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**THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN BECOMING A VARSITY  
ATHLETE**

by

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**THESIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sport teams have been studied in many different ways, however very little research has focused on how learning to become an athlete takes place in a team. Recent research in the fields of business and education have examined the learning process among naturally forming groups called “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The notion of communities of practice constitutes the major element of Wenger’s (1998b) social theory of learning. Some authors have described sport teams as a good example of a community of practice. Based on these comments, this study employed a qualitative methodology to look at the learning process that takes place through the interaction of the members of a team.

Twenty-four female varsity athletes were interviewed regarding their participation in varsity level sports. The athletes were asked about their progression from being a newcomer (rookie) to their present status on the team. In particular, participants were asked how they learned to fit into the team and how they interacted with other players and the coach during this process.

The results of the study are presented through two articles examining individual aspects of the athlete community of practice. Article #1 examines the role of tacit knowledge in becoming a varsity athlete. Article #2 looks at how newcomers to a varsity sports team move from the status of newcomer or legitimate peripheral participant, toward full participation (old-timer) in their community of practice.

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**PART ONE: INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF LITERATURE, FIELD  
INFORMATION, AND PURPOSE**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sport teams have been the subject of many different types of research. Some of the most thorough research has been in the area of group dynamics (e.g., Carron & Hausenblas, 1998) and more specifically, group cohesion (e.g., Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, & Carron, 2000). Authors such as Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley (1985) have attempted to understand and explain how cohesion affects the dynamics and functioning of the sports team. Most of the research on group cohesion has employed quantitative methods to study various outcome measures of cohesion, such as performance (e.g., Grieve, Whelan, & Meyers, 2000; Mullen & Copper, 1994), adherence (e.g., Prapavessis & Carron, 1997), and satisfaction (e.g., Carron, 1982).

Another important area of research on sport teams concerns the development of identity (e.g., Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1994; Donnelly & Young, 1988; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991; Tsang, 2000). Research on issues such as starter-status (e.g., Riemer & Chelladurai, 2001; Rotella & Newburg, 1989), and gender (e.g., Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1993, 1994; Reimer & Chelladurai, 2001) have helped to understand how identity is developed, maintained, and/or changed through an athlete's membership with, and level of involvement in, the sports team.

While the studies in areas such as team cohesion and identity have made very important contributions to the sport literature, no research has directly addressed the learning process that takes place through the interaction of the members of a team. Also, while there is literature describing many aspects of being a member of a team, there is no research on the process of becoming part of a team. Becoming a team sport athlete is not

like becoming a doctor or lawyer, which involves a formal education and standardized testing measures. The learning process is much less structured and relies heavily on participation in the group and learning from teammates.

Recently, researchers in the areas of business and education have studied the learning process in groups using a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998b). Wenger (1998b) explains that “the primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation” (p.4). The basic notion is that we begin our participation in a “community of practice” as newcomers. As we gain more knowledge, experience, and acceptance from other community members, we move toward “full participation”, that is, we become old-timers or more central figures in the community.

A community of practice is made up of all of the members of a group who are engaged in its practice. Wenger (1998a) states that “[m]embers of a community are informally bound by what they do together (...) and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities. A community of practice is thus different from a community of interest or a geographical community, neither of which implies a shared practice” (p.2).

Communities of practice are defined along three dimensions: Joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire of communal resources. We can roughly summarize the links between these three dimensions by saying that members of a particular group interested in achieving a certain task (joint enterprise) will engage in actions and will interact with others (mutual engagement) to “negotiate the meaning” (Wenger, 1998b) of this enterprise. Over time this negotiation process creates routines,

words, tools, stories, ways of doing things (shared repertoire), which are essential in order to know how to be a full member in the community of practice.

One of the main ways learning takes place in communities of practice is through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This term is used to designate the process newcomers experience in becoming part of the community of practice.

‘Legitimate peripheral participation’ provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.29)

Legitimate peripheral participation addresses the fact that most learning in communities of practice does not take place in a traditional classroom-type setting where learning has historically been mostly decontextualized and focused on the transfer of knowledge (Choi & Hannafin, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning takes place through the negotiation of meaning between members of a community of practice by their mutual engagement in an endeavour. It is not simply the result of being in a group, rather it is the process of participation and interaction within a community of practice.

Up to now, research on communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation has been focused on the fields of business and education. A few recent

ethnographic studies (e.g., Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) have described research on communities of practice as a promising new way to understand groups: emphasizing a growing focus on social practices and relationships. Several authors have also mentioned that the community of practice framework is very applicable to understanding groups in the domain of sports, particularly sports teams (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999, Henning, 1998, Wenger, 1998a). Therefore, using Wenger's (1998b) social theory of learning, this research will seek to explore the process of becoming a varsity athlete to help understand how athletes "experience the world and [their] engagement in it as meaningful" (Wenger, 1998a, p.53). Through the use of a qualitative methodology, detailed insight will be gained into the learning that takes place between members of a community of practice – the varsity sports team (article #1). It will also examine how newcomers move from legitimate peripheral participation toward full participation in their community of practice (article #2).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Research on the topic of communities of practice is limited. The concept is relatively new to scientific literature and has not yet been studied or used by a great number of researchers. Lave and Wenger first used the term “communities of practice” in 1991 in their book “Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation”, however it was not very well defined or closely examined in their research. It was not until 1998 when Wenger wrote the book “Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity”, that a clear definition and understanding of communities of practice was available.

Literature on communities of practice has been focused mainly in the business world and somewhat in the field of education. To our knowledge, there has been no research to date on sport teams as communities of practice and very little research on communities of practice in the sports domain at all. This chapter will briefly review some aspects of the literature on groups and teams in the field of sport psychology as well as giving a detailed review of research on communities of practice in various fields of study.

#### Research on Groups and Teams in Sport Psychology

As far as we know, there is currently no research on communities of practice in the domain of sport. Studies on groups and teams are examined because they represent the most closely related topic in research on sport. Research on teams in sport psychology has generally been focused in the area of group dynamics, more specifically group cohesion. Studies in this area have provided the field of sport psychology with valuable

insight in understanding the factors that affect the cohesion of groups and their individual members in many situations.

Cohesion is defined by Carron, et al. (1998) as “a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives, and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (p.213). It is one of the most common ways that teams have been studied since the young field of sport psychology began.

In 1985, Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley introduced a model for cohesion which proposes that “each group member integrates the information from various aspects of the social world that are relevant and meaningful to the group such that a variety of perceptions and beliefs are generated” (Paskevich, et al., 2000, p.473). Based on this model, the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) (Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1987; Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985) was developed to better assess sport team cohesion.

The GEQ was designed to assess the two main beliefs why groups remain cohesive (group integration and individual attraction to the group), as well as the two sub-components of each of these beliefs (task and social orientations). Thus the questionnaire measures four dimensions: Group Integration – Task (GI-T); Group Integration – Social (GI-S); Individual Attraction to the Group - Task (ATG-T); and Individual Attraction to the Group – Social (ATG-S).

Through more than 30 studies on group cohesion in sport psychology, four main categories of correlates have emerged: Environmental factors, personal factors, leadership factors, and team factors (Paskevich et al., 2000). Within each of these

categories, more specific areas of cohesion have been studied to assess their correlation with cohesion.

Another important issue in the cohesion literature is the link between cohesion and performance. Mullen and Copper (1994) found that, of 66 studies examined, 92% reported that cohesion affected performance, although generally the effect was small. However, as Paskevich et al. (2000) explain “the research thus far has had limited success at providing a definitive answer to whether cohesion affects performance or performance affects cohesion” (p.476). While research on cohesion has provided important information for the field of sport psychology, it represents only one of many ways of viewing and studying groups and has generally been limited in scope and methodology. Paskevich et al. (2000) point out that although there have been great strides in research on cohesion in team sports, a number of unexplored issues remain. From our perspective, one issue that could possibly be explored is the lack of qualitative research describing the dynamics of the team from the viewpoint of team members. Using the concepts of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, the team can be understood and described from the perspective of the individual members through qualitative interviewing. While communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation have not yet been studied in the field of sport psychology, they represent a promising new way to understand sport teams and other athletic groups.

#### What is a Community of Practice?

Communities of practice are not a new phenomenon, they have been around for as long as human beings have. We engage in many of them every day, at home, at school, at work, in our pastimes; we just don't generally define them as communities of practice.

While the notion of communities of practice is not a new concept, it is relatively new as a research topic. Only recently have researchers begun to examine communities of practice in an effort to understand the learning process that takes place within them.

In his book entitled "Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity", Wenger (1998b) describes the three dimensions of practice that bind community members together and make them a community of practice. The first dimension, mutual engagement, is described as being what defines "belonging" in a community of practice: "Practice does not exist in the abstract. It exists because people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another" (p.73). The emphasis in mutual engagement lies in the active participation of members in the community of practice.

The second dimension, joint enterprise, involves "a collective process of negotiation [...] defined by the participants [...] [that] creates among [them] relations of mutual accountability" (p.77). Here, the importance lies in the negotiation process that takes place between members in a collective effort to give meaning to their participation in the community of practice.

The third dimension, shared repertoire, "includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (p.83). This is important to the community of practice because it enables members to speak about and understand things using a common language and similar ways of doing things. It is also what distinguishes a particular community of practice from others and contributes to forming the identity of people as members of a particular community.

A few researchers have examined communities of practice from an ethnographic perspective and brought to light the topic's research potential. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) studied communities of practice in their research on language and gender. Using examples of previous studies in their field, the authors explain why viewing groups such as "jocks", "burnouts", or "nerd girls" as communities of practice is important: "It is what people are DOING which gives their interactions real bite, and which constructs language and gender (and much more) [...]. It is the PRACTICE component of the CofP that makes it such a useful construct for language and gender research" (p.190).

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999), also conducting research on language and gender, examined the differences between the community of practice framework and other social psychological and sociolinguistic frameworks. They explain that the community of practice offers a very effective way of conducting research in their field that is different from other more traditional methods.

It emphasizes the notion of 'practice' as central to an understanding of why the concept offers something different to researchers than the traditional term 'community' – or, in the context of sociolinguistic research, more than concepts like 'speech community' and 'social network'. (p.174)

In her research on a group of nerd girls, Bucholtz (1999) underlines some of the benefits of using the community of practice framework: "The community of practice [...] allows us to look at nerd girls [...] as speakers AND as social actors, as individuals AND members of communities" (p.213).

The ability to understand people as playing a combination of roles in learning, not just a single one, opens the door to understanding the complexity of the learning process and the many roles participants play in a community of practice. Also, since participation on sport teams is naturally centred around the notion of practice, this makes it an ideal framework for understanding learning in the sports domain. The life of the varsity athlete, as sportsperson, academician, and socialite, involves learning and participation in many different aspects of the team: a phenomenon that is often understudied or overlooked in most sports team research.

#### Research on Communities of Practice in Business

In business, researchers (Community Intelligence Labs, 2001; McMaster, 2001; Sharp, 1997) have focused on how to use communities of practice to improve the functioning of organizations. However, Wenger (1998b) points out:

Communities of practice are not a new kind of organizational unit; rather they are a different *cut* on the organization's structure – one that emphasizes the learning that people have done together rather than the unit they report to, the project they are working on, or the people they know. Communities of practice differ from other kinds of groups found in organizations in the way they define their enterprise, exist over time, and set their boundaries. (p.4)

One of the major areas of recent study in the business field has been in knowledge management (McDermott, 2000). Particular attention has been given to communities of practice for their ability to pass on a particular type of knowledge: “[M]any are discovering that the real value in knowledge management is in sharing ideas and insights

that are not documented and hard to articulate. This undocumented, hard-to-articulate knowledge is what has been called tacit knowledge” (McDermott, 2000, p.1). Tacit knowledge is important because it involves the sharing of crucial information that normally isn’t found in books or anywhere else. It is only learned through active participation in the community of practice.

The situation is much the same in sport teams, where there are generally no written rules, instructions, or handbooks on being part of the team, and the only way to learn how to function in the group is through active participation.

The implementation and use of communities of practice in major worldwide corporations has been documented recently (e.g., Brown & Solomon-Gray, 1995; Hanley, 1999; Stamps, 1997; Stewart, 1996; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Research on companies such as Xerox, Daimler Chrysler, and Shell Oil has shown how developing and nurturing communities of practice can help to provide strategies, solve problems, and promote best practices (Wenger & Snyder, 2000)

Research on communities of practice in the business field has also examined other aspects, such as success factors in building a community of practice (e.g., CoVis, 2001; McDermott, 2000), organizational learning and strategy insights (Snyder, 1997), the role of communities of practice in team organizations (McDermott, 1999a), and how to nurture a community of practice (McDermott, 1999b; Sharp, 1997; Wenger, 1996, 1998a, 1998b). Each of these topics also has relevance in the world of sports and is helpful in better understanding the sports team as a community of practice.

### Research on Communities of Practice in Education

While the overwhelming majority of research on communities of practice has been done in the business domain, there has also been some research in the field of education. For example, Palincsar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, & Brown (1998) set out to create a community of practice designed to help kindergarten to grade five teachers with new inquiry-based science classes. From this, the Guided Inquiry supporting Multiple Learning (GIsML) community of practice was formed. This community was developed through a five-step process centered on the participation of all members (teachers) in activities and discussion groups. The result was a community of practice built on understanding, sharing, and learning new ways of delivering inquiry-based science classes to students. Teachers first experienced GIsML as learners then discussed connections between learning and teaching GIsML. They then worked together on the development and planning of the teaching of the curriculum. Once teachers began implementing GIsML in the classrooms, they met regularly to debrief and discuss how to improve it.

Understanding how communities of practice are created and function is especially important for research in the sports field, as the turnover rate in sport teams is generally high and it is quite common to create new teams for events, such as tournaments, provincial, national, or international competitions, and the Olympics. In these cases, the practice time is usually limited and the team must learn to work together quickly.

In another article (Rogoff, 1994), a community of learners was contrasted with two opposing, "one-sided" forms of instruction: adult-run instruction and children-run instruction. In the adult-run model, adults are considered the "keepers" of knowledge

and their job is to fill children up with knowledge in the same way a bottle is filled with liquid. In the children-run model, children are responsible for their own learning and adults are seen as an obstruction to this learning. The community of learners model is not intended as a happy medium between these two models, rather it reflects an entirely different philosophy. Rogoff (1994) points out that “both mature members of the community and less mature members are conceived as active: no role has all the responsibility for knowing or directing, and no role is by definition passive” (p.213).

Rogoff (1994) cites research on the raising of children in the Mayan culture versus a middle-class European-American community to compare and contrast the community of learners model with the two one-sided models of learning. In the Mayan community, children are allowed to learn through participation in all of the same activities as adults in the community. Learning is not separate from community activities and there is no special “instruction” time set aside to teach children. This research helps to understand that most learning in the community of practice is not the result of teaching: it is the result of participation in the community’s practice.

Rogoff’s (1994) research puts into question the feasibility of the long-held tradition of sport teams as an adult-run organization. The coach as the keeper of knowledge. “filling athletes up” with information may not be the most effective way to learn. However, teams where coaches allow athletes to make all of the decisions about their learning may not be the solution either. As Rogoff indicates in her research, rather than trying to choose only one model and apply it in every situation, we would be better to use different models based on our needs in different circumstances.

Brown & Duguid (1993) examine the differences between instruction and learning and discuss the importance of viewing the situation from the learner's perspective (p.10). They also examine the differences between explicit and implicit knowledge, explaining that learners need to "steal" the implicit knowledge that they need to learn a practice. This "theft" occurs mainly because making most implicit knowledge explicit is problematic or even sometimes impossible; therefore learners are instead required to "steal" it. In some sport teams, the notion of "theft" of implicit knowledge can be very legitimate, particularly where there is jealousy, rivalry, or competition for certain positions on the team. In these cases, some athletes are left to themselves to learn how to fit in to the community of practice. Therefore they must "steal" implicit knowledge instead of having it shared with them by team members.

#### Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Research on legitimate peripheral participation has provided insight into the learning process of newcomers and people on the periphery of communities of practice. In their book, "Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation", Lave and Wenger (1991) propose the term legitimate peripheral participation to describe the findings of their research on apprenticeship in various settings. The authors cite ethnographic studies involving the apprenticeship practices of Yucatec midwives, Vai and Gola tailors, naval quartermasters, meat cutters, and nondrinking alcoholics. Each example provides a rich description of the process newcomer apprentices must go through in entering a new community of practice.

Wolcott (1996) examined peripheral participation at a potlatch (celebration) held by the Kwakiutl people of British Columbia. In his research, the author describes how the

degree of peripherality of each person at the potlatch could actually be seen through simple observation. People's physical proximity to the stage seemed to be in direct proportion to their involvement in, and endorsement of the potlatch celebration (p.472). This reveals how sometimes peripherality can be a physical phenomenon as well as a social one. On sport teams, peripheral members are often highly visible: practicing on their own, not socializing with teammates, or sitting on the bench or in the stands (if they did not dress) at games.

Wolcott also describes one particular participant who made a conscious choice to remain on the periphery instead of trying to get more involved. Although he was on the fringes of the potlatch, he seemed to be exactly where he wanted to be (p.477). This helps to understand that all community of practice members do not necessarily have the same trajectory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b) and some remain on the periphery by choice. For some student athletes, success in sport is not the main reason for participation. Sport may be a pastime or way to keep in shape, or it may be a way to meet people or to be social. It is important to understand that all athletes don't necessarily seek the same outcomes from their participation in sport.

Wolcott's (1996) research with the Kwakiutl people of British Columbia also describes his own experience as a peripheral participant in one of their potlatch celebrations. In his report, the author speaks about understanding firsthand what it means to be a legitimate peripheral participant. At first, Wolcott did not consider himself a participant in the potlatch (p.467). However, when unexpectedly asked to participate in a traditional dance honouring a leader in the community, Wolcott officially earned the status of legitimate peripheral participant.

“For that brief moment, I (...) was pulled into the circle of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. I was legitimate because I had access to a true community of participation, peripheral because my task was short and simple, capable of being accomplished by a novice”. (Wolcott, 1996, p.485)

This firsthand account of what it’s like to be a legitimate peripheral participant can be helpful in understanding what newcomers to sports teams may experience when they join a team.

A final study (Fuhrer, 1993) focused specifically on how newcomers react in different behaviour settings. Using a quasi-experimental research design, Fuhrer had sixty-four freshmen subjects complete a task consisting of going into a career planning and placement centre and collecting information. The author manipulated the career planning and placement centre environment on three variables: setting-specific prior knowledge, number of people present, and congruence of subjects’ and others’ actions or goals. Fuhrer (1993) found that when newcomers weren’t given specific instructions to complete the task in the study, they were more concerned with discrepancy-reducing behaviour and impression management than those who were given detailed information on the task in the study. This shows that newcomers tend to rely on observing others when learning how to complete a particular task (p.205), relaying the importance of legitimate peripheral participants learning how to become a part of a community of practice by doing what they see other more experienced participants doing. In concluding his article, Furher (1993) comments that:

[L]ooking at newcomers coping with real-life behavior settings demonstrates that situated learning is the joint product of processing cognitive, social, emotional, and environmental goals. Neither cognitive, nor social, nor emotional, nor ecobehavioral models per se would adequately explain situated learning. Instead, situated learning must be viewed as the coordination of multiple actions or goals. (p.207)

This statement supports the notion that there are no simple ways of learning how to be a member of a community of practice; newcomers must learn how to become members of the community through their participation and negotiation of meaning with other members of the community of practice. Through this process they come to understand what it means to be a full participant in the community.

### Identity

Although the process of becoming a member of a community of practice is linked to identity, there have been very few studies focused directly on the topic of identity in the community of practice. In their research examining the relationship between school kids' identification with a particular group (jocks or burnouts) and their gender and use of language, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) discuss the role of identity in the community of practice (CofP):

Individuals construct identities through the resolution of their various forms of participation in various communities of practice [...]. Participants come to each CofP with a history and a trajectory, a host of social and linguistic expectations from other sources, and a set of abilities. The extent

and ways in which these are transformed depends on the nature of their engagement in the new CofP. (p.189)

The same can be said for newcomers to a sports team, where athletes join the team with a number of personal experiences and expectations from which they draw their current identity. Transforming this identity into one that reflects membership in the new community of practice relies heavily on athletes' engagement with their new teammates and participation in the community's practice.

In her work on language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls, Bucholtz (1999) states that "[t]he community of practice model accommodates the individuality that is paramount in the nerd social identity, without overlooking the strong community ties that unify the nerd girls in this study" (p.213). This ability to view people as individuals and as participants in a community allow for a more complete understanding of how people interact and function in practice-based groups. It also identifies the importance of studying the concept of identity in research on communities of practice: "[I]dentity is analyzed within the community of practice framework because only this concept permits us to draw on the [...] social information necessary to understand the production of [...] identity" (p.204).

There have also been a number of researchers (e.g., Jacob & Carron, 1996; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991; Tsang, 2000) who have examined the topic of identity in the sport setting, looking at it from various angles, however none of these have used the community of practice framework. One area of study was players' status on the team. Jacob and Carron (1996), in their study of college level Canadian and quasi-professional Indian athletes, found that status was most highly related to such factors as experience,

role on the team, performance, and age. This is very similar to the community of practice framework, where full participation normally involves the acquisition of experience, playing a key role (on and off the playing field), and the ability to maintain and enhance the practice of the community.

Rotella and Newburg (1989) looked at the reverse side of status, describing how having the label of “benchwarmer” can have a large impact on an athlete’s identity. Some athletes who are benched can experience identity crises, which can seriously affect the way they perform. The authors explain that very often team sport athletes measure themselves according to the amount of playing time they receive and are often not prepared to cope with being benched. However Rotella and Newburg suggest that playing time is not always the only way for an athlete to feel successful. Playing a valuable role on the bench or in practices can also bring an athlete a great sense of accomplishment and feelings of being an important contributor to the team. This can be likened to the notion of communities of practice, where different members have different trajectories and seek to fulfill different roles on the team (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b).

#### Research in Physical Education

Although there has been no research conducted in the field of sport using the community of practice framework, there is an article regarding the use of situated learning theory in physical education (PE). The community of practice framework has its roots in the concept of situated learning, which served as the focal point for the initial research on communities of practice: “*Situated Learning* contributes to a growing body of research in human sciences that explores the situated character of human understanding and communication. It takes as its focus the relationship between learning and the social

situations in which it occurs” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.14). Kirk and MacDonald (1998) investigated the use of situated learning in physical education (PE) through a newly developed model for PE called the “sport education model” (Alexander, Taggart, & Thorpe, 1996). This model basically consists of longer units, which act as seasons. Each season, students are given the opportunity to assume one of many roles, such as athlete, coach, manager, official, publicist, or member of the “sports board” which oversees the unit. The sports are often modified and the teams are matched in ability.

Kirk and MacDonald explain that using this model in Australia has been quite successful because of “the opportunities for *legitimate* peripheral participation it affords” (1998, p.383). The authors also point out that a major strength of this social theory of learning is that it applies to a wide variety of communities of practice related to physical activity, such as sport teams. Therefore, while they do not directly address the issue of sport teams, the authors do concede the benefits of situated learning and communities of practice in understanding how they (and other related communities of practice) function.

This study shows that communities of practice are very relevant to the domain of physical education and sport. Learning, using this new sport education model, relies heavily on participation from all of the students who are generally newcomers to many activities such as coaching, officiating, managing, and publicizing. Through their participation in these communities of practice and negotiation with community members, as well as other communities of practice, students come to learn how to become members of the sporting community in general. The opportunity to be full participants in these communities of practice allows the students access to information, knowledge, and experiences that they might otherwise never been able to obtain.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **FIELD INFORMATION**

As part of the current research, a pilot study (Galipeau & Trudel, 2001) was conducted in which a female varsity athlete was asked about her involvement in her community of practice (varsity athletes) both as a legitimate peripheral participant and as a full participant. Using an in-depth, semi-structured interview, the athlete was asked to explain how she and other teammates interacted with coaches, teammates, friends, family, and any other people related to her sport.

Through the interview, important insight was gained into the process of negotiation that took place between rookies (legitimate peripheral participants) and veterans (full participants) on the two teams that she played during her varsity career. The athlete's own experiences moving from newcomer toward full participation were also sought. Many specific examples were given to describe what she and other legitimate peripheral participants did to become part of the community of practice and move toward full participation. For example, the athlete described her experience as a newcomer. "My first year was very overwhelming because I didn't know what to expect. I had never been on something with that much responsibility before: training and you know, you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that [...]. There were lots of rules and things". She also explained how occasionally there were difficulties between some rookies and veterans. "There were problems there because the star rookie was expected to perform and the vets would look at her if she wasn't performing. A lot of them supported her, but then some of them didn't support her. Some of the vets didn't like all of the attention she was getting".

The importance of having various forms of participation in a community of practice surfaced in the coach's statements when the athlete announced she was leaving the team. Her coach replied:

Actually, you know, you had a bigger role than you thought you did.

I know you didn't play very much, but you brought a lot to this team.

You brought a lot of humour and a lot of fun... You brought the girls up and you worked hard, you were the heart of the team. Not heart of the team skill wise, just working hard.

Conducting the pilot study helped to uncover some potentially important topics for future interviews as well as themes for coding and analysis. It also helped in supporting the utility and importance of studying sport teams using the community of practice framework. The interview provided many concrete examples that could be traced back directly to previous literature on communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation in other fields.

As it can be seen from this review of literature, communities of practice represent an effective new way to study groups in various areas of research. This information helps us to better understand how groups function and how newcomers learn to become part of these groups. However, up to now there is no research on sports teams as communities of practice, and very little research on this topic in the domain of sport and physical activity in general. The pilot study that was conducted supports the relevance and importance of investigating teams using the community of practice framework. These facts reveal the need for research on this relatively new topic in the scientific community, an issue that the current research attempts to address.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to examine the learning process involved in becoming an athlete in a varsity sports team. Coaches and teammates can have a very big influence on how athletes learn to fit into the team. Social interaction also plays a major role in the learning process of communities of practice. Based on this, my general research questions are the following:

1. What is the nature of the interaction process between athletes in a varsity sports team?
2. How does this interaction process affect the development of athletes as members of the community of practice?

More specifically, this research will seek to investigate two main areas:

1. The learning process that takes place within the athlete community of practice in a varsity sports team (article #1)
2. How newcomers to a varsity sports team move from legitimate peripheral participation toward full participation in their community of practice (article #2).

## **CHAPTER V**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Because the focus of this research is to understand the experience of participation in a community of practice from the athletes' perspective, a qualitative research design was utilized. As Rubin & Rubin (1995) point out, qualitative interviewing allows us to understand why people do what they do, and to see how they understand their world (p.5). Through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to

obtain rich, detailed information on the athlete's view of the process of becoming a varsity athlete. Rubin and Rubin (1995) explain that: "People who live or work together [...] develop shared understandings that are communicated to others in their group and constitute their culture. In-depth qualitative interviewing helps explain how and why culture is created, evolves, and is maintained" (p.3).

### Participants

The participants (N=24) consisted of members of a university women's hockey team and a university women's soccer team. All participants were either currently playing for the team, or had played for the team during the previous season. Both teams were part of the Ontario Women's Intercollegiate Athletic Association (OWIAA), which organizes women's sports teams in Ontario universities as part of Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS).

### Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews (one per athlete) were audio taped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed. The analysis consisted of classifying units of information based on categories derived from the literature on communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, as well as other important points that emerged in the pilot interview. These units served as initial "nodes" (see Appendix A) for analysis using QSR Nudist Vivo (or NVivo for short), a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program. As more interviews were conducted and analyzed, new nodes were created, others deleted, or some others grouped to accommodate new discoveries and interpretations.

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this research was addressed through the use of triangulation (Mathison, 1988), a process whereby multiple measures are taken independently to ensure the data is trustworthy. Denzin (1978) points out that researchers typically use three types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In this research two of these three types of triangulation were used to ensure trustworthiness. Data triangulation was used through the inclusion of many individuals as a source of data, as suggested by Mathison (1988), as well as member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which consisted of having participants verify the transcript of their interview for accuracy. Also, the use of the NVivo software enabled more efficient handling of data, easier retrieval and classification, and less chance of losing or misplacing it during the ongoing analysis. Investigator triangulation was ensured through peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which consisted of regular meetings with a group of colleagues knowledgeable in the area of research for their feedback and suggestions on how to improve any aspects of the research process.

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**PART TWO: RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

## **CHAPTER VI**

**Running head: Becoming a Varsity Athlete**

**The Role of Tacit Knowledge in Becoming a Varsity Athlete**

**James Galipeau  
&  
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### The Role of Tacit Knowledge in Becoming a Varsity Athlete

We don't learn how to be a varsity athlete in the same manner as we learn to be a doctor, lawyer, teacher, etc. In the latter cases, the content of the curriculum is well defined with a clear beginning and end. Also, only accredited institutions are allowed to dispense the training. For athletes, the situation is less crystal clear because learning doesn't start with a formal education, as in other professions. Although in some sports, such as swimming (Canadian Amateur Swimming Association, 1977) and gymnastics (Canadian Gymnastics Federation, 1986) there are some specific skills/movements to learn in a specific order, most of the time people learn to be athletes through their many experiences with teammates, coaches, managers, etc. This is particularly true in team sports where each organization tries to have their players implementing the best game strategies to create an element of surprise or to gain an edge on the competition.

Coaches are recognized as having an important influence on the learning that takes place on a team (Bloom, Schinke, & Salmela, 1997; Roy, Trudel, & Lemyre, in press). For example, in the Coaching Model (CM) developed by Côté and his colleagues (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russel, 1995; Gilbert & Trudel, 2000) the coach has, among other things, the responsibility to help athletes develop their skills during training sessions and perform according to their potential in competition. Coaches are often seen as being the possessors of knowledge and the athletes must carefully follow the coaches' instructions in order to acquire the knowledge and skills they need. For the athletes, this learning context is one of acquisition of knowledge (Sfard, 1998). Although there is no doubt that coaches play a key role in the development of athletes and teams, an important part of the athletes' learning can also be done apart from the coach and often without his

or her awareness. Sfard (1998) uses the participation metaphor to describe how learning is a process of participation not simply a matter of knowledge acquisition. On the sports field, interactions between individuals and at the group level create a context or “life” in the team that is somewhat hidden from coaches and outsiders. As Sharp (1997) explains: “When people work [play] together, they invariably form many informal networks of relationships that go beyond formal organization patterns [...]. In short, people in organizations never just strictly follow the formal organization and never behave just as cogs in a machine” (p.1). Coaches are usually aware of the importance of having a good climate, a team spirit, or a gang pulling in the same direction. But what do these expressions really mean?

Up to now, there has been very little research on how sport teams function as a group, apart from studies done by Carron and his colleagues (e.g., Carron, 1982; Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998) on team cohesion. Studies on cohesion have used quantitative methodologies and have been focused mainly on the relationship between cohesion and outcome measures, such as performance (Mullen & Copper, 1994) and adherence (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997). The contribution of this research to the field of sports is very interesting, however there is a need to go a step further and look at the life inside of the sports team. Thus new concepts are needed to answer questions such as: What is the nature of the interaction process between athletes on sports teams and how do these interactions influence the development of the athletes?

In an effort to explain the learning that takes place through participation, Wenger (1998b) has developed a theory called “social theory of learning”. At the core of this

social theory of learning is the concept of “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b).

Members of a community are informally bound by what they do together [...] and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activities. A community of practice is thus different from a community of interest or a geographical community, neither of which implies a shared practice. (Wenger, 1998b, p.2)

Communities of practice are defined along three dimensions: Joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire of communal resources. We can roughly summarize the links between these three dimensions by saying that members of a particular group interested in achieving a certain task (joint enterprise) will engage in actions and will interact with others (mutual engagement) to “negotiate the meaning” of this enterprise. Over time this negotiation process creates routines, words, tools, stories, ways of doing things (shared repertoire), which are essential in order to know how to be a full member in the community of practice.

Some ethnographic studies have examined various details of life as a student-athlete (Cheville, 1997; Holt & Sparkes, 2001; Stratta, 1995). However, very few of them have looked at how athletes learn from a “participation” perspective. Considering this, as well as the fact that some authors (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999; Henning, 1998; Wenger, 1998a) have made reference to sport teams when talking about communities of practice, the purpose of this article is to investigate the “hidden” learning that takes place in a specific community of practice: the athlete community of practice in a sports team.

Using the content of interviews with varsity athletes, we will examine how the many components of communities of practice are applicable to sport teams.

### Method

Twenty-four female athletes from two varsity (university) sport teams (soccer and hockey) were each interviewed once (approximately one hour per interview) regarding each of their years as participants at the varsity level of sport. The athletes, aged between 17 and 25 years old, were asked a variety of questions about their participation on the team, such as their experiences as a newcomer to the team, their relationship with other players and the coaching staff, as well as what it means to them to be a varsity athlete. The use of direct quotes from the interviews serve to enable rich, detailed descriptions of situations and circumstances in the lives of these team athletes and provide a first-hand account of the events as they were experienced.

### Results

For varsity athletes, engagement is generally threefold. The nature of varsity sports as well as the regulations of Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), emphasize that participation as a varsity athlete involves development in three areas: academic, social, and athletic (Canadian Interuniversity Sport, 2001). One athlete alludes to the importance that all three of these elements played in her first years as a varsity athlete.

[Last year] I learned so much from the vets [veterans], and still, like even this year. The last year was a huge step socially, academically, and athletically. I learned so much last year, and just the little tips they have from experience, it just saves you that step of making that mistake. (#8)

### Academic Development

In the United States, the revenue generated by many college and university sports allows most institutions to offer student-athletes large scholarships and the potential opportunity to move on to professional sports after graduation (Lahey, 1993). However the context is very different in Canada where varsity sport does not have the same exposure and very few athletes see their varsity experience as a step toward a career in professional sports. Most athletes feel that their number one priority is to find a career that suits their interests (Chinn, 1991). Thus, coaches in Canada are expected to play a significant role in varsity athletes' academic development. Part of their job is to provide student-athletes with resources if they need help and ensure that all the athletes on their team remain in good standing academically (Gilbert & Trudel, 2000; Miller, 1996). As one athlete explains: "Well yeah, academics were emphasized by the coach for sure, definitely, but usually we didn't really share grades or anything like that." (#2).

The way individuals or the team negotiate the importance of school is not something the coach can directly control because success is not necessarily always a joint enterprise for the entire team. Some athletes pay little attention to their education, despite eligibility rules and coaches' emphasis:

Well, to some of the players it was important. To me, I'm mostly here to play sports. Like, at the same time we get a degree, but some of the players were really... they managed... school's first. But I was like "sports first". (#1)

However, for students who are interested in their academic career, there is not only help from coaches, but also from teammates:

I think everyone was worried about everyone else. Some people helped by giving notes or some of the girls were in the same classes so they would sometimes alternate - "I'll go to this one, you go next week". Some girls were getting tired, having a hard time so they'd help each other out. (#17)

This mutual engagement among team members serves not only to strengthen the bond between teammates through helping, but also acts against losing important players due to academic suspensions by the school or the coach.

Another way that athletes engage in supporting academics on the team is through their respect for players who want to study when others do not. For example, when teams travel for games and tournaments, players respect the need for certain people to use the traveling time for studying.

[Y]ou have the serious ones and the ones that on the bus will never have a book out. But what happened was the people that were partying more were at the back of the bus, and the people that wanted to read or whatever, they brought their headphones and sat more in the front of the bus. Everybody respected what everybody was doing. (#17)

Athletes also talk about having certain hotel rooms designated as “study rooms” or “quiet rooms” when the team travels. With and without the coaches’ help, the varsity athletes develop among themselves ways of negotiating their academic pursuits.

### Social Development

Athletes interviewed in this research consistently view coaches as being least involved in the social development of the team. While coaches are generally viewed as being available for athletes who wish to discuss any issues or problems they may be having, they are excluded from many other aspects of social development on the team. The athlete community of practice evolves socially, for the most part, without the coaches’ involvement and occasionally even without their full awareness.

One example from our research of a major social event that takes place in the team is the initiation of newcomers. This event, which most often occurs without the involvement of the coaching staff, serves as a “rite of passage” of sorts, which officially includes rookies as members of the team (Bryshun, 1997). Many interviewed athletes feel that the initiation of rookies helps to bring the team together. As one athlete explains:

I think it was a positive experience cause really, I think it brought everybody together more and so you just have that one extra thing, one extra memory that you constantly talk about at practices and stuff and just funny memories which is, you know, fun. (#14)

A second example of players gathering socially, apart from coaches, comes from both teams’ designations of a particular house as the team’s main gathering place. This “sport” house consists of a dwelling where a bunch of the players, mainly veterans, all

live together. It serves as the main gathering point for most social outings, as well as the main location for team get-togethers and parties.

Having the rookie initiation party and the “sport” houses not only helps to bring each team together, it also helps them to build a shared repertoire of words, stories, and places that they can refer back to often. As coaches are not normally present at gatherings, parties, or initiations, they may not understand the stories or see their significance with regards to the team’s social atmosphere.

The social climate in the community of practice can have a major influence on the joint enterprise and mutual engagement of the group. The development of “cliques” or smaller communities of practice within the team can have a significant effect on how the team gets along and performs. Cliques may develop their own joint enterprise, which may differ from that of the rest of the team. For example, one athlete describes how one clique was not socially involved with the team: “It affected the team spirit because there were cliques that would only hang out together... When we’d go out to a restaurant they would just sit together, apart from the whole gang...” (#1). The athlete explains how this clique also affected the team’s performance: “Some of the players would go out and train... some of them, the commitment wasn’t there. Because of the cliques and everything, people withdrew.”

### Athletic Development

The largest role coaches assume on a team is the responsibility for the athletic development of players. Coaches design practices that will help athletes enhance individual skills and improve team play. However, it is the athletes themselves who must actually do the practicing and decide how they will develop their athletic skills. For

example, one athlete explains how the players (without the coaches) negotiated the meaning of being committed to the team and legitimate reasons for missing practices.

One of the rules we came up with the second year was, if you had to miss practice you had to have a really good reason. If you were sick, you had a doctor's note. Some people missed their classes like if they had it during practice time every once in a while depending on the time and what was going on in the class. But if you had an exam, you went to the exam and you missed practice. Whatever, there had to be a good reason for missing practice and if you didn't come to practice and there was no note, you had to sit out one of the games on the weekend. Everyone agreed to that. (#10)

Another example comes from athletes negotiating how to perform at a tournament in which one of the teams was about to compete.

I remember, because [the coaches] said "we're going there for fun" and the team reacted and said "no we're not going there for fun, we're going there because we want to play and give it a chance", even if we knew we probably wouldn't win the tournament, but we wanted to play to win as much as we could. (#17)

Most often team decisions do align with coaching perspectives. However, wherever there is a difference between the coach and the team's enterprise, it is the players who have the final word.

### Implications for Coaching

Based on Wenger's (1998b) social theory of learning, a group of athletes can be viewed as a community of practice, which means that the members - in this case, athletes - will always have the last words: "Even when a community's actions conform to an external mandate, it is the community – not the mandate – that produces the practice. In this sense, communities of practice are fundamentally self-organizing systems" (Wenger, 1998b, p.3). While the coach has a large amount of influence on the athlete community of practice, many aspects are out of his or her control. Coaches are not considered to be a part of the athlete community of practice because they do not actually engage in many aspects of the community's practice. They do, however, belong to the team community of practice (inside which the athlete community of practice evolves) as well as the coaching staff community of practice if there is more than one coach. Part of the success of a team as a community of practice involves the harmonizing of the athlete and coaching communities of practice.

For coaches who favor an autocratic style of coaching (Cross & Lyle, 1999), the tendency will be to ignore the community of practice. This type of coach will assume he or she already knows what is best for them and will make decisions without considering the potential of the athlete community of practice developing its own strategies for learning. However, for coaches with a democratic style, seeing the group of athletes as a community of practice probably makes sense. Then the role of the coach is to nurture this community of practice. To succeed in this task, coaches must first understand that conflict is a natural and sometimes-necessary part of the negotiation of meaning among players, and it would be best to avoid imposing a solution. The formation of cliques

inside a team is an indicator that there may be a disagreement among members of the community about their joint enterprise or ways to be engaged in their activities. It is not by imposing his or her way of doing things that a coach will be able to solve this problem. At this point, playing the role of mediator may be most beneficial.

Coaches also have to accept the concept of nurturing their athletes. This “does not imply laissez-faire or an absence of leadership” (Wenger, 1998a, p.261), but rather simply being aware of athletes’ decisions and not acting directly against them. For example, in this study it was found that the athletes negotiated a way to deal with teammates who wanted to study during team trips by having these athletes regroup in the bus or in designated rooms at the hotel. However, another athlete explains how the coaches attempted to integrate newcomers by pre-arranging the rooms on road trips, which went against the arrangements made by athletes:

One thing the coaches do on road trips is that they don’t let you pick who you want to stay in a room with. It’s always a rookie and a vet or 2 vets, or 2 rookies and a vet, whichever in a room. They just mix it up so that you’re not always with the same people. (#19)

The question remains: What should coaches do in this and other similar situations? Should they impose their view or accept the decisions made by the athletes? Perhaps the best advice comes from Wenger (1996), who suggests to “make sure that the organizational apparatus is in the service of practices, and not the other way around” (p.2). The author explains that it is important to:

avoid organizational demands that do not somehow serve the practices on

which they are made. The purpose of organizations is not to replace communities of practice [...], but to recognize their existence and to provide the resources and information to help them locate their practices in a broader context and align with one another in order to work together". (p.2)

What this means for coaches is that it is essential to consider what is best for the athlete community of practice before making any executive decisions about the team. Consulting with players, particularly those who have a good sense of the "life" of the community of practice, can be crucial in nurturing the community and helping it to be successful in its practice.

### Conclusion

The sports team provides a concrete example of how a community of practice comes together around a common endeavor, negotiates meaning among its participants, and achieves its objectives through the engagement of its members. While research on communities of practice has grown in the last 10 years, its application in the field of sport has never been explored. This research represents a new way in which interactions within sport teams can be studied and understood. Membership in a community of practice is a process of continual negotiation and learning.

The coach can play a very important role in the development of the athlete community of practice. However this can only be done through the relinquishing of total control over the athletes and the concentration on nurturing it. Coaches who employ an autocratic style of coaching don't allow the athlete community of practice to negotiate the meaning of its own practice, thereby depriving it of its main purpose. By understanding the team as a community of practice and working toward nurturing it, coaches and

support staff can design strategies to help the community and all of its members develop to their fullest.

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**CHAPTER VII**

**Running head: Experiences of Newcomers**

**The Experiences of Newcomers in A Varsity Sports Team**

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## The Experiences of Newcomers in a Varsity Sports Team

Being a team sport athlete involves more than just the development of skill; it's also about learning to fit into a team. In other words becoming a team sport athlete is a social process. As shown in a previous article (Galipeau & Trudel, 2002), an important part of an athlete's learning is done through interacting with other athletes.

Throughout his or her career, an athlete in a team sport will be faced with the uncertainty of being a newcomer each time he or she leaves one team and joins another. Based on various articles about the lives of athletes (e.g. Anderson, 2001), this experience is sometimes described as enjoyable and sometimes not. Up to now, very few researchers have studied the experiences of newcomers in a sports team.

Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest the concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" (LPP) for understanding how newcomers learn to become part of a group, or what they call a "community of practice". A community of practice can be defined as a group of "people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion... and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Viewing the athletes in a varsity sports team as community of practice allows the experiences of newcomers to be understood as an example of LPP. While coaches are responsible for deciding who will be a part of the team and who will not, it's the athlete community of practice members themselves (not the coach) who decide whether or not a player will be accepted as a legitimate peripheral participant. Based on this concept of legitimate peripheral participation, newcomers to a sports team will be considered "legitimate" once they have been accepted by veteran teammates as members of the team.

However, they will be deemed “peripheral” because they have not yet learned how to fit in and do all of the things that the core members of the team do. “Participation” is the crucial component of this label for newcomers, as membership hinges on them being active participants on the team. As athletes will gain more knowledge, experience, and acceptance from other community members, they will move toward “full participation”, that is, they will become veterans or old-timers who are more involved in the team and play a more central role in the team’s activities.

Research on legitimate peripheral participation has found that “when new members join a well-established community, the process can be daunting for the newcomers” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p.102). In his ethnographic study of refrigeration service technicians, Henning (1998) found that many of the servicemen wanted to quit when they first saw the complexity of the required work, feeling the job was too much for them to handle. Hay (1993), in his critique of Lave & Wenger’s work on communities of practice, explains that in general “the newcomer has little or no ability to make or even impact decisions” (p.35), a situation that can have a negative effect on their identity and feelings of belonging to the community of practice. However, Wenger (1998) relays the importance and benefits of legitimate peripheral participation for newcomers, explaining that peripherality enables participation, but with “lessened risk, special assistance, lessened cost of error, close supervision, [and] lessened production pressure” (p.100).

Not only do communities of practice have a major impact on the newcomers, newcomers also have a major impact on communities of practice: “New members disrupt the pattern of interaction the core community has developed. They ask different

questions, have different needs, and have not established the relationships and trust that the core group enjoys” (Wenger, et al., 2002, p.98). While adding newcomers often forces change in the community of practice, much of this change can be viewed as being positive. These newcomers can bring novel ideas or ways of doing things that often lead their community to discover new and better ways of engaging in its practice.

This study attempted to help us learn more about the experiences of newcomers as legitimate peripheral participants and their interactions with veteran members of their community of practice: athletes in a varsity sports team. As newcomers become more involved in the community of practice, their identity as members begins to develop and influence the way they perceive themselves and are perceived by others. This process of identity development is important in helping coaches and other team support staff, such as sport psychologists, to view the group of athletes as a community of practice. It also shows them how they can support and nurture the incorporation of newcomers into the athlete community of practice in order to develop it to its fullest.

### Method

One-hour (approximate) interviews (one per athlete) were conducted with thirteen female athletes from a varsity (university) sport team. The athletes, aged between 17 and 25 years old, were asked questions regarding their participation in sport at the varsity level. In particular, athletes discussed their experiences as newcomers to the team, their relationship with other players and the coaching staff, and how they learned to fit into the team. The experiences of newcomers are explored in this article through the use of direct quotes from the interviews, enabling rich, detailed descriptions of situations and events as they are described by the athletes themselves.

## Results

In order to better understand the process newcomers face when joining a team, a model has been devised (see Appendix A) which outlines the different levels of participation and the coaches' influence. The model is based on one by Wenger, et al., (2002, p.57), and has been adapted to fit the setting of a team in the sports domain considering the findings of this study.

To summarize this new model, before presenting each level individually, newcomers start off as outsiders and are given the status of peripheral participants (PP) once they have been selected to the team by the coach. From there they must work to gain legitimacy from the players in order to move on to the legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) stage. If they fail to do so, athletes either remain as peripheral participants or become marginal (Wenger, 1998). Once they have reached the LPP stage, rookies begin to develop stronger relationships with veterans on the team and move to the rookie-veteran relationship stage (RVR). As they do this they become more involved in the athlete community of practice, both on and off the playing field, and move toward the full participation (FP) stage. Full participation is achieved once an athlete is deemed to be a core participant deeply involved in the workings and decisions of the community of practice.

Although the coach is not actually a member of the athletes' community of practice, he or she still can have a big impact on that community of practice. There is no doubt that coaches can play an important role in how the team functions. For example, a coach may decide one year to keep all his or her veterans and accept very few rookies in

an attempt to win a championship. A coach may just as easily cut some veterans to make room for newcomers in order to assure permanence of the team.

The wedge on the left side of the model represents the influence of the coach on the community of practice. The size of the wedge varies depending on how much influence the coach has on the community of practice. But as it gets closer to the “center” of the community of practice the wedge always becomes smaller, reflecting the fact that coaches have less influence or control on core issues and decisions about how the athlete community of practice functions and more control on issues such as which outsiders are granted access to the team as peripheral participants.

#### Peripheral Participation

Joining a varsity team can be a very difficult and overwhelming experience for many newcomers. Veteran players already know each other, have played together, and are familiar with how the team operates, but for newcomers everything is brand new. For most new recruits, varsity sport is a very different level of competition than that to which many of them are accustomed. This can create a lot of expectations for new recruits, as one athlete explains: “I was totally nervous the first time I came out [...], I didn’t know what to expect. Seeing all the other girls that were just awesome, and I’m just little me trying to play with these guys. It really intimidated me” (#5). Another player describes a very similar experience: “At first when I got there, and I didn’t think I was even going to make the team at all. They were at a very different level than what I had played at before. It was actually kind of a shock. I wasn’t really expecting that” (#1).

### Breaking Through the Wall of “Legitimacy”

Contact with veteran teammates also played a major role in how newcomers adjusted to becoming members of the team. For some athletes, meeting and getting to know teammates was a very relaxed, easy process: “Jane fit in right away because she is amazing, so the respect she got... She proved herself that she has the skill and so she fit in great” (#5). However for many other athletes, this process was not so easy: “It was difficult for new players coming in [...]. It was a team that had been together forever and they had their expectations and they had their friends and they had their team. It was difficult coming in because you are trying to break through into this team” (#5). One athlete describes the difficulties of her very first encounter with a teammate: “When I was first introduced to her, the coach brought me up to her and said ‘this is Jill, she’s a walk-on and I’m pretty sure she’s going to be playing for us this year’ [...]. The girl looked at me and she walked away, she didn’t even say hello [...]. I felt like a piece of dirt” (#13).

### Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Gaining acceptance from veteran teammates involved first accepting to be a rookie for a while in order to learn how to do things a certain way and to know the “lingo” or shared repertoire (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) of the team.

Being a rookie generally involved being treated differently by experienced teammates and subjected to various initiation rituals and extra tasks that veterans were not. As one athlete explains: “You may have been a star on your old team but now you’re not the star and you have to realize that. Rookie initiation and rookie duty kind of helps that along” (#12). Initiating the rookies is generally one of the first social events of the season for the team. For some teams the initiation process can be negative or even

dangerous (O'Hara, 2000), but for other teams (Hoffer, 1999; O'Brien & Hersch, 1997) and the varsity team involved in this research, it is generally seen in a positive light.

To briefly summarize rookie night, newcomers were sent on a scavenger hunt, fed strange food concoctions, dressed up in outrageous clothing, brought out in public, and made to do embarrassing things such as singing silly songs in front of strangers. One athlete explains: "I think rookie parties are good to have, I think for our team it's important because it brings everybody closer. It's the first night that everybody goes out together and it [...] shows everybody in a new light and a different atmosphere. rather than on the sports field" (#8).

Another part of being a rookie on the team involved having extra duties or responsibilities and giving up certain privileges: "Rookies clean up everything after practice, rookies take all the dirty uniforms, pick them up and put them away [...] that kind of stuff. When on road trips wherever the vets wanted to sit, they got to sit. They got to pick their own numbers and we had to take what was left" (#13). This type of treatment often left rookies feeling belittled and frustrated: "I felt at the bottom of the food chain, so to speak. I felt like I shouldn't talk, I shouldn't say a word, I shouldn't argue, I shouldn't go in hard on plays because I'm just a rookie" (#13). Another rookie shares much of the same feelings: "The veterans had been there longer, they knew what they were doing. You're just a silly little rookie who's inexperienced and untrained" (#10).

For many athletes, being a rookie lasted throughout their whole first season or even longer as they struggled to fit in and make their mark on the team. Some athletes accepted this as a natural part of becoming a member of the team:

My first year was a tough year because as a rookie you don't get to be, unless you're a superstar rookie that everybody talks about, you don't really get that opportunity to play a lot unless you prove yourself [...]. So it was a tough year, but I was proud with the fact that I got to dress every game [...] considering that some people didn't get to play at all.

(#3)

However, for other athletes, the transition from veteran on their former team to the status of rookie on their new team was much more difficult. One athlete remarks:

I came from my last team being a starter, so I came here thinking I would start or I would play a lot [...]. I went from being a player to a non-player, just encouraging them the whole time and talking and yelling and video taping, just doing odd jobs for the coach [...]. I felt like I was nothing [...]. Even my parents said they've never ever seen me on the bench that much. It was hard for them and they were so frustrated. (#4)

For this athlete, being on the periphery for such a long time had a large impact on her sense of belonging to the team: "I didn't feel as close with the players at all, I felt like I was just there to show I'm there, I just didn't feel like part of the team, like we won games but I didn't do anything and they'd score and I wasn't part of it. It was very, very hard...very hard" (#4).

### The Rookie-Veteran Relationship

While veterans on the team had the power to make things very difficult for rookies trying to learn and fit in, they were also instrumental in helping integrate newcomers into the team. One athlete describes how veteran teammates would help rookies become better players: “You would watch the ones in your position or what position you thought you were going to play and you would watch what they do [...]. If you wanted to learn a move or something, and somebody could do it, you’d just ask them and they’d show you” (#9). Another athlete explains how some of the more experienced players gave her confidence in her playing abilities: “Every practice and every game I got better and a lot of teammates were saying: ‘Every time we see you play you get better’ and it was just building my confidence [...]. The girls really kind of took me under their wing” (#1).

The interviews with these varsity athletes revealed that some players who had an especially bad experience as rookies made it a point to not perpetuate the same type of treatment on new recruits. One athlete explains: “[At training camp] I got to meet all the rookies first hand and let me tell you I made those rookies feel welcome. There was no way I was going to treat them like the veterans treated me last year, no way” (#13). A second athlete shares much the same philosophy: “Knowing what I went through I try not to do the same thing to the rookies, it wasn’t a good experience for me so I don’t want them to have that either” (#7). One veteran athlete took this desire to help newcomers even one step further:

I’m going to make an effort because I know how scary and intimidating it can be for some people [...]. I want to let the rookies know about the kind

of atmosphere going around, like why there are certain reactions to certain things, like 'oh well it's because we lost to this team'. I just want to be kind of a link to that. (#8)

### The Rookie-Coach Relationship

Part of becoming a member of the team also involved getting to know the coaches and how they operate. Coaches, although they are not part of the athlete community of practice, do have a significant amount of influence on many aspects of the team; therefore it is important for players to develop a good relationship with them. As one rookie describes, sometimes coaches made this process somewhat difficult:

It was always really confusing because the coach never establishes what he wants, where and when he wants it. It's kind of confusing and he just assumes that all the rookies know what to do. It's our first year and we don't really know what to do at all, but he just assumes that we do. (#12)

Coaches also sometimes perpetuated feelings of inferiority among newcomers, as described by one of the rookies.

We were doing the team picture and half of us had to wear the dark coloured jerseys and half of us had to wear white. I said 'oh, I call dibs on white' and the coach answered 'not if a veteran wants a white before you'. He made me feel like an idiot. (#12)

## Discussion

While it is true that some newcomers to this varsity sports team had a very positive, easy transition into the team, many of them did not. The question remains: What can coaches (and other training staff members) do to improve the integration of newcomers into the team? One possible solution is to find ways to nurture or cultivate the community of practice in order to facilitate the movement of newcomers from peripheral participation to legitimate peripheral participation, and from LPP toward full participation. Wenger, et al. (2002) use the analogy of cultivating a plant to describe the process of nurturing a community of practice:

You cannot pull the stem, leaves, or petals to make a plant grow faster or taller. However, you can do much to encourage healthy plants: Till the soil, ensure they have enough nutrients, supply water, secure the right amount of sun exposure, and protect them from pests and weeds.

(p.13)

Coaches can cultivate the athlete community of practice in much the same manner by ensuring it has all of the necessary ingredients for optimal growth. The following section will highlight suggestions that can be related specifically to helping newcomers move toward full participation in the community of practice.

Wenger (1996) suggests to “view individuals as members of communities of practice, not by stereotyping them, but by honoring the meaningfulness of their participation” (p.1). Sometimes the “rookie” label can carry more weight than any contribution a newcomer may make to their team. By honoring the meaningfulness of

**newcomers' participation on the team instead of their designation as a rookie, coaches can legitimize their contributions and importance on the team and help them move from PP to LPP. This includes recognizing that players who may not be starters (which will likely include many newcomers) still have a vital role to play in the successes and failures of the team.**

**The most direct way to do this is to acknowledge non-starters and their importance in helping teammates improve by pushing them hard in practices, encouraging them during games, and being ready during games to replace a starter at a moment's notice. Veterans can also team up with rookies who play their position and discuss and develop new strategies together. Another way is to acknowledge that newcomers bring in fresh new ideas and ways of doing things that might benefit the team. At the beginning of the season, inviting rookies to share thoughts and ideas, such as some of the things that worked best for them on previous teams, can help them to feel welcome and valued as team members.**

**Following the same lines, Sharp (1997) suggests to "look for opportunities for short-term 'mentoring'" (p.3). As the author explains "a chance to work together [...] can increase the probability of a successful CoP [community of practice] and the sharing of 'implicit' knowledge so critical to a dynamic practice" (p.3). Setting up mentoring opportunities for newcomers can help them team up with veterans to learn about the team more quickly and thoroughly. In particular the veterans can teach them about team rules and ways of doing things that are not necessarily written down anywhere. For varsity athletics in particular, mentors can be especially helpful since newcomers are most likely in their first year of university and possibly living away from home for the first time.**

Getting advice from someone who has been through the same transition can make the process much easier and more enjoyable and can help rookies and veterans develop stronger bonds with each other.

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) suggest “invit[ing] different levels of participation” (p.61) as another way to cultivate communities of practice. The authors explain that “people participate in communities for different reasons – some because the community directly provides value, some for the personal connection, and others for the opportunity to improve their skills” (p.55). Being attuned to the reasons newcomers join the community of practice, and what they hope to get out of their participation on the team, can help coaches to become more aware of each athlete’s “trajectory” (Wenger, 1998). Coaches can then acknowledge newcomers’ trajectories and support them, regardless of whether the emphasis is on academics, athletics, or the social atmosphere (Galipeau & Trudel, 2002).

A final suggestion on how to cultivate communities of practice is the recommendation by Wenger, et al. (2002) to “develop both public and private community spaces” (p.61). This entails the creation of opportunities for community members to meet and discuss issues both as a group and in private situations. One way to foster the public community space is to hold regular team meetings where all athletes are invited as equals to share their views on the team. This allows everyone the legitimate opportunity to speak and share their ideas: “Like a neighborhood bar or café, a community becomes a ‘place’ where people have the freedom to ask for candid advice, share their opinions, and try their half-baked ideas without repercussion” (p.61).

A way to nurture the private space is to connect athletes who share common likes, dislikes, skills, difficulties, strengths, weaknesses, ideologies or beliefs, and encourage them to share their experiences with each other in the spirit of learning. Another idea might be to have a "suggestion box" where athletes can anonymously share their ideas on how the team could improve. In this way, athletes who are less outspoken or are shy, particularly newcomers, will have a "voice" with which to share their thoughts and insights without the prejudice of status or stereotype.

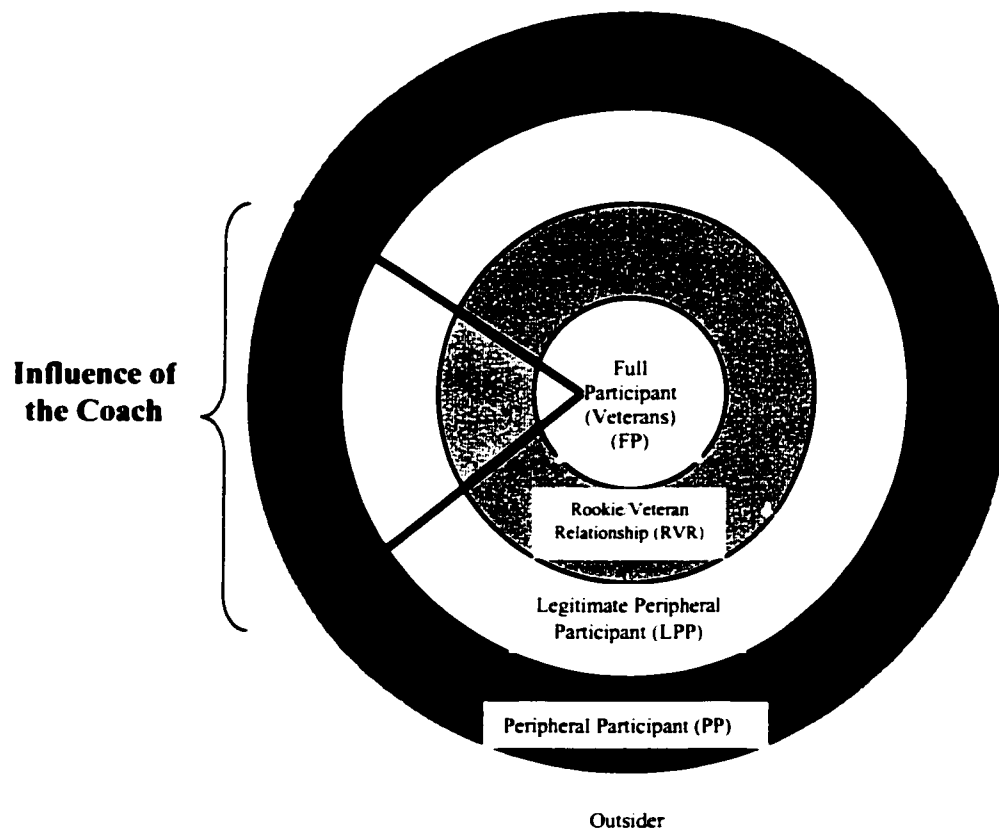
### Conclusion

Life as a newcomer to a varsity sports team can be difficult. Learning to fit in and gaining acceptance from veteran teammates are not an easy task for most rookies. Being on the periphery of the team can affect newcomers' identities and their feelings of belonging to the community of practice. Coaches cannot directly control the athlete community of practice and force the integration of newcomers because they are not actually a part of that community of practice. However, by honoring the meaningfulness of athlete participation, creating mentoring opportunities, inviting different levels of participation, and developing both public and private community spaces, coaches can create an environment that is inviting to newcomers and addresses the difficulties associated with the transition onto a new team.

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## APPENDIX A



**Figure 1:** Levels of Community Participation in a Varsity Sports Team

**PART THREE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## CHAPTER VIII

### DISCUSSION

#### Communities of Practice as a Framework to Study Team Sports

This research brings to light a new way to look at groups and teams in sport; one which reflects the social nature of an athlete's participation and its effects on how learning takes place within the group. Article #1 demonstrates how the community of practice framework provides a new way of understanding athletes and their experiences as members of a sports team.

Traditional methods of research in sport have shown that there are links between team cohesion and various outcome measures such as performance (e.g., Grieve, et al., 2000) and adherence (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997) are correlated to team cohesion. However very few clues are given as to why or how these links exist. As article #1 shows, studying the group of athletes as a community of practice enables it to be viewed and understood from an inside perspective, through the experiences of community members who negotiate their enterprise together in order to achieve outcomes. This takes the current cohesion research one step further by examining the process of developing connections and relationships in a team, not just the outcomes.

For example, one area that the community of practice framework addresses that the cohesion literature does not is the role of conflict as a component of participation on the team. In the community of practice, diversity, conflict and contradiction are not uncommon and are viewed as a sometimes-necessary part of the development of the community (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999, p.189). Some athletes seek out conflict as a way of fighting for their own enterprise or trajectory on the team. Although this can

make things difficult for the coach and team members, it is a natural part of forging a joint enterprise and developing mutual engagement. This view is in contrast with cohesion research, which focuses only how players “stick together” or remain “united” in the pursuit of team goals.

For example, the development of cliques in the team is a problem that many coaches face, for which they often have no solution. Cliques are often an indication that the whole team is not engaging in negotiating meaning together and the athletes are not developing a common identity as a single community of practice. Understanding each of these cliques as smaller communities of practice with different enterprises and trajectories can help the coach to develop ways of nurturing each of them and trying to bring them closer to a joint enterprise.

The individualized plans and projects of community members is what Wenger (1998b) defines as trajectory. One of the ways research on communities of practice surpasses that of identity in sport is by incorporating athletes’ trajectories into an understanding of identity formation and development. An athlete’s trajectory can have a major influence on how that athlete identifies himself or herself in relation to the team. Trajectories can also help to explain some of the variation in identity between team members: something that cannot be understood using traditional theories of identity.

From a methodological point of view, the community of practice framework also differs from cohesion research by going beyond quantitative, survey-based research and enabling a more complete view of teams and groups in sport. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) explain:

The search for across-the-board content generalizations is tied up with the survey-based research practice that has come to dominate the study of variation – a practice that has given the study of variation its great robustness, but has also bled it of its access to social meaning. (p.191)

Bucholtz (1999) explains that the community of practice framework addresses this issue in that it allows for quantitative and qualitative research in the same analysis. This brings the two closer together and allows for the study of variation while preserving the richness of social meaning (p.221).

Communities of practice also allow the examination of learning at the micro and macro levels of analysis simultaneously. As Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) explain, the community of practice framework looks at both social diversity and the perception of subtle but meaningful patterns of interaction. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) also support this notion, indicating that studying communities of practice allows them to focus on the individuality of the nerd girls in their research without overlooking the strong ties that bring them together as a community. The communities of practice model helps to understand the intricate details of an individual's learning while situating this learning in the individual's social context.

#### Communities of Practice as a Framework to Study Newcomers in Sport

Research on newcomers to sport teams is very limited. This could be partly due to the lack of an adequate tool with which to study the experiences of newcomers in sport. Article #2 shows how the communities of practice framework is an appropriate tool to examine and understand the experiences of newcomers and how they learn to become members of the athlete community of practice.

Initiation rituals are a very common part of a newcomer's experience when joining a new team, however, there has been very little research into this event. The few studies (e.g., Bryshun, 1997) on this topic have focused on describing the events and their effects on newcomers. Viewing the group of athletes as a community of practice goes beyond these results and provides a way to learn about the reasons teams might engage in these rituals.

For example, the initiation of newcomers may serve as a way of forming the athlete community of practice (Wenger, 1998b, p.183). Hoffer explains that the idea of initiating newcomers is "the destruction of status to foster teamwork" (1999, p.31). Using the communities of practice framework, one can understand initiation rituals as a form of negotiation of meaning designed to encourage the pursuit of a joint enterprise. Newcomers must leave behind the identity or status they may have held in their former team in order to adopt and develop a new identity as a member of the current team through the negotiation of meaning with other teammates. The initiation then serves as a ceremonial introduction to engagement in a new enterprise and the development of a new repertoire.

Another area where community of practice research sheds light on the experiences of newcomers concerns how they learn the finer details of community membership. Many aspects of membership on a team are unwritten and often not even explained to newcomers when they join a team. The lack of "implicit" (Brown & Duguid, 1993) or "tacit" knowledge (Wenger, 1998b) is often what makes it evident that someone in the group is a legitimate peripheral participant, since they have not yet learned how to be and act like a full community of practice member. This period can be either very

difficult or provide newcomers with a special status on the team which affords them the opportunity to learn while having reduced demands and responsibilities placed on them.

### Coaching and the Issues of Power and Control in the Community of Practice

The community of practice framework puts traditional notions of coaching into question by suggesting to coaches to see their team differently and act differently in order to be successful. The perspective on coaching in the community of practice model takes much of the traditional notions of power and control away from coaches, yet preserves their ability to play a significant role in the organization, development, and performance of the team (Galipeau & Trudel, 2002a). This switch from autocratic or democratic leader (Cross & Lyle, 1999) to outside collaborator can change the dynamics of the relationships between coaches and players and lead to new ways of working together. The athlete community of practice then becomes more responsible for its own enterprise and coaches use their knowledge and expertise to nurture the community and facilitate the growth, development, and engagement of its members.

### Examining the Differences Between Communities of Practice

The differences between athlete communities of practice have not been explored in this research. However we have enough data to write an article in which the differences between the two women's varsity teams studied in this thesis will be analyzed. The following are some of the results.

One of the major differences found between the two teams relates to the duration of their existence. One team (Team A) has been in existence for almost a decade, is very successful, and has very strong traditions and ways of doing things. The other team (Team B) has only been around for a few years and is still in the process of establishing

itself. This distinction revealed some very clear differences in the way the team was organized as well as how it pursued its enterprise.

For example, examining the issue of newcomers revealed some very large contrasts between teams that affected both teams' structure. For Team A, newcomers found it generally very difficult to have an impact on the team. This was mainly due to the fact that it has consistently been one of the top teams in the country. Not only does this mean that there are very talented players on the team, it also means that many of the top high school prospects are being recruited. Therefore, for many rookies, joining the team involves a transition from superstar on their old team, to benchwarmer on the varsity team.

The situation is quite different for Team B, which is a very young team. In its first year, mostly local players were recruited in order to have a full team and to get established in the league. That year there were no "rookies" as the whole team consisted of first year players. The following year, more than half of the team was replaced as coaches began a more intensive recruitment process. Players who remained from the previous year attempted to initiate the new "rookies" and force them to do rookie duties, but they were, for the large part, unsuccessful. First year players refused to be treated as rookies since they outnumbered the veterans, many of the rookies had more playing experience and skill than some veterans, and there was only one year of difference in playing experience on the varsity team between the two groups.

This inability of the "veterans" on the team to have an influence over the "rookies" can be most easily related to Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea of legitimacy in the community of practice. Just as peripheral participants in the community of practice

need to be granted legitimacy, full participants also need to be accepted as legitimate. Full participation implies the possession of certain characteristics that legitimate peripheral participants do not yet possess, such as knowledge and skills in particular areas. In this situation, community members may be likened to journeyfolk who are “not yet masters, [but] are old-timers with respect to newcomers” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.57)

Both teams show how unique circumstances on each team created very different ways of negotiating the meaning of being a newcomer. No two communities of practice are the same and communities of practice are continually evolving as time passes, old members leave, and new members join.

This continual change in the community of practice highlights the importance of tacit knowledge (Wenger, 1998b) for newcomers as they try to fit into a team. Even players who have played for many different teams still need to learn the specific repertoire of their new team and engage in its enterprise in order to be accepted by the other players as a member of the community of practice. There is no standard way of “being a rookie” or “being a veteran”: it is through legitimate peripheral participation and the negotiation of meaning that each athlete learns what it means to be a member of their community of practice.

For coaches, understanding that there are differences between athlete communities of practice means always remaining open and flexible in the way they coach the team. Just like the situation with the athletes, there is also no standard way of “being a coach”. While there are certain drills and skills that can be taught for specific sports, every team needs to be nurtured according to its own unique characteristics. Some

coaches insist on keeping the exact same coaching style and methods year after year, regardless of changes in the team. While this may sometimes appear to bring success to the team, it undermines the athlete community of practice and does not encourage the natural process of social learning among players.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of the current research was to examine how athletes negotiate meaning as part of the learning process involved in their participation in varsity sports. This was done through investigating specifically with whom athletes negotiated meaning, the nature of this negotiation of meaning, and how it affected the meaning athletes gave to their participation in the athlete community of practice. In particular, this research sought to investigate the learning process that takes place within the community of practice of athletes in a varsity sports team. It also looked at how newcomers to a varsity sports team move from legitimate peripheral participation toward full participation in their community of practice.

The first article demonstrated how varsity athletes negotiate meaning with other teammates in the development of their academic, social, and athletic lives in the community of practice. Coaches were also recognized as playing a significant role in influencing the development in these three areas, although they are not actually considered to be part of the athlete community of practice. Article #1 shows how part of the learning process in the community of practice is done apart from coaches. The coach's role in the community of practice model thus revolves around the concept of

nurturing the community of practice as opposed to the traditional notions of having control over the community of practice and its enterprise.

The second article focused on the incorporation of newcomers into the varsity team and how they learn to become part of the athlete community of practice. The designation of newcomers as legitimate peripheral participants represents the first step in them becoming full members of the community of practice. Through the development of relationships with veteran teammates, legitimate peripheral participants begin to develop a shared way of doing things on the team and an identity that reflects their membership in the community of practice. Coaches can help with the integration of newcomers through the development of various strategies that help nurture the community of practice and legitimate peripheral participants in particular.

The emphasis in this research was on developing concrete strategies for coaches to help nurture the athlete community of practice. However these findings also have very strong implications for other members of the team's support staff, such as sport psychology consultants. Viewing the group of athletes as a community of practice can help consultants better understand issues such as difficulties with communication, lack of enjoyment, power struggles, marginality of players, lack of commitment, and troubles dealing with the coach. Consulting can also focus on the importance of social relationships in building a team identity and facilitating learning among team members.

Since communities of practice remain unexplored in virtually every area of sport, research is recommended in all of the major areas of sports studies. However, there are a few areas of research that are of particular interest. First, it is recommended that research be conducted on coaching communities of practice to understand the learning process that

coaches go through in learning how to be a coach. Most coaches do not seem to have the same access to other practitioners as team sport athletes do, therefore an investigation into where and how coaches learn how to coach would be a particularly interesting research topic.

A second recommended area of study would be the examination of communities of practice in individual sports. Many individual sports such as badminton, swimming, and running are organized in a “team” fashion, with athletes helping each other in the pursuit of their enterprise. While the athletes don’t actually compete together, most practice together and benefit from many of the positive aspects of being part of a team, such as learning from others and receiving support and encouragement. The examination of how this type of community of practice differs from the type of community studied in this research may provide some important clues about a team’s mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

**PART FOUR: REFERENCES AND APPENDICES**

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## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF NODES FOR NVIVO

#### **Community of Practice (1)**

Full Participant (1 1)  
 Legitimate Peripheral Participant (1 2)  
 Cliques (1 3)  
 Peripherality (1 4)  
 Brokering (1 5)  
 Relationship - Rookie~Veteran (1 6)  
 Negotiation of Roles - Athletes (1 7)  
 Negotiation of Roles - Coach~Athlete (1 8)  
     Playing Time (1 8 1)  
 Friendships (1 9)  
 Outside Community of Practice (1 10)  
 Non-Participation (1 11)

#### **Dimensions of Practice (2)**

Shared Repertoire (2 1)  
     History (2 1 2)  
     Reification (2 1 3)  
 Joint Enterprise (2 2)  
 Mutual Engagement (2 3)

#### **Identity (3)**

Humour (3 1)  
 Hard Work (3 2)  
 Expectations of Others (3 3)  
 Changing (3 4)  
 Leadership (3 5)  
 Mediator (3 6)  
 Responsibility (3 7)  
 Transition (3 8)  
 Commitment (3 9)  
 Injury (3 10)  
 Fear (3 11)  
 Disagreements (3 12)  
 Stories (3 13)  
 Imagination (3 14)  
     Heroes (3 14 1)  
     Other teams (3 14 2)  
 Alignment (3 15)  
 Difficulties (3 16)  
 Differences (3 17)  
 Enjoyment (3 18)

**Team mates (4)**

Academic Development (4 1)  
Athletic Development (4 2)  
Social Development (4 3)

**Coach (5)**

Academic Development (5 1)  
Athletic Development (5 2)  
Social Development (5 3)  
Alignment (5 4)

**Friends (6)**

Athletic Development (6 1)  
Educational Development (6 2)  
Social Development (6 3)

**Family (7)**

Academic Development (7 1)  
Athletic Development (7 2)  
Social Development (7 3)

**Professors (8)**

Athletic Development (8 1)  
Academic Development (8 2)  
Social Development (8 3)

**CIAU (9)**

Academic Development (9 1)  
Athletic Development (9 2)  
Personal Development (9 3)

**Background (10)**

Progression (10 1)  
Interest in Varsity Sport (10 2)

**Extracts (11)****Years (12)**

Year 1 (12 1)  
Year 2 (12 2)  
Year 3 (12 3)  
Year 4 (12 4)  
Year 5 (12 5)  
Overall (12 6)

**Past Players (13)**

**Trainer (14)**

**Road Trips (15)**

**Rookie Night (16)**

**Trajectory (17)**

**APPENDIX B****INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Can you describe your progression in soccer from the time you started playing, up to when you started playing in university?
2. What are your reasons for participating in varsity sports?
3. Did anyone or anything influence you to participate in varsity sports?
4. What do you think is the goal of varsity sports in Canada?
5. Are you familiar with the CIAU's mission statement? What is it?
6. How many years have you played soccer in university?
7. Can you describe what it was like playing soccer in your rookie season in university?
  - a. What did you do to fit in?
  - b. What was your role on the team?
  - c. How was your relationship with the veterans on the team?
  - d. Who did you get along with best on the team? Why?
  - e. What did your teammates do to help you improve athletically?
  - f. Did any teammates have an influence on your schoolwork? How?
  - g. Did any teammates have an influence on your development as a person?
  - h. How was your relationship with the coach? Why?
  - i. How did the coach influence you as an athlete?
  - j. Did your coach have any influence on your schoolwork? How?
  - k. Did your coach have any influence on your personal development? How?
8. Did any other people, events or things have an influence on your participation in sports, your schoolwork or your personal development during your rookie year?
9. Did the CIAU play a role in your academic or personal development at any point in your varsity career?

**\*REPEAT QUESTIONS 7 TO 9 FOR EACH YEAR IN VARSITY SPORTS\***

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

#### Becoming a Varsity Athlete

I, \_\_\_\_\_ am interested in collaborating in the research to be conducted by James Galipeau of the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. The project is under the supervision of Dr. Pierre Trudel of the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa. The purpose of the research is to understand how athletes interact with people who have an influence on their participation on a varsity sports team, such as coaches, team mates, parents, siblings, friends, etc.. This information will be used to explain the process of moving from newcomer (rookie) to full participant (veteran).

My participation will consist of one interview lasting approximately one hour. I understand that the contents will be used for the advancement of knowledge about athletes and sports teams and that my confidentiality will be respected by omitting any information that may identify me as a participant in this research.

I understand that since this activity deals with personal information, it may cause me some uneasiness and that I am free to control the extent to which an issue is discussed. I have received assurance from the researchers that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview, and refuse to answer questions without prejudice.

I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by the use of pseudonyms and the alteration of minor context details in the publication of findings. Tape recordings of interviews and other data will be kept in a secure manner and will be destroyed five years after publication of the findings.

Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the relevant Research Ethics Board for research involving human subjects of the University of Ottawa, or by calling the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research: Lise Frigault, Office of the Vice-Rector (Research), Tabaret Hall, Suite 246, P.O. Box 450, 550 Cumberland St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5, (613) 562-5800 ext.1787, lfrigaul@uottawa.ca. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep. I understand that the researchers below are available to answer pertinent questions.

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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