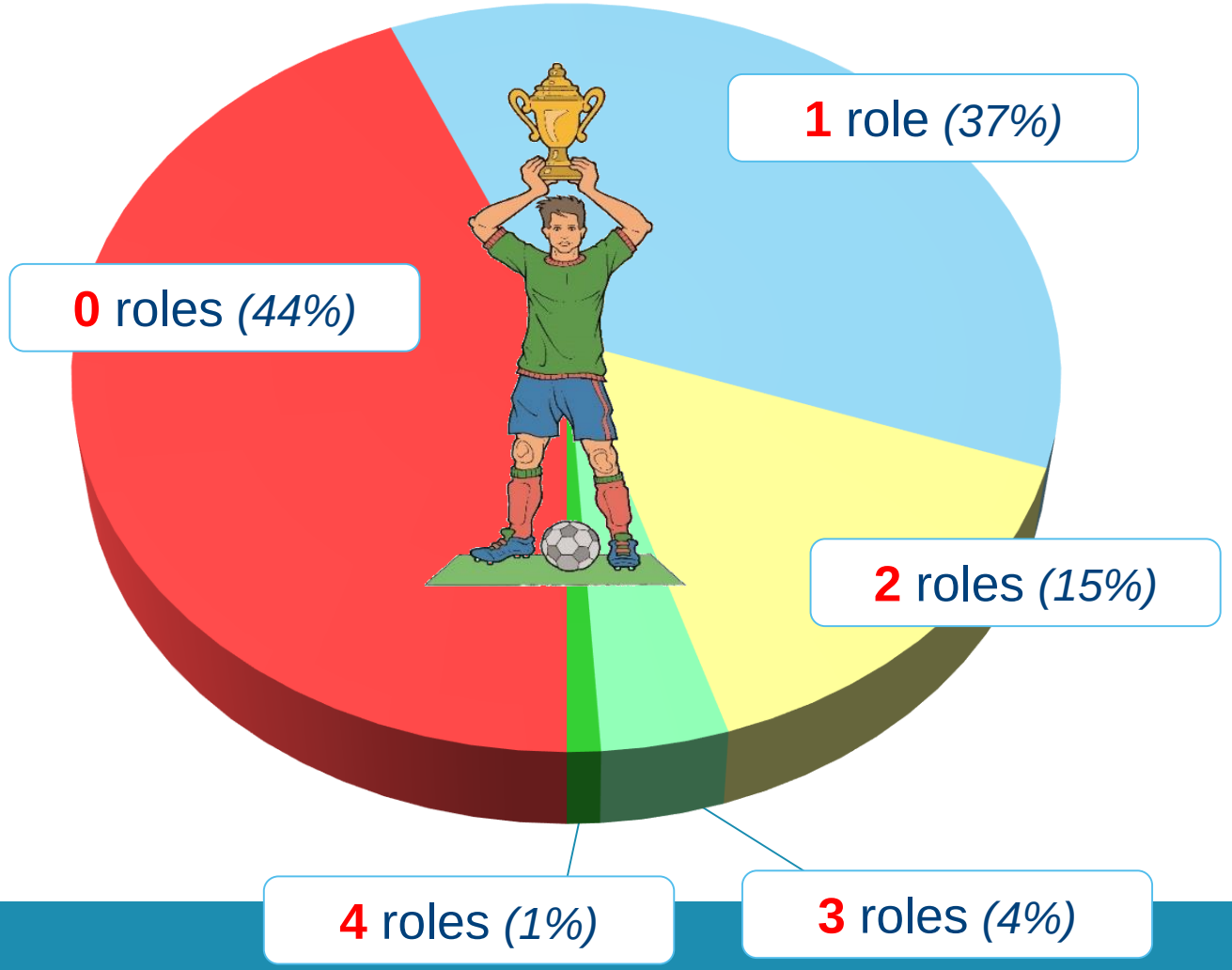
The team captain as best leader



… % of teams?

The role of the team captain

Number of leadership roles in which the team captain is seen as the best leader:



Similar results for…

- ✓ 9 sports
- ✓ males/females
- ✓ players/coaches
- ✓ over competitive levels

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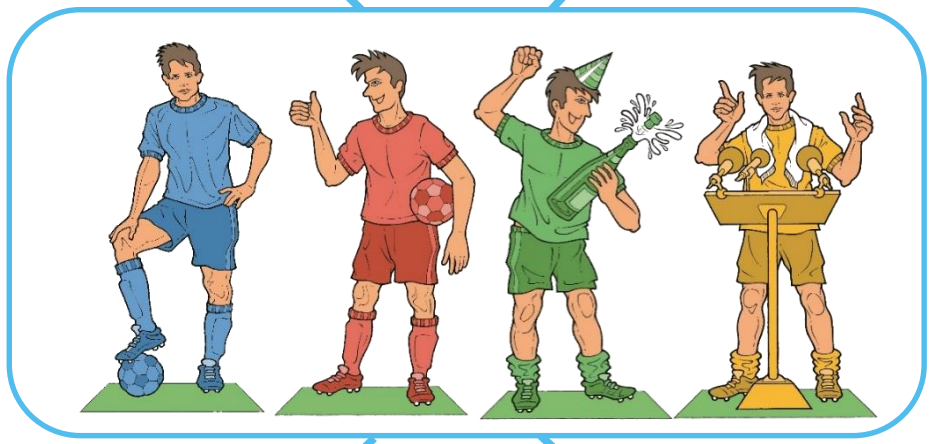
Towards a structure of shared leadership



Study with **132 employees in organisations**: 4 leadership roles occupied by…

1 leader (17%)

2 leaders (20%)



3 leaders (41%)

4 leaders (23%)

Edelmann, C. M., Boen, F., & Fransen, K. (2020). The power of empowerment: Predictors and benefits of shared leadership in organizations. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 3281.

Towards a structure of shared leadership



Towards a structure of shared leadership





Towards a structure of shared leadership

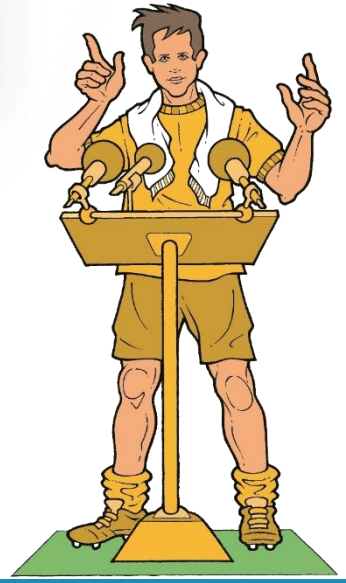


Towards a structure of shared leadership











Shared leadership is also more functional!

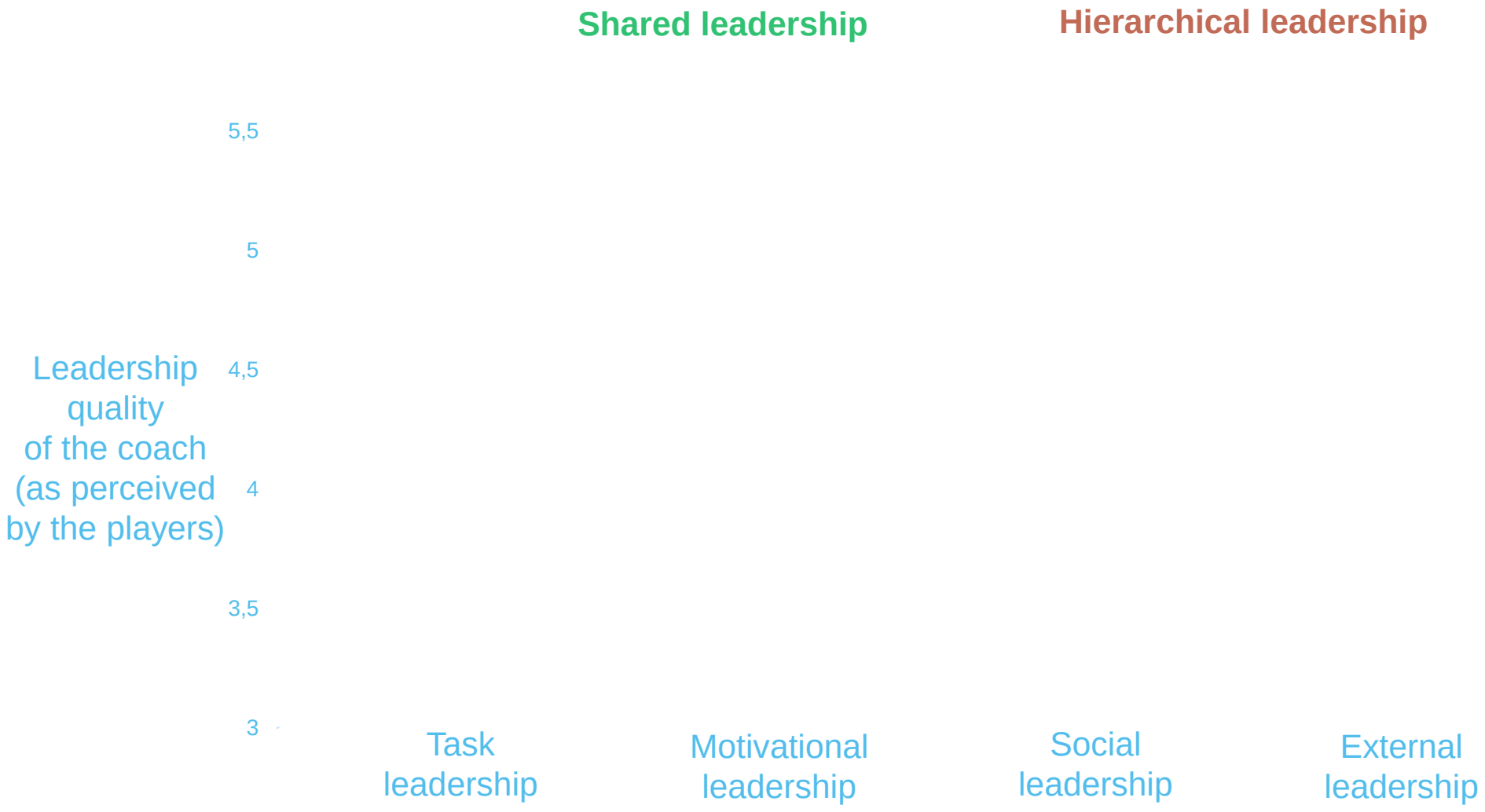


- Higher team confidence
- Stronger team identification
- Higher on the team ranking

What then is withholding the coaches?



Does empowering reduce the coaches' power?



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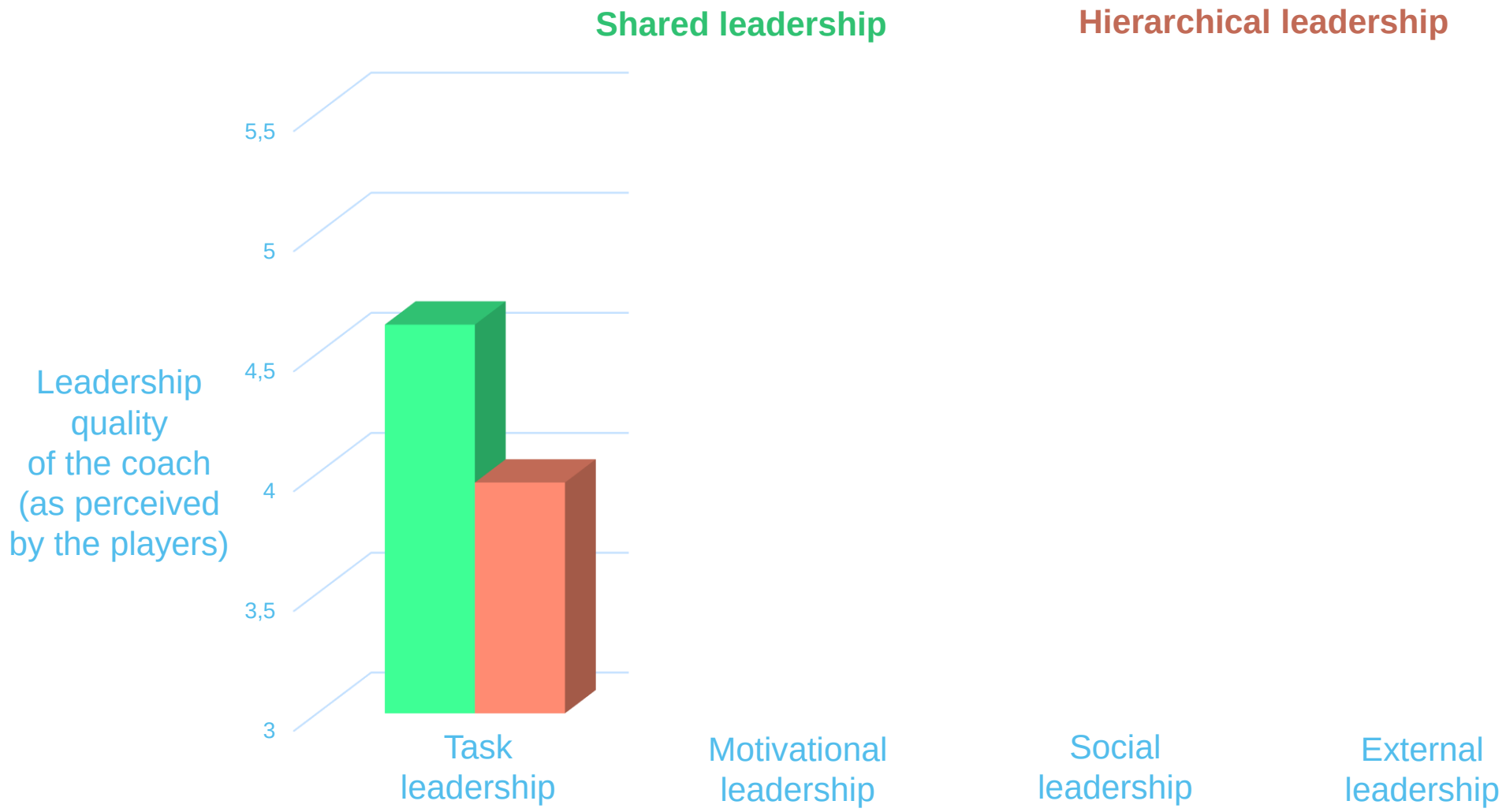

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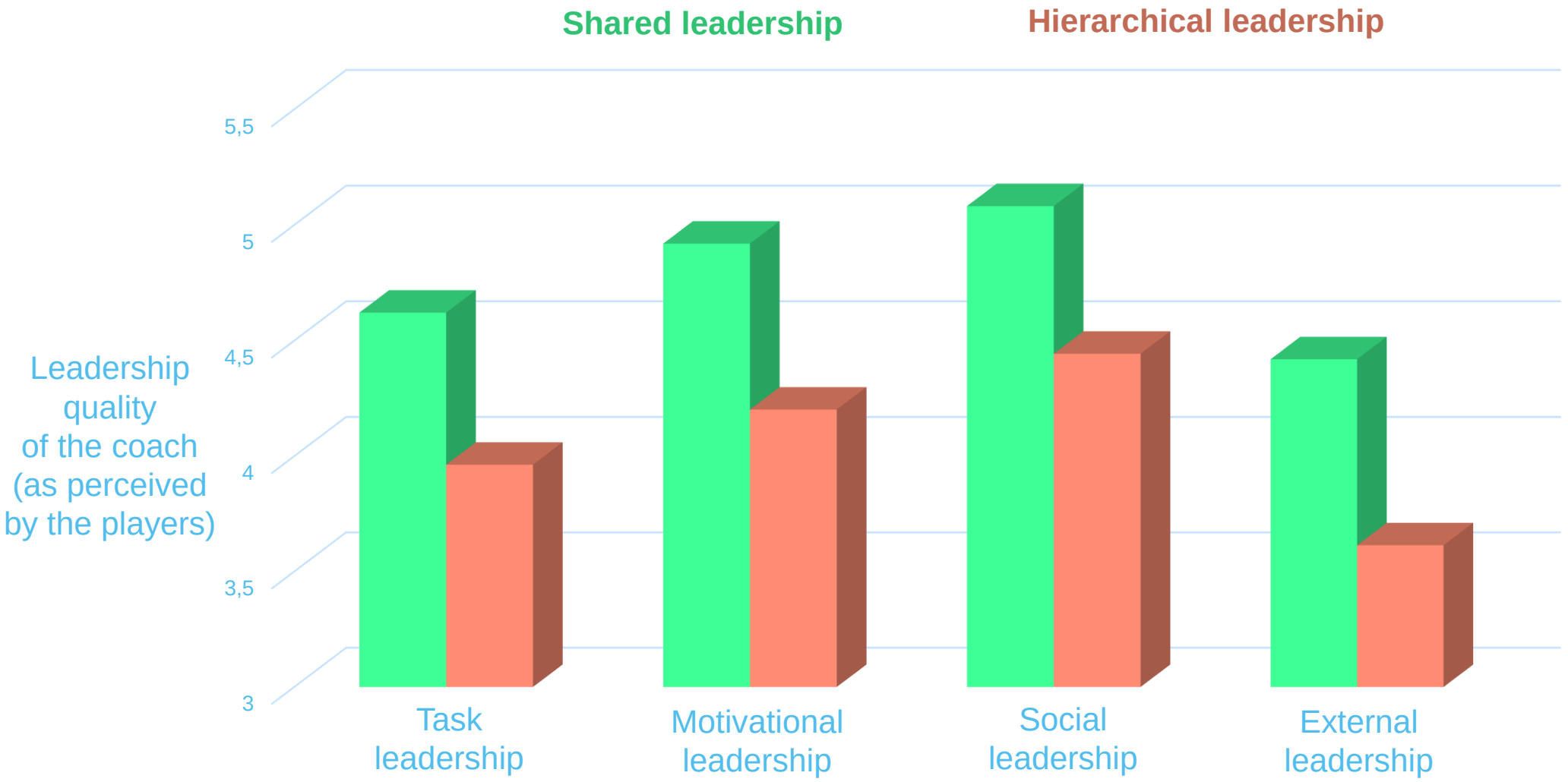
Does empowering reduce the coaches' power?



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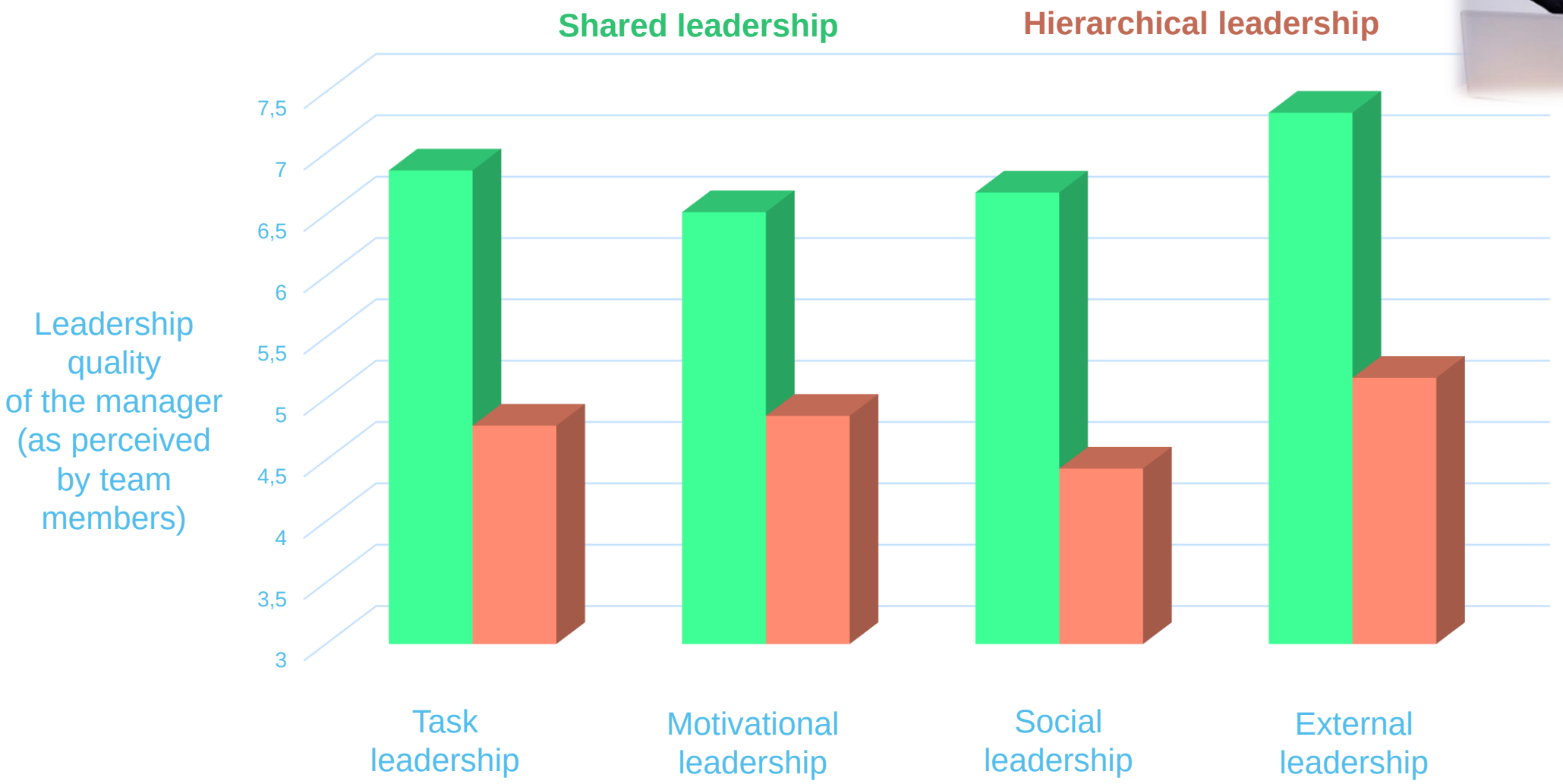
What about managers in organisations?





Edelmann, C. M., Boen, F., & Fransen, K. (2020). The power of empowerment: Predictors and benefits of shared leadership in organizations. Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 3281.

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HYBRID structure of shared leadership









The road to efficient leadership



STEP 1: Identification of leaders

STEP 2: Appointing leaders

STEP 3: Developing leadership

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The road to efficient leadership



STEP 1: Identification of leaders

STEP 2: Appointing leaders

STEP 3: Developing leadership

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"On every team there is a core group who sets the tone for everyone else. **If the tone is positive, you have half the battle won.** If it is negative, you are beaten before you even walk out on the field."

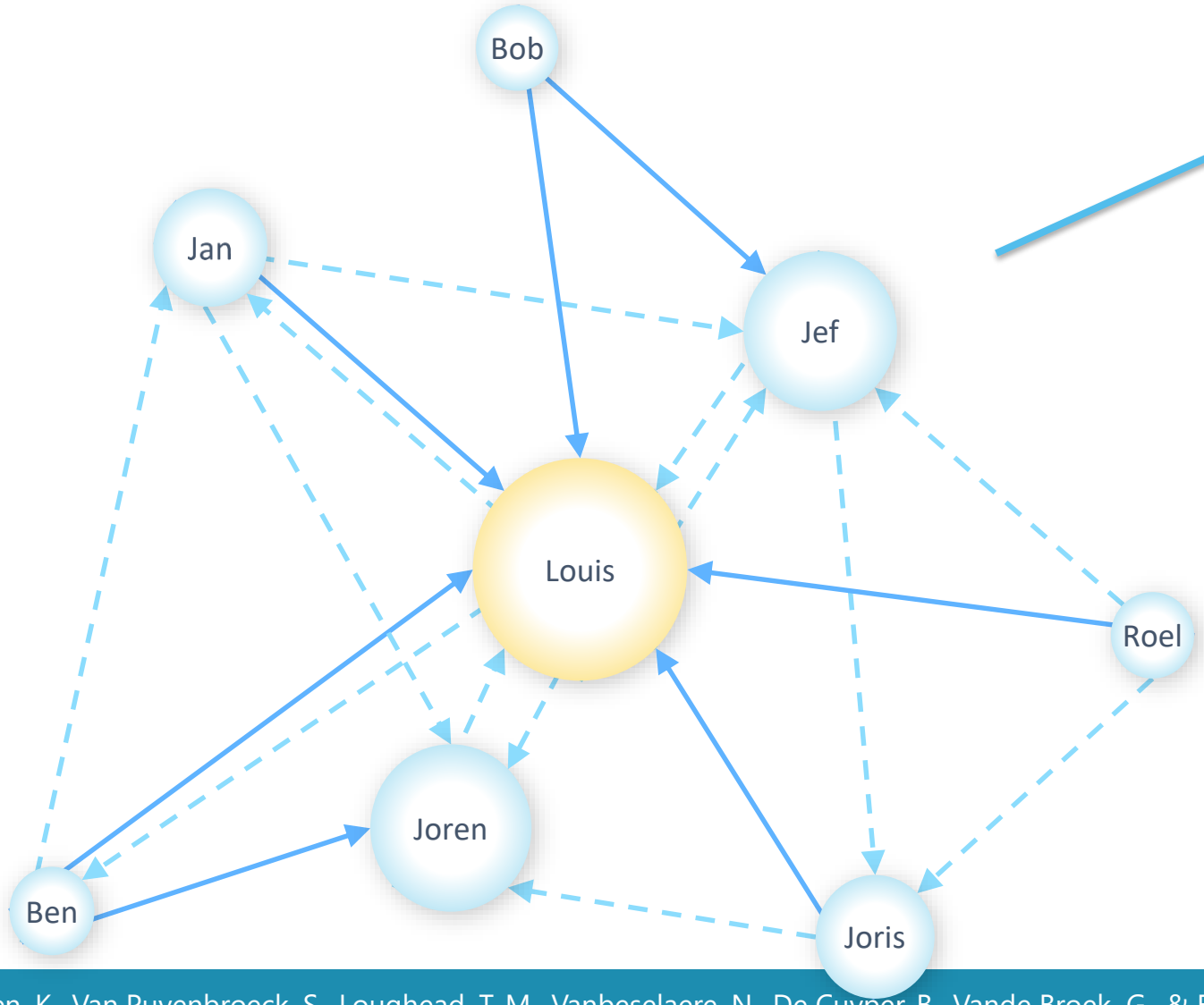
Chuck Noll, Pittsburgh Steelers, Four Super Bowls

Appointing leaders





Shared Leadership Mapping: social networks





Fransen, K., Van Puyenbroeck, S., Loughead, T. M., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., Vande Broek, G., & Boen, F. (2015). Who takes the lead? Social network analysis as pioneering tool to investigate shared leadership within sports teams. *Social Networks, 43*, 28-38.

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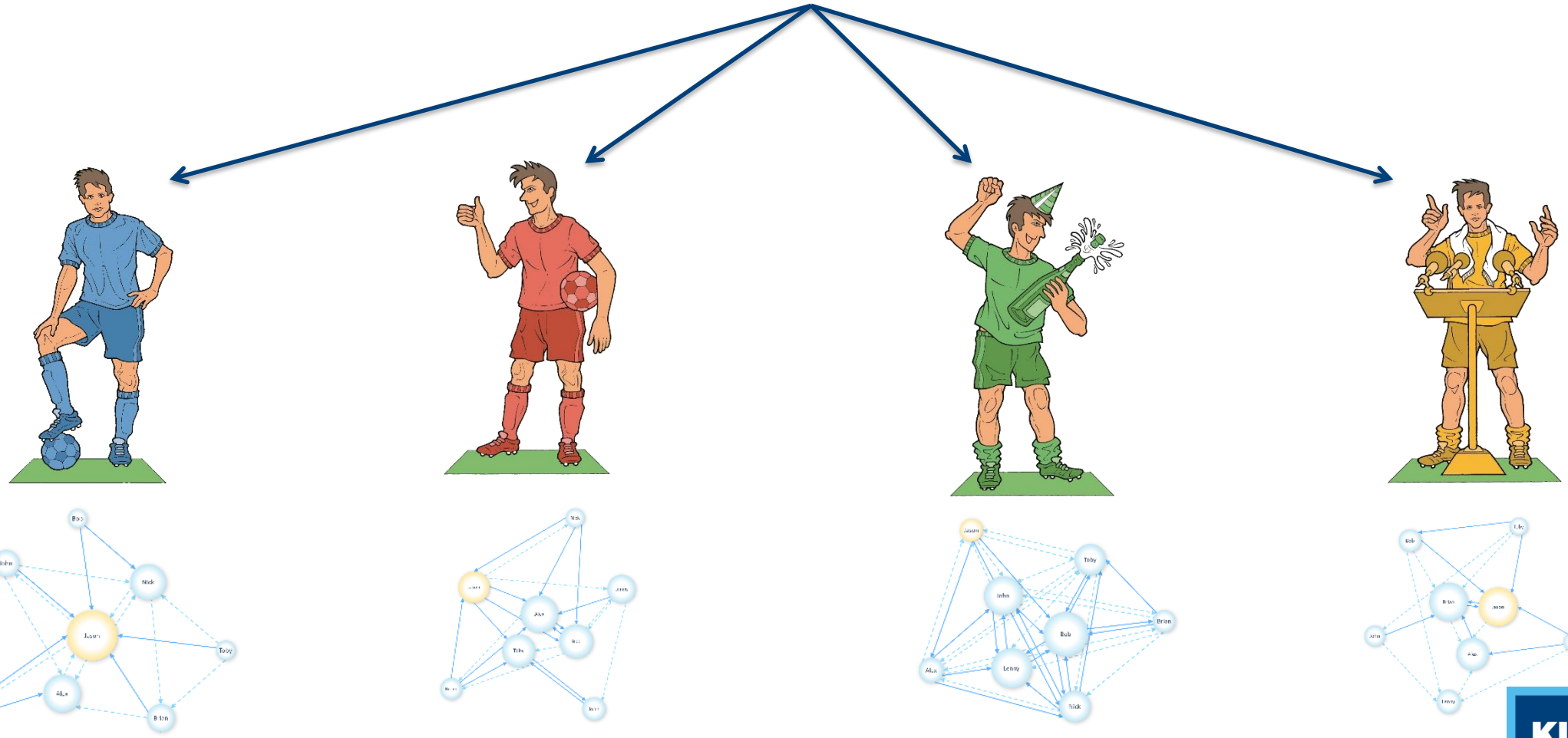
Shared Leadership Mapping: for each role

1 TEAM



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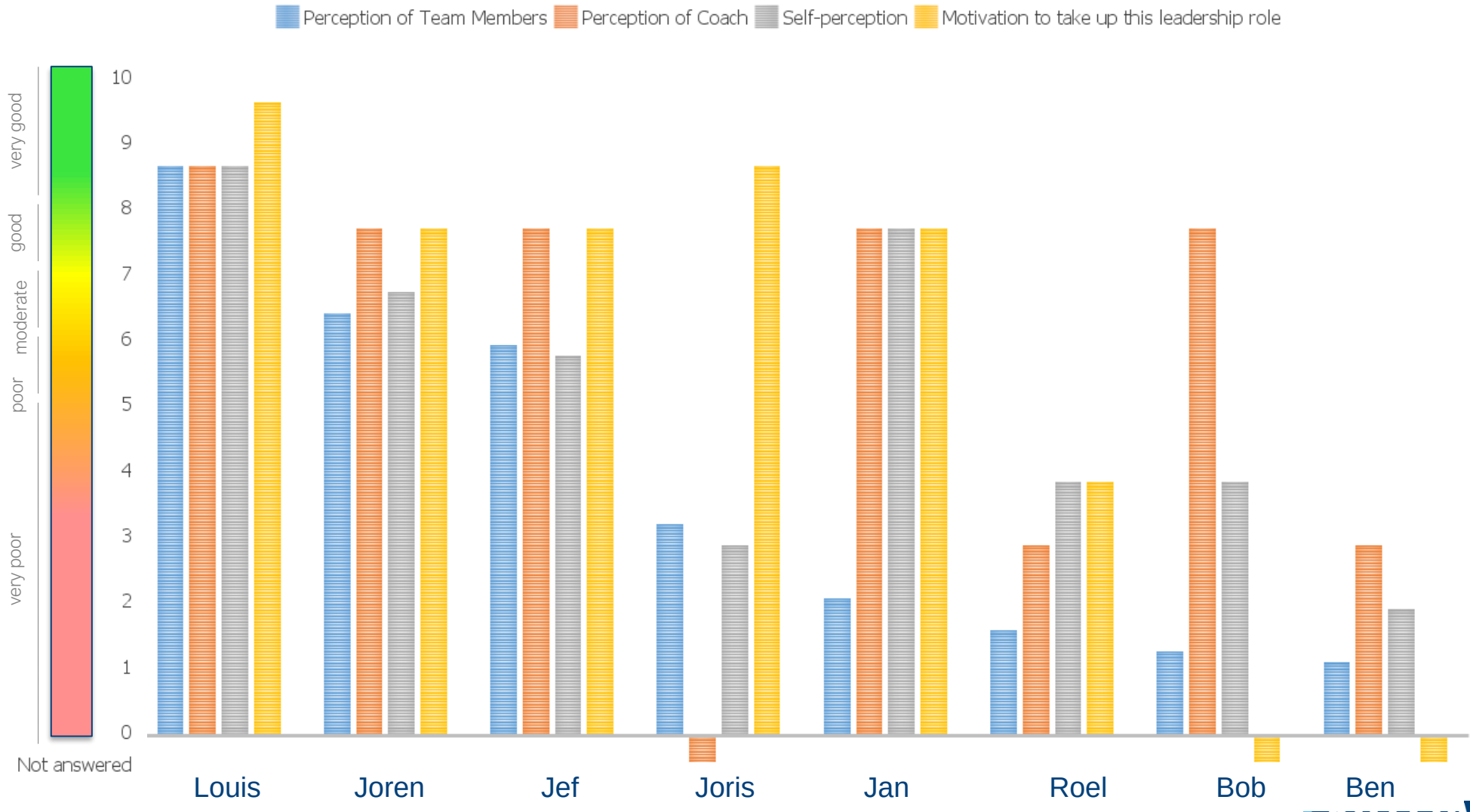
Shared Leadership Mapping: of individual players





Shared Leadership Mapping

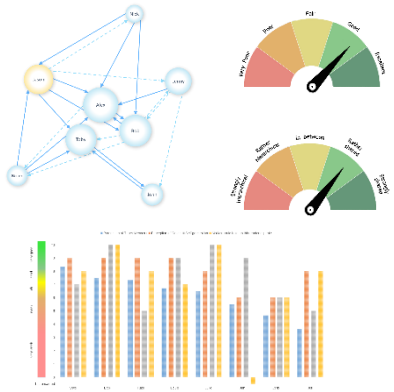




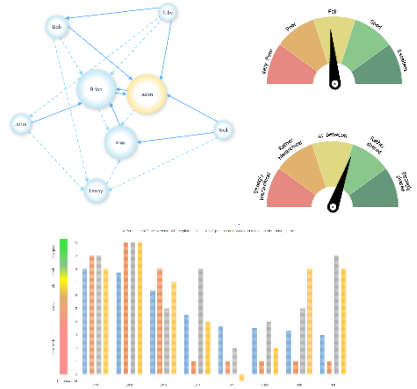














only the coach!

(players don't see this information)

For more info see: www.leadinginsights.be/en

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The road to efficient leadership



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Benefits of appointing leaders



- Acceptance by the group
- Motivation and commitment ↑
- Taking up responsibility
- If you emphasize dynamic/flexible nature of appointments

The road to efficient leadership



STEP 1: Identification of leaders

STEP 2: Appointing leaders

STEP 3: Developing leadership

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Underlying mechanism







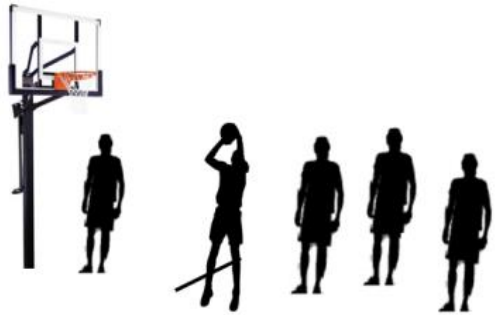




Fransen, K., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., & Boen, F. (2015). Believing in us: Exploring leaders' capacity to enhance team confidence and performance by building a sense of shared social identity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, 21*(1), 89-100.

Underlying mechanism











"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to **surrender the me for the we.**"

Phil Jackson

Fransen, K., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., & Boen, F. (2015). Believing in us: Exploring leaders' capacity to enhance team confidence and performance by building a sense of shared social identity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, 21*(1), 89-100.

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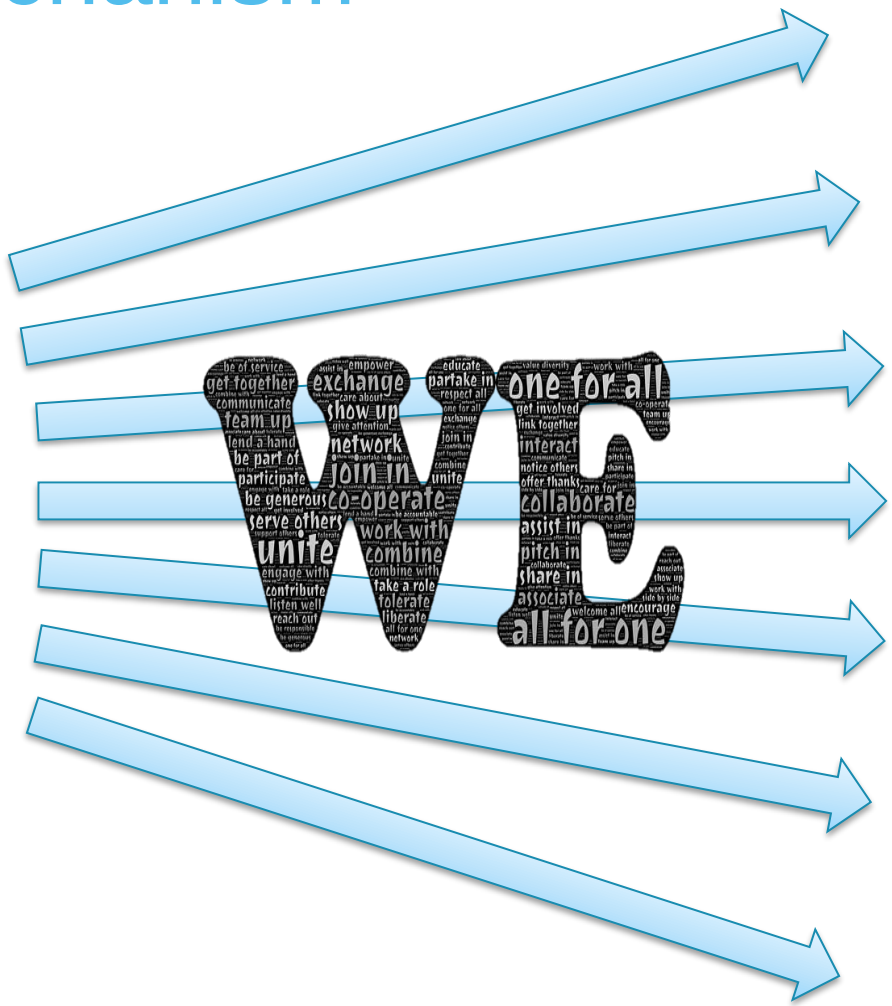
Underlying mechanism





- Team cohesion
- Team work
- Team resilience
- Exerted effort
- Psychological safety
- Burnout
- Health

(Fransen, McEwan, & Sarkar, 2020; Fransen, Haslam, Steffens, Mallett, Peters, & Boen, 2020; Stevens, Rees, Steffens, Haslam, Coffee, & Polman, 2019; Fransen, Decroos, Vande Broek, & Boen, 2016)

Shared Leadership Program



Implementing a structure of shared leadership

1. **R**eadying	*Why does 'we' matter?*
2. **R**eflecting	*Who are we?*
3. **R**epresenting	*What do we want to be?*
4. **R**ealizing	*Becoming what we want to be.*
5. **R**eporting	*Are we what we want to be?*





Fransen, K., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Mallett, C. J., Peters, K., Mertens, N., & Boen, F. (2020). All for us and us for all: Introducing the 5R Shared Leadership Program. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 51*, 101762.

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Trademarks:
from simple to complex



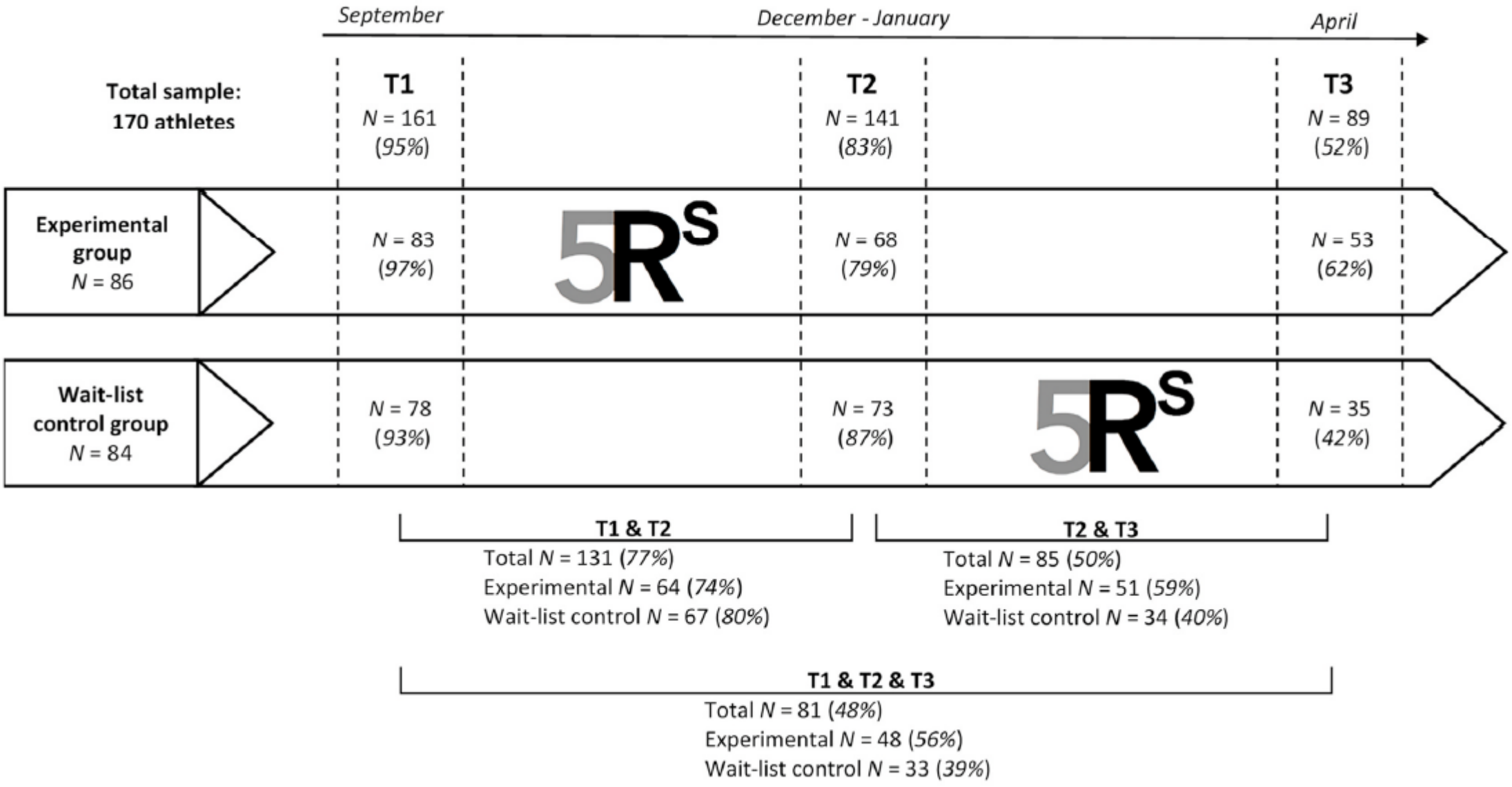


First experimental evidence in basketball



- Identity leadership of athlete leaders
- Team identification
- Intrinsic motivation
- Perceived social support
- Team confidence (1st half)
- Health
- Burnout (1st half)

Mertens, N., Boen, F., Steffens, N. K., Cotterill, S. T., Haslam, S. A., & Fransen, K. (2020). Leading together towards a stronger 'us': An experimental test of the effectiveness of the 5R Shared Leadership Program in basketball teams. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 23*(8), 770-775.
Mertens, N., Boen, F., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Bruner, M. W., Barker, J., Slater, M., & Fransen, K. (2021). Harnessing the power of 'us': A randomized wait-list controlled trial of the 5R Shared Leadership Development Program (5R^S) in basketball teams. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 54.*


September
December - January
April
Total sample:
170 athletes
T1
N = 161
(95%)
T2
N = 141
(83%)
T3
N = 89
(52%)
Experimental group
N = 86
N = 83
(97%)
5RS
N = 68
(79%)
N = 53
(62%)
Wait-list control group
N = 84
N = 78
(93%)
N = 73
(87%)
5RS
N = 35
(42%)
T1 & T2
Total N = 131 (77%)
Experimental N = 64 (74%)
Wait-list control N = 67 (80%)
T2 & T3
Total N = 85 (50%)
Experimental N = 51 (59%)
Wait-list control N = 34 (40%)
T1 & T2 & T3
Total N = 81 (48%)
Experimental N = 48 (56%)
Wait-list control N = 33 (39%)

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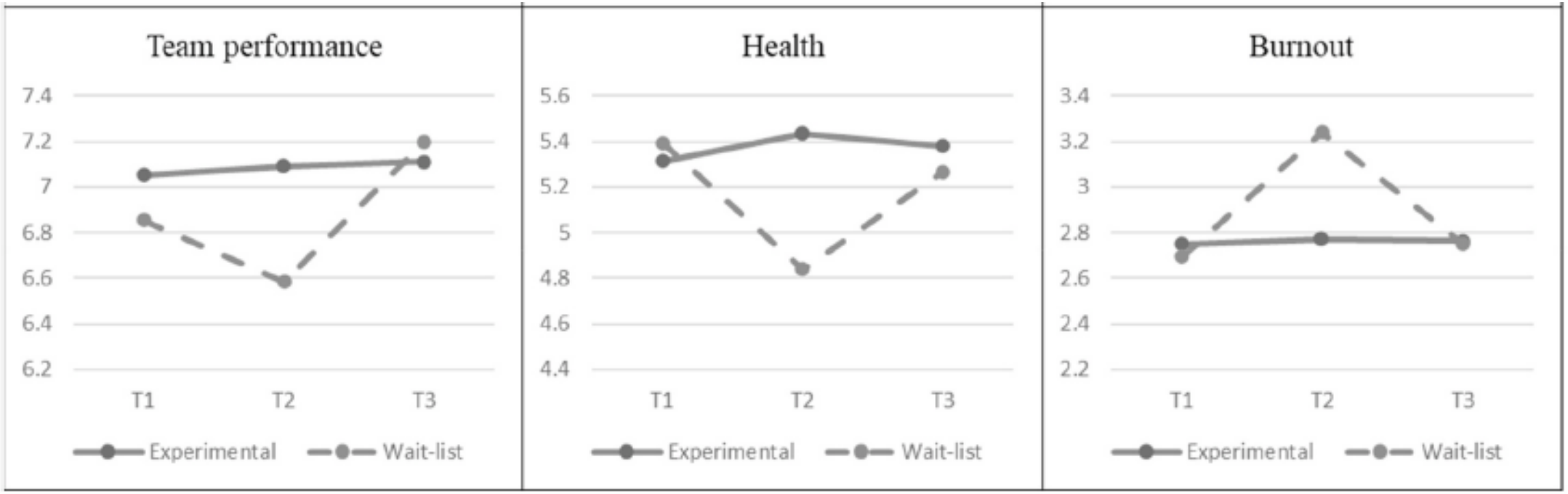

Fig. 2. Visualization of the total mean of all outcomes at each timepoint, for both the experimental group and wait-list control group.

Evidence in elite sports

- *N* = 111
- Context: Australian rugby/football = highly pressurized sports context

  → health/well-being at risk and high prevalence of burnout

  (Cresswell, 2007; Rice et al., 2016)

North Queensland Cowboys (Rugby League)



North Melbourne Kangooroos (AFL)



Brisbane Lions (AFL)



Fransen, K., Haslam, S.A., Steffens, N.K., Mallett, C.J., Peters, K., & Boen, F. (2019). Making 'us' better: High-quality athlete leadership relates to health and burnout in professional Australian football teams. *European Journal of Sport Science*, *20* (7), 953-963. doi: 10.1080/17461391.2019.1680736

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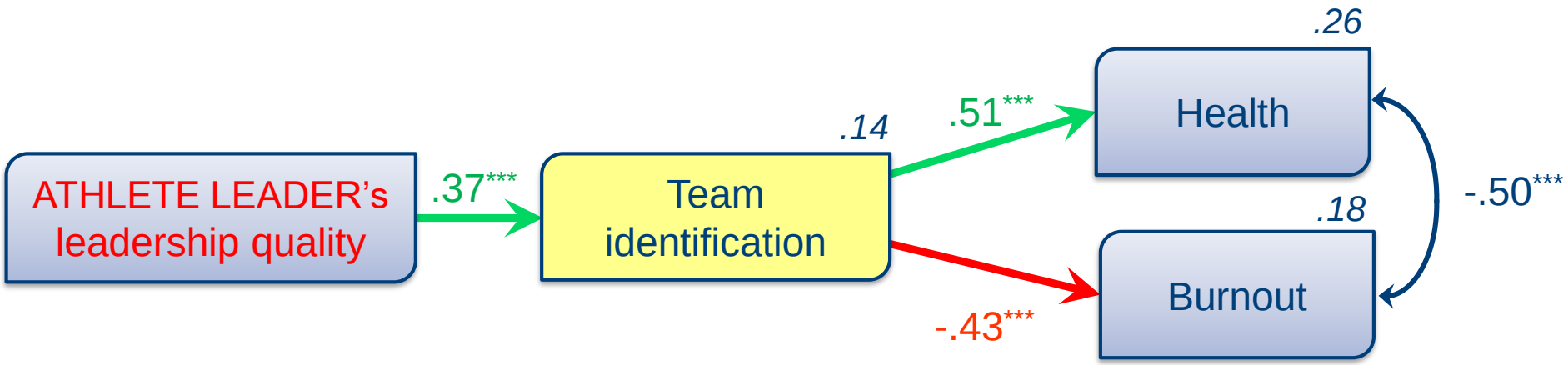
Results

Having good leaders in your team is good for your health.



$\chi^2(13) = 9.75$; $p = .71$; $CFI = 1.00$; $TLI = 1.02$; $RMSEA < .001$; $pclose = .87$

$^{***}p < .001$

Take home message

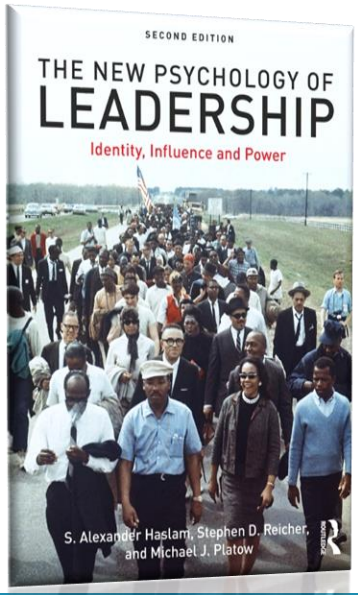
"The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, **never say "I."**
And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I." They don't think "I."
They think "we"; they think "team."

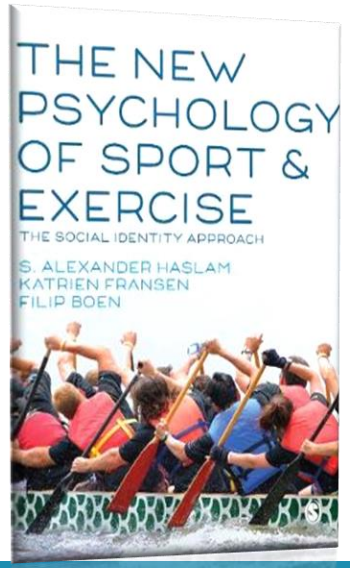
Peter F. Drucker



Leaders unlocking their team's potential











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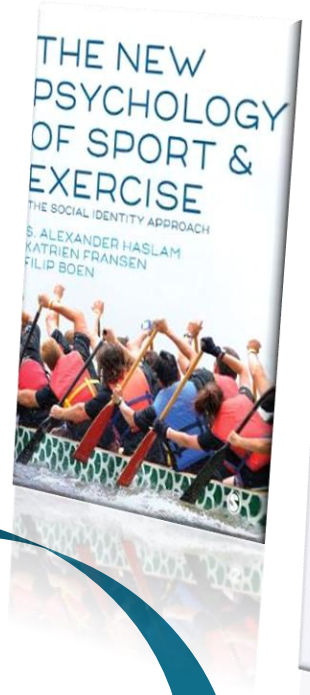

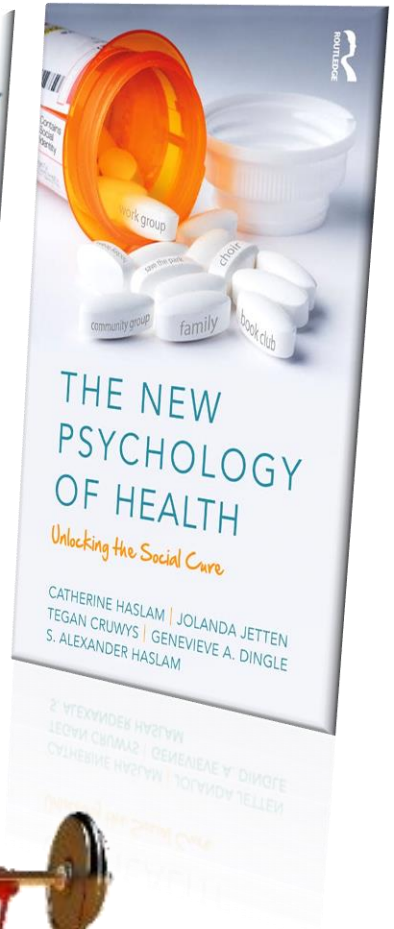



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Thank you for your attention!



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