CHAPTER 5
GENERAL DISCUSSION

Coordinating activities across teams’ boundaries is critically important, but also notoriously difficult. Difficulty to coordinate emergency response teams’ efforts, for example, caused serious delays in the rescue operations following hurricane Katrina in 2005 (DeChurch & Mathieu, 2009). Similarly, Boeing’s test flight of the 787 Dreamliner prototype was delayed by more than 2 years because teams involved in the project were unable to coordinate (a) which parts were critical at what point in time for the prototype’s assembly, and (b) how different parts should be made to fit each other (Kotha & Srikanth, 2013). Backorders and rework were therefore inevitable, forcing Boeing to “take a more aggressive role in sticking their noses into suppliers’ operations” (Lunsford, 2008: 2). Such coordination problems have led scholars to conclude that “there seems to be a general lack of managerial ability to integrate and coordinate” teams’ and organizations’ efforts (Kanda & Deshmukh, 2008: 317).

Much research has been devoted towards resolving this issue. Researchers have, for example, examined how macro-level organizational design, meso-level team composition, and micro-level individual characteristics can support interteam coordination. Despite these efforts, there is still considerable ambiguity about how to effectively manage interteam coordination with scholars observing that “there is a fund of practical and theoretical advice on how to work effectively in collaboration, but in reality outcomes are often disappointing” (Williams & Sullivan, 2010: 4; see also Donahue & Tuohy, 2006; Kerosuo, 2010). Chapter 1 discussed three key ambiguities that may have contributed to this disappointment. First, there appeared to be disagreement about how macro-level organizational design can facilitate interteam coordination and teams’ collective performance. Second, there was meso-level ambiguity regarding how specific team composition strategies can support interteam coordination...
coordination and performance. And finally, micro-level research was ambiguous on the value of distinct, individual-level work experiences for persons’ interteam coordination behavior.

This final chapter summarizes how Chapter 2, 3, and 4’s main findings help to address the ambiguities identified in Chapter 1 and collectively contribute to interteam coordination research, team science, and human resource management literatures. In addition, this chapter describes how future research may build on this dissertation’s findings and further increase academic understanding of interteam coordination. The general discussion concludes with a description of how this dissertation may help to manage interteam coordination in practice.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Macro-level Ambiguities

Chapter 2’s purpose was to clarify the performance implications of the multiteam system (MTS) approach – a new, increasingly common form to structure multi-organizational collaborations. In this chapter, I examined the multi-organizational collaboration that Dutch rail organizations use for jointly dealing with incidents (e.g., collisions, broken-down trains, failed rail infrastructure, etc.). Initially, coordination between these rail organizations was strictly formalized and relied on highly standardized procedures that pre-specified different organizations’ activities. Moreover, a central group of traffic controllers decided on how to resolve complex rail incidents that existing procedures did not sufficiently cover, providing specific instructions to carriers and repair organizations. After a series of large incidents, however, rail organizations switched from this formalized, centralized organizational structure toward a decentralized, deformedalized structure that was inspired by the MTS approach. This resulted in the installation of a new rail control center in which fourteen collocated ‘component’ teams from eight different rail organizations engaged in consensual decision-making and direct coordination to organize collective responses to incidents.
Illustrating the MTS approach’s potential in this context, Chapter 2’s results indicated that the average daily duration of rail incidents had reduced by 30 percent in the period following the control center’s implementation. Subsequent interviews revealed that the new control center’s set-up allowed members to jointly search for viable options for dealing with incidents and, in turn, develop effective countermeasures. Interview results, however, also indicated that intensified coordination requirements in the new control center had initially distracted members from completing their core job tasks. Members implemented ‘contingent coordination’ practices to mitigate these downsides. Contingent coordination involved using integrative roles (liaisons) to coordinate collective activities on a strategic level during the start-up of the incident management process, while leaving subsequent coordination of operational issues to teams’ specialist members. Contingent coordination relieved members from effortful coordination responsibilities early on in the incident management process, while preserving their opportunities for directly coordinating detailed issues with other teams during later phases. Members needed cross-organizational understanding (i.e., knowledge of the diverse and interrelated nature of the multi-organizational working context) for effectively applying contingent coordination practices. Cross-organizational understanding developed as different teams’ members gained joint working experiences in the control center.

Taken together, Chapter 2’s findings addressed macro-level ambiguities by illustrating the distinct performance implications of shifting from a centralized, formalized structure towards a more deormalized, decentralized structure that is based on the MTS approach. In addition, this chapter identified strategies (e.g., instilling contingent coordination and cross-organizational understanding) that may help to realize the benefits of such reorganization.

**Meso-level Ambiguities**

Chapter 3’s main goal was to address a second, meso-level ambiguity in our academic understanding of interteam coordination. Specifically, in this chapter I examined if the well-
known strategy of composing teams with members who have experience in multiple functional work domains (i.e., high intrapersonal functional diversity; IFD) can advance coordination and performance in organizations designed according to MTS principles. I suggested that IFD has both positive and negative implications for MTSs. On the one hand, IFD might improve members’ understanding of the general functions and workings of the different component teams in the MTS, enabling members to coordinate these component teams’ efforts in a bottom-up, lateral manner (i.e., horizontal coordination). Horizontal coordination may, in turn, improve the overall MTS’s performance. On the other hand, I argued that IFD might limit component team members’ specialization and distract them from working towards realizing high-impact, strategic goals (i.e., less aspirational behavior).

Building on macro-level insights from Chapter 2, I reiterated the crucial role of formal integrative roles in the MTS structure, arguing that a formal integration team can help to optimize IFD’s performance implications. An integration team is responsible for overseeing component teams’ horizontal coordination and realization of strategic goals. As such, the integration team is uniquely positioned to develop ‘big-picture information’ on coordination and strategic demands in the MTS. I suggested that the integration team could distribute this big-picture information in the MTS by aligning its efforts with component teams – a process that I refer to as “vertical coordinated action.” Equipped with this information, members can draw from their IFD and horizontally coordinate their component team’s activities with other teams in the MTS. I further proposed that the integration team could emphasize core strategic goals through vertical coordinated action, thereby focusing component teams’ efforts on challenging, specialized activities that advance such goals. Even component teams in MTSs with high IFD may then retain a focus on aspirational behavior during task execution.

I tested these predictions in a sample of 236 fourteen-person MTSs. Results corroborated that vertical coordinated action enabled MTSs to realize the performance
benefits of IFD through increased horizontal coordination, while neutralizing its negative implications through reduced aspirational behavior. In contrast, MTSs with poor vertical coordinated action experienced the negative effects of IFD, but failed to experience related benefits. In sum, Chapter 3’s findings help to resolve the ambiguity regarding IFD’s value for teams’ interteam coordination and collective performance by illustrating both IFD’s distinct benefits and detrimental side effects, as well as strategies to optimize IFD’s implications.

Micro-level Ambiguities

Chapter 4 was developed to clarify ambiguities concerning the individual-level implications of members’ breadth of functional experience for these members’ interteam coordination behaviors. Building on personal construct theory, I proposed that broad functional experiences can enhance an individual’s socio-cognitive capacity for understanding and responding to diverse social situations (i.e., interpersonal cognitive complexity), which, in turn, may enable an individual to better coordinate task-related issues with unfamiliar outside team members. I further argued that a functionally broad individual might use his or her cognitive complexity both to avoid and to engage in interteam coordination, depending on specific motivational factors that are external to personal construct theory. I therefore extended personal construct theory with insights from social identity theory and introduced organizational identification (i.e., an individual’s perceived belongingness to the organization) as a motivational factor that may determine a person’s use of his or her cognitive complexity.

I argued that individuals who strongly identify with the organization are likely to attach personal importance to achieving organizational goals. Importantly, interteam coordination behavior aims at integrating distinct teams’ actions to achieve such outcomes. An individual with a strong organizational identification might therefore be particularly motivated to use his or her cognitive complexity to engage in interteam coordination behavior. Without such strong organizational identification, on the other hand, an individual
may see interteam coordination as distracting from more proximal, within-team tasks and use his or her cognitive complexity to avoid (rather than engage in) such behavior.

I tested these predictions in two field studies. Study 4.1 took place in the context of an international peace-support training mission, whereas I examined a Dutch municipality administration in Study 4.2. Findings from both of these settings identified an individual’s interpersonal cognitive complexity as a conditional mediating variable that can translate his or her breadth of functional experience into interteam coordination behavior. The strength and direction of this indirect relationship, however, depended on the individual’s identification with the organization as a whole. Individuals appeared to use their cognitive complexity for intensifying their interteam coordination behavior when they strongly identified with the organization, while they used their cognitive complexity to effectively avoid interteam coordination behavior when their organizational identification was lower. Results from Study 4.2 further indicated that team members’ overall interteam coordination was positively related with their team’s performance. All in all, these findings addressed key micro-level ambiguities surrounding the implications of broad functional experiences by demonstrating both how and under what conditions such experiences matter for interteam coordination.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The findings described above make several important contributions to theory advancement. These contributions refer to the literature on interteam coordination, but also to the team science and human resource (HR) research areas. As described below, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 collectively advance a more comprehensive perspective on interteam coordination that is based on multiple theoretical viewpoints. In addition, Chapter 2 and 3 complement the singular focus on internal team processes that is common within team science by considering how teams can deal with concurrent pressures of establishing both effective within-team and between-team processes. Finally, Chapter 3 and 4’s findings may help to advance theoretical
HR models for understanding the implications of interventions aimed at developing breadth of functional experience and IFD.

Contributions to Interteam Coordination Research

As described in Chapter 1, two separate theoretical approaches have typically been used to generate insights on interteam coordination, each driven by a different set of assumptions. First, a number of scholars have adopted a structural approach and assumed that interteam coordination is mostly dictated and controlled through organizational structure (e.g., Dekker, 2004; Gulati & Singh, 1998; Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007). These researchers have, accordingly, examined how formal coordination tasks and responsibilities can be optimally distributed among organizational members. Other scholars have adopted a behavioral approach and assumed that team members can engage in (or avoid) interteam coordination behavior, regardless of whether or not they are formally tasked with such activities (Kratzer et al., 2008; Levina & Vaast, 2005; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). According to these scholars, members often help to coordinate their teams’ efforts by building and maintaining informal working relationships with external stakeholders (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992a; Hoegl et al., 2004). Researchers using a behavioral approach have, thus, been oriented towards developing members’ motivations and capacities for informal interteam coordination behavior.

Whereas most scholars relied on either the structural or behavioral approach, this dissertation illustrates the potential of combining both. Findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that organization-level design choices (e.g., the use of an MTS structure and integration teams) may interact with members’ coordination capacities (as vested in IFD and cross-organizational understanding) and jointly shape teams’ interteam coordination and collective performance. Specifically, the present dissertation shows that the organizational structure may provide members with opportunities for directly coordinating work with other teams, whereas the capacities examined by the behavioral approach may determine if
members can effectively capitalize on these opportunities. In doing so, this dissertation responds to coordination scholars’ “plea for greater understanding of the complex interplay between structural factors and the influences of individuals” (Williams & Sullivan, 2010: 4) and advances a “holistic” approach towards studying interteam coordination (Kanda & Deshmukh, 2008: 317; see also Joshi et al., 2009; Marrone, 2010).

**Contributions to Team Research**

Besides contributing to interteam coordination literature, this dissertation may also help to advance team science. Much team research has overlooked the interaction between teams’ internal and external context and, as a result, unwittingly identified ‘best practices’ for enhancing within-team processes that may actually hurt between-team processes, as well as the other way around (DeChurch & Zaccaro, 2013). Suggestions to facilitate team-level performance by empowering teams (i.e., providing teams with the competencies and autonomy to tackle complex tasks independently; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999), for instance, can severely complicate interteam coordination. Although empowered teams may exert extra effort at realizing team-level goals, such teams may also frequently change directions and task approaches (Klein & Pierce, 2001). This may create unpredictability that inhibits teams from accurately anticipating and responding to each other’s activities (Lanaj et al., 2013). On the other hand, building fluid teams composed of part-time workers to promote interteam coordination (e.g., Drach-Zahavy, 2011) may cause problems for within-team processes, because members may feel detached from the team and dedicate little time and energy towards realizing the team’s unique goal (DeChurch & Zaccaro, 2013).

Combined, the empirical chapters in this dissertation help address this issue by clarifying the implications of efforts aimed at promoting interteam coordination for teams’ internal operations, and vice versa. Chapter 2’s results, in particular, illustrate that providing teams with open and direct access to each other’s members can facilitate interteam
coordination, but may also interfere with these teams’ internal operations. Indeed, teams’ members may become distracted from their core tasks by external members’ requests for assistance and information. On the other hand, Chapter 2’s qualitative interviews show that liaisons’ buffering of team members from external distractions protected teams’ internal operations, but also obstructed interteam coordination. Findings from Chapter 3 further illustrate that compositional strategies aimed at providing teams with broad capacities for interteam coordination may come at the cost of these teams’ specialized contributions (i.e., aspirational behavior) to MTS outcomes.

Importantly, this dissertation also identifies approaches that can help teams to maintain high-quality internal processes, while also engaging in interteam coordination. Chapter 2, for example, illustrates how a multilevel approach – in which coordination tasks are subdivided and differentiated across different layers in the MTS (e.g., between component teams and the integration team) – (a) buffers teams’ internal operations from detrimental external interference, and (b) exposes teams to potentially beneficial external interactions. Similarly, Chapter 3 illustrates how integration teams can enable component teams to coordinate work with each other without becoming distracted from their unique, specialized tasks in the MTS. As such, this dissertation helps team science to progress from a singular focus on how to manage within-team or between-team processes towards assisting teams to deal with the paradoxical pressures associated with managing these processes simultaneously.

**Contributions to HR Research**

Finally, this dissertation’s exploration of teams’ IFD and individuals’ breadth of functional experience may help to better understand the implications of HR interventions aimed at developing generalist teams and individuals (e.g., job rotation, personnel movements, and cross-training). HR research has been preoccupied with testing organization-wide HR policies’ implications for firm performance (Guest, 2001). Although this focus
helped identify the corporate-level value of HR practices, it has also led to an “abstracted empiricism” that distracted scholars from building a more fine-grained and theoretical understanding of specific HR interventions’ implications (Guest, 2001: 1092). Specifically, HR research has generally overlooked factors that may determine the effectiveness of interventions aimed at increasing functional breadth within teams or individuals (Casad, 2012; Kalleberg & Moody, 1994; Macduffie, 1995).

The present dissertation addresses this issue by generating theoretical insights on the mechanisms and contingency factors that may determine the value of broad functional experiences. Both Chapters 3 and 4, for example, indicate that interteam coordination is a central mechanism through which broad functional experiences may affect performance. Integrating insights from team research and organization theory literatures, Chapter 3 further illustrates that the effectiveness of composing teams of broad functional generalists for interteam coordination may depend on the support provided by a formal integration team. In extension, integrating insights from cognitive and social psychological frameworks, Chapter 4 identifies the specific individual-level capacities that may result from broad functional experiences and the motivational forces that may lead members to use these capacities for interteam coordination behaviors. Combined, Chapters 3 and 4’s insights therefore point to important variables and frameworks that may help HR research to build a more detailed, theoretical model of the workings and performance implications of interventions aimed at increasing breadth of functional experience within teams and individual members.

**FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

In addressing key ambiguities in our understanding of interteam coordination, this dissertation uncovered several, more detailed issues that require further inquiry. As outlined below, for example, Chapter 2 and 4 highlighted remaining ambiguities regarding how members collectively organize interteam coordination within their teams. In addition, the
disentangling of horizontal and vertical coordination between teams in Chapter 3 hinted towards the existence of hitherto unexplored coordination strategies that members might use to align work across team boundaries. Below, I describe how these observations may guide future research and further advance academic understanding of interteam coordination.

**How are Interteam Coordination Activities Coordinated within Teams?**

Chapter 4 revealed that team members engage in interteam coordination to different degrees, depending on their breadth of functional experience, cognitive complexity, and identification with the organization as a whole. Hence, this chapter uncovered individual-level foundations of interteam coordination. What remains unclear, however, is how teams can effectively organize their individual members’ engagement in interteam coordination behavior (Marrone, 2010). For example, it is unknown if it is more effective for teams to specialize members in coordinating with specific external teams or, alternatively, to have all members coordinate with all other teams in the organization. Also, it is unclear if teams that rotate interteam coordination tasks between members over time are more effective, compared with teams in which members maintain a consistent level of interteam coordination.

It is possible that specializing or rotating interteam coordination tasks reduces the amount of time and energy that each individual team member needs to invest in aligning work with other teams (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988). This may subsequently diminish coordination-related role overload and stress (Marrone et al., 2007; Ramarajan et al., 2011). Specialization may, for example, result in economies of scope and allow team members to master certain aspects of their team’s interteam coordination activities. Also, specialization may ensure that a team’s members are not disturbed during their work by requests for assistance from unfamiliar outsiders. Similarly, teams that rotate coordination responsibilities across team members over time may provide members with the necessary ‘off time’ to recharge after hectic interteam coordination processes and focus on their core tasks. Empirical research that
builds on these notions may provide new insights in how teams can optimize benefits and mitigate potential downsides of interteam coordination.

How are Members Selected for Interteam Coordination Roles?

A related issue involves explicating the intrateam processes that cause some members to put in more effort than others in coordinating their team’s efforts with other teams. Although such processes are largely unexplored, several studies hinted towards the existence of some sort of selection process within teams. Chapter 4, for example, drew from research that has suggested that interteam coordination represents a voluntary, extra-role behavior that team members take on because they perceive it to be valuable for themselves and/or the organization (Marrone, 2004). In other words, members are assumed to engage in self-selection and manage their own involvement in interteam coordination activities (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988). Other studies, however, have suggested that members are often nominated by their colleagues based on their competencies or skills, before they are allowed to engage in interteam coordination on behalf of the team (i.e., peer selection; Levina & Vaast, 2005; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Similarly, it is possible that team leaders formally assign coordination tasks, for example when members forego voluntary interteam coordination because they perceive such behavior to take up too much of their time or energy (i.e., leader selection; Noble & Jones, 2006; Ramarajan et al., 2011).

Additional research on intrateam selection processes for coordination positions is important, because different selection mechanisms may lead to different outcomes regarding which members engage in the bulk of a team’s interteam coordination activities. For example, whereas the most competent members may be selected for interteam coordination under a peer-selection system, assignment by internally focused leaders may lead to the selection of the most dispensable members for executing a team’s external coordination. And finally, self-selection processes may cause the most motivated members to manage most of the team’s
interteam coordination activities. Selection mechanisms may therefore affect interteam coordination’s performance implications. Interteam coordination may, for example, be more effective when executed by peer-selected coordinators, relative to a situation in which leader-assigned members are forced to manage such efforts on behalf of their team. Examining when a specific selection process prevails within a team may, thus, represent a necessary step for further increasing academic understanding of interteam coordination’s consequences.

Selection mechanism may also be activated simultaneously in the team in case a member volunteers, colleagues indicate their preferred co-worker, and the team leader independently selects a person for performing interteam coordination tasks. When the most competent member is also the most motivated and most dispensable candidate, the different selection devices will probably converge and the distribution of interteam coordination tasks is likely to be a highly effective and trouble-free process. However, when the most motivated member is not the most competent or most dispensable person, selection mechanisms may conflict. In such cases, teams may need to establish a picking order of selection mechanisms and determine which system (i.e., self, peer, or leader selection) will best enable interteam coordination and, therefore, should be given more weight. The occurrence, implications, and management of disagreements between selection mechanisms is an open empirical question and offers an interesting research direction that can further improve academic insights in how to manage and optimize teams’ interteam coordination.

With Whom Do Members Engage in Interteam Coordination?

Beyond examining who engages in interteam coordination, it is also important to further clarify with whom members connect to execute such behaviors. As shown in Chapter 2 and 3, members can both horizontally and vertically coordinate efforts across teams. Horizontal coordination takes place between specialist members from different teams, while vertical interteam coordination refers to the alignment between teams’ specialists and the
higher-level group of liaisons or leaders within the organization (Davison et al., 2012). Importantly, team members may also combine horizontal and vertical coordination by forming diagonal linkages. Members who establish diagonal linkages directly approach members outside their functional department with a higher or lower hierarchical rank (Wilson & Malik, 1995). A specialist from research and development may, for instance, diagonally connect with the head of the sales department to discuss the market potential of a new technical invention. Members can also form diagonal linkages by skipping a hierarchical level and approaching their supervisor’s supervisor to gain additional managerial support or their subordinates’ subordinates to gain access to extra expertise (Kassing, 2009; Wilson, 1992).

Although diagonal linkages are a common phenomenon in many organizations (Kassing, 2009), most research ignored the role of such linkages for interteam coordination. Diagonal linkages may, however, offer unique benefits, because such interaction patterns may allow members to simultaneously coordinate across functional and hierarchical boundaries (Wilson, 1992; Wilson & Malik, 1995). Diagonal linkages may, thus, connect the most knowledgeable lower-level specialists with the most influential higher-level leaders in the organization during the coordination of important task-related issues. In doing so, it may keep non-essential, hierarchical intermediates from delaying or distorting interteam coordination, and allow teams to dynamically coordinate within otherwise highly bureaucratic and rigid organizations (Hamel, 2009). Diagonal coordination may therefore be critically important when teams work under great pressure and have limited time to follow formal interaction patterns for coordinating ad-hoc issues. Some scholars have even suggested that the Colombia space shuttle disaster in 2003 potentially could have been averted, had a flight manager not ignored diagonal coordination attempts (Levina & Vaast, 2005). According to these scholars, the Colombia crashed partly because “a manager in charge of the flight ignored investigation
requests from engineers from another division who did not proceed through the appropriate channels of communication” (Levina & Vaast, 2005: 336).

At other times, diagonal linkages may possibly trouble interteam coordination. Members who circumvent their supervisor during coordination may damage their supervisor-subordinate relationship (Kassing, 2007) and initiate activities that are misaligned with the supervisor’s vision for the team. Also, diagonal linkages deviate from generally accepted hierarchical interaction patterns (e.g., horizontal or vertical), which some members may perceive as inappropriate. A supervisor who is strict on the rules, for example, may feel that it is illegitimate to request assistance from a subordinate from a different department without first having asked for the respective subordinate’s supervisor’s consent. Also, conflict may emerge when such supervisors are diagonally approached to coordinate work by a person from a different department who has a relatively higher or lower hierarchical rank. In fact, this is what happened during the Colombia space mission when the flight manager was alarmed by lower-rank specialists from a different division (Levina & Vaast, 2005). Additional research is needed to understand why such situations happen and to clarify if and when members can effectively complement or substitute horizontal and vertical coordination with diagonal efforts to align teams’ actions. Such research may open up new ways to make interteam coordination more effective and efficient in critical situations.

**Additional Antecedents of Interteam Coordination**

Considering the potential importance of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal coordination between teams, it seems also essential to examine antecedents that may lead team members to exhibit these distinct interaction patterns. Chapter 4’s results indicate that functionally broad members develop a superior capacity for interteam coordination that they may use for establishing and maintaining coordination linkages with other teams when they strongly identify with the organization as a whole. Further research could build on these findings and
uncover additional factors that may motivate members to use the capacities vested in breadth of functional experience specifically for horizontal, vertical, or diagonal coordination. Such research can further increase academic understanding of the emergence of interteam coordination patterns in organizations and enable managers to motivate individual team members in using their capacities for particular types of interteam coordination.

Specifically, research could examine whether contextual conditions may affect how team members use their capacities for interteam coordination. For example, team members may foremost use their cognitive resources for horizontal coordination in flat organizations where most decisions are at members’ own discretion. On the other hand, members may be directed towards using their breadth of functional experience for vertical coordination within centralized organizations where supervisors control most resources and decision-making (cf. DeHart-Davis, 2007; Tsai, 2002). It is also possible that members are motivated to use their breadth of functional experience to escape from formal coordination mechanisms in case they associate such mechanisms with “red tape” (i.e., an abundance of seemingly pointless, yet time-consuming rules and regulations; Bozeman, Reed, & Scott, 1992: 290). In such instances, functionally broad members may use their capacities for diagonal coordination.

Besides examining contextual conditions, additional research could explore individual-level differences that may lead team members to use their capacities for specific coordination types. Researchers could, for instance, consider “unbureaucratic personality” (i.e., a member’s innate tendency to bend rules when they perceive this is in their organization’s best interest; DeHart-Davis, 2007: 892), pro-active personality (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006), and risk-taking propensity (Brockhaus, 1980) as dispositional forces that may lead members to deviate from typical coordination patterns and use their capacities for diagonal interteam coordination. Pursuing these directions would advance a
more nuanced perspective on the emergence of interteam coordination that differentiates antecedents according to the specific coordination type they are likely to promote.

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This dissertation offers several important practical recommendations for managing interteam coordination. Specifically, the findings presented here can inform managers on choices regarding organizational design, team composition, and the development of individual members’ capacities. First, this dissertation illustrates how the formal system of roles and responsibilities in the organization can be designed so as to promote interteam coordination. Based on these findings, managers may redesign bureaucratic organizational structures according to MTS principles and allow lower-level members to self-organize their teams’ collective efforts. In doing so, managers ensure that team members have sufficient opportunities to coordinate with other teams. In addition, managers should appoint a central group of formal boundary spanners with system-wide oversight (i.e., an integration team) to support lower-level teams’ coordination efforts. Such integration teams are a formal part of the MTS and responsible for assisting teams in coordinating efforts within the overall system.

Second, the present dissertation’s findings can help managers in realizing MTSs’ full potential. MTSs appear to function most effectively when the integration team applies contingent coordination principles and specializes in coordinating strategic directions during initial phases of collective processes (e.g., the start-up of a joint project or task), while leaving the subsequent alignment of detailed task-related issues to teams’ specialist members. Managers may, accordingly, distribute strategic coordination duties to the integration team and focus teams’ specialists on aligning more operational issues. In addition, integration teams need to exhibit vertical coordinated action (i.e., frequently connecting and discussing task-related issues with lower-level team members). Vertical coordinated action allows the integration team to transmit its real-time, system-wide information of activities within the
MTS towards teams’ specialist members. Specialist members are then likely to know which operational issues need to be coordinated during later phases of collective processes. Beyond instilling contingent coordination practices, managers therefore need to make sure that the integration team has the appropriate capacities for vertical coordinated action. Managers can, for example, enroll an integration team’s members for “coordinating” training in which they can learn to exchange information and align efforts with component teams.

Third, this dissertation details how to develop individual-level and team-level capacities for interteam coordination within MTSs. Building MTSs with functionally broad members was found to facilitate horizontal coordination between component teams, provided that the integration team supported component teams through exhibiting vertical coordinated action. Individual-level studies further indicated that functionally broad team members needed to identify with the organization, in order to be motivated to direct their cognitive potentials towards interteam coordination. Guided by these insights, managers may initiate interventions aimed at increasing functional breadth (e.g., through job rotation, multifunctional development trajectories, team composition strategies, etc.). Furthermore, managers may need to ensure that members are motivated to use their broad functional experiences for interteam coordination purposes by instilling a strong organizational identification. Managers could, for example, stress the organization’s distinctiveness and prestige toward subordinates and emphasize teams’ mutual goals in the organization.

Finally, this dissertation can assist managers in deciding on the appropriateness and timing of interventions aimed at increasing members’ functional breadth. For example, the finding that breadth of functional experience’s value for interteam coordination depends on the integration team’s vertical coordinated action and members’ organizational identification may help managers to evaluate the potential effectiveness of practices for increasing functional breadth. Managers may assess vertical coordinated action and organizational
identification and, based on that evaluation’s outcomes, decide on an optimal strategy for promoting interteam coordination. If an organization is well coordinated vertically and members strongly identify with the organization, substantial performance advantages can be realized by developing members’ breadth of functional experience. In contrast, when an organization is not well coordinated vertically and/or organizational identification is likely to be weak, managers should prioritize developing these boundary conditions before investing in interventions aimed at increasing members’ breadth of functional experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Numerous examples illustrate teams’ day-to-day difficulty in effectively coordinating joint efforts, as well as the breakdowns they experience by consequence. Chapter 1, for example, described how coordination failures had inhibited teams from jointly constructing a functional rail tunnel and collectively preparing a successful space mission. This dissertation offers new knowledge on the factors that may enable more effective interteam coordination in the future. The studies presented here worked to resolve key ambiguities regarding how to optimize organizational structures, team composition, and individual members’ capacities for interteam coordination. In doing so, this dissertation advances existing management theory and practice by introducing a new, holistic approach towards studying interteam coordination that combines insights from multiple research fields to facilitate such important activities. I hope that this dissertation helps to manage coordination challenges in practice and motivates other scholars to create new knowledge on this intriguing topic.