

Planning, promoting and assessing social learning in sport: A landscapes of practice approach

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in women securing leadership positions across Canadian sport. However, when compared with their male counterparts, there continues to be an imbalance of women in these roles. The purpose of this doctoral dissertation was to evaluate a social learning initiative implemented in the province of Alberta to address these existing gender disparities by increasing gender equity, leadership development/diversity, and knowledge transfer across sport systems. The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) was framed using Wenger's (1998) concept Communities of Practice and consisted of 12 sport leaders (from various PSOs, clubs, and other sport organizations) and six mentors (with leadership expertise). Each sport leader planned and implemented a project in their home sport organizations to support the increase of gender equity and leadership development/diversity. The mentors were responsible for supporting the sport leaders in achieving their project goals and facilitating leadership development opportunities to inspire growth in the sport leaders. Accordingly, an evaluation was conducted using the Value Creation Framework (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2011) to examine the perceived value of participating in this social learning initiative. Data were collected over a year and a half period, from the 18 members who made up the AWiSL group and other important stakeholders. The data included in-depth interviews, informal conversations, observations, surveys, and collecting organizational documents resulting in over 700 pages of transcribed data.

The findings are presented in four articles and an additional findings section. The first article focuses on one of the sport leader's projects which aimed to foster a collaborative women-only training program for 10 women to become certified coach developers. The second article examines the development of the AWiSL mentors' social learning leadership capabilities during

their first attempt at facilitating a CoP to promote gender equity and leadership development/diversity, through an action learning approach. The third article delves into the sport leaders' perceptions of their leadership skill development through their participation in the two and a half year social learning initiative, specifically a CoP of femininity. Finally, the fourth article highlights the 12 sport leaders' projects to examine the impacts of the AWiSL in terms of moving gender equity forward across the province. The additional findings section touches on the knowledge transfer outcome of the AWiSL, including the development of a how-to model for organizations wishing to implement a similar initiative and the overall perceived value of this initiative. The dissertation is concluded with a general discussion highlighting the theoretical contributions and practical implications, along with future recommendations for research.

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List of Abbreviation

AL: Action Learning

ASC: Alberta Sport Connection

AWiSL: Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program

CAC: Coaching Association of Canada

CD: Coach Developers

CoP: Community of Practice

EIM: Ecological Intersectional Model

EST: Ecological Systems Theory

GENC: Gender Equality Network Canada

LoP: Landscape of Practice

MSO: Multiservice- Sport Organization

NSO: National Sport Organization

PSO: Provincial Sport Organization

SLT: Social Learning Theory

WAGE: Women and Gender Equality

WiSL: Women in Sport Leadership

WOTP: Women-Only Training Program

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Sustaining women and girls' participation in sport has been an ongoing challenge for many years across Canada (Donnelly et al., 2013) and includes all levels of sport comprised of athletes, coaches, and leaders (Canadian Heritage, 2019). To combat this issue, a variety of initiatives and interventions have been put into place such as policy developments to support women in sport (Thibault & Harvey, 2013). These have resulted in some advances, such as an increase in the number of women participating in high performance sport (Canadian Heritage, 2019). Despite these attempts, considerable efforts are still needed for Canada to achieve the goal of gender equality in sport at every level by 2035 (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2019). For girls specifically, we are seeing a decline in sport participation during their transition to adolescence, in part because girls feel they have neither the competencies nor fundamental skills to participate in sport (Kjønniksen et al., 2009). Additionally, there are societal pressures for girls' bodies to look a certain way which may be intensified in certain sports environments (Sabiston et al., 2014), creating another aversion to sport participation. For women in Canada, the statistics are similar; in 2016, only 19.7% of women above 15 years old regularly participated in sports (Statistics Canada, 2016). There are similar trends noted when it comes to women's involvement in other levels of sport, as women are underrepresented in both coaching and leadership positions (Demers et al., 2019). For example, in Canada, only 39% of sport board member positions are secured by women and only 28% of board chairs are women (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020). Many of the reasons women and girls are challenged to participate in sport relate to the barriers they experience. Girls may not have access to the same quality of programming as their male peers and do not always have role models to look up to (Hall & Oglesby, 2016). They also may be ridiculed and have their sexuality called into question

when exhibiting similar aggressive sports behaviours to their male peers (Roper & Polasek, 2019). In the case of women in coaching and leadership, there are numerous barriers in both attaining and retaining positions, such as a lack of confidence (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), the pressure of working in a male dominated field, job insecurity (Carson et al., 2018), perceived gender discrimination, and fewer opportunities to participate in developmental challenges than their male counterparts (Machida-Kosuaga et al., 2017). As such, there are opportunities for innovation to enable sport participation for women and girls at every level, across all demographic categories (Canadian Heritage, 2019).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation was to assist in the facilitation and evaluation of a social learning initiative to increase gender equity, leadership diversity/development, and knowledge transfer across all levels of sport in the Western Canadian Province of Alberta. Four main research questions guided this research: (a) How has a women-only training initiative enabled learning and development opportunities for two women in a Canadian sport organization? (b) How has a group of social learning leaders' (learning facilitators') participation in an action learning initiative influenced their personal and collective learning, and their social learning leadership capabilities? (c) How is leadership learned using a Community of Practice (CoP) approach and a two and a half year initiative focused on improving leadership skills and capacities in sport? and (d) How has a social learning initiative to promote gender equity impacted various systems across the Canadian sport landscape? Together, these questions sought to examine the impacts of a longitudinal gender equity initiative to support women, girls, and other marginalized populations in their participation and leadership progression at various levels across Canadian sport. A qualitative approach was well suited to capture the various experiences

of the participants (co-researchers and other stakeholders) in this program. The outcomes of the projects were captured largely through qualitative data and supplemented through a limited amount of quantitative data. Data were generated through multiple sources including interviews, surveys, organizational documents, field notes, and observations, and were analyzed to answer the research questions and evaluate the overall program.

Epistemological Position

The epistemological worldviews guiding this dissertation included elements of both participatory and constructivist paradigms. Considering a CoP approach framed the research, a participatory lens was fitting as it is fundamentally experiential and concerned with research which situates participants as co-researchers, as opposed to establishing the traditional participant-researcher relationship (Heron & Reason, 1997). With this said, some articles in this dissertation are not fully aligned with a participatory positioning and draw from constructivism. To be specific, Articles One and Two use a constructivist lens as the “Inquirer and inquired are fused into a single entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.103). Knowledge is co-created socially through interactions between the researcher and participants. Articles Three & Four support a participatory approach in that the participants are not only involved in the co-construction of realities, but take on the position of co-researchers: “Co-researchers are initiated into the inquiry process by facilitator/researcher and learn through active engagement in the process” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p.196). One of the key distinctions between the two paradigms is that constructivists “Gain understanding by interpreting subject perceptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.102), whereas participatory research is “Transformation based on democratic participation between researcher and subject” (p.102). By integrating elements of both worldviews through this dissertation, there

is a blend of collaborative knowledge creation which underpins social learning, along with a constructivist view which is well used in sports research (Culver et al., 2019; Paquette & Trudel, 2018). By employing a pragmatic stance of knowledge creation, each of the two worldviews were utilized according to the specific research question and purpose at hand.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical Frameworks

The use of a *Social Learning Theory*, *Ecological Systems Theory*, and *Action Learning Approach* were appropriate guiding theories for this dissertation. According to Wenger-Trayner (2013) it is possible to combine working theories into a framework through his “plug-and-play” principle, where theories may run through each other. The principle “celebrates the diversity of theories in light of the complexity of human experiences, but without giving up on discipline in progress” (p.4). With this in mind, Wenger-Trayner’s three phase evolution of a social learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) acted as the central theoretical framework which underpinned the four articles written for this dissertation and framed the facilitation and evaluation of the gender equity and leadership initiative examined in this dissertation. As well, Bronfenbrenner’s (1977;1979) Ecological Systems Theory played a key role in Article One and Article Four to explore the systems influenced by the gender equity and leadership focused initiative. Finally, Revan’s (1982) approach to Action Learning was paired with a social learning theory in Article Two to study the development of the social learning leaders. The following section will explore the development and main tenants of the three working theories as a means to “understand the perspective of each theory in the context of its historical roots, its location in the theoretical landscape, and the intentions of its authors” (Wenger-Trayner, 2013, p.4).

Wenger-Trayners’ Social Learning Theory

Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayners’ (2012) social learning theory is anchored by the understanding that learning is at the core of our existence and that humans are inherently social beings; assumptions underlying the three-phase evolution of social learning theory. The first phase (Lave & Wenger, 1991) described the experience of social learning in the context of

apprenticeship where newcomers joined a community intending to eventuate to full members through the gradual acquisition of legitimacy in situated learning, for example, as seen traditionally with tailors. Apprentices journey along a trajectory from peripheral participants in the community to full members through engagements in social practices with more competent, legitimate members of the community. This journey is much more than a learning experience and includes the negotiation of identity and one's understanding of oneself "as a person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.52)

Phase two followed, with Wenger's (1998) contribution to the concept *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. This phase saw a shift to a focus on the collaborative nature of a community with the main features of a CoP comprising mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. Central to this phase is the members' shared learning imperative, rather than the newcomer's journey into an established practice. Herein, emphasis was placed on the continuous negotiation and renegotiation of practice and identity within the community, to collectively determine competency. According to Wenger and colleagues (2002), a CoP consists of "people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). As with the previous phase, there is considerable identity work that is experienced on both the individual level and in relation to the social engagements which take place in a CoP. Thus, individual participation levels in CoPs vary depending on an individual's experience in the social landscape and the collective needs of the CoP members which are in constant negotiation. In order to guide groups of people to promote and assess the individual and collective value being created through a CoP, Wenger and colleagues (2011) developed the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF).

The VCF was initially developed to guide the promotion and assessment of value using a five-cycle approach: *immediate value*, *potential value*, *applied value*, *realized value*, and *transformative value* (see Table 1 for a definition of each type of value). Through the collection of personal and collective narratives from participants in a CoP, Wenger and Colleagues (2011) suggested using this approach in an effort to identify value that may have otherwise been overlooked in social learning:

As human experiences that evolve over time, communities and networks have stories – how they started, what has happened since, what participants are trying to achieve. It is in the context of these narratives that one can appreciate what learning is taking place (or not) and what value is created (or not). Framing value creation through narratives emphasizes the importance of audience and perspective (p.15).

More recently, Wenger-Trayner and colleagues (2019) advanced this framework and introduced two additional value creation cycles: *strategic value* and *enabling value*. These values account for the strategic work (such as conversations) that participants engage in with relevant stakeholders to support the CoP, and the actual supports (e.g., financial) from stakeholders to nurture and sustain CoPs. These complementary value cycles also bring a focus to the broader landscape of practice and the learning potential to be found at the boundaries of various communities within a landscape. In their ongoing development of the VCF, Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020) introduced a final cycle *orienting value*, which further strengthened our understanding of how a CoP fits within the greater landscape of practice.

Table 1.

Value Creation Cycles

Cycles	Description
Immediate	An activity or an interaction creates value
Potential	The activity or interaction leads to an idea that has potential to become valuable at a later time
Applied	Once this potential idea is applied into a new context, it created applied value
Realized	Once an individual reflects on the results of the applied value (positive or negative) they create realized value
Transformative	When there is a new definition of success and what indicators lead to this success
Enabling	When supports are provided to a CoP in support of the social learning
Strategic	Key and relevant stakeholders become involved in quality conversations with the CoP leaders or members to ensure the learning is making a difference
Orienting	Developing an understanding of where the CoP fits within the larger landscape of practice

*Wenger et al., 2011; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020

Moreover, Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2020) introduced the concept of learning loops and flows between cycles. These help us understand how value flows through cycles to show how different values contribute to the overall social learning. For example, there may be a flow between realized and potential value. Once an individual reflects on the outcomes of their applied social learning (realized value) this could generate new possibilities for future types of value to occur, thus looping the flow back to potential value. If this individual returned back to their CoP and shared their experiences with other members, this could also lead to potential value for members of their CoP, directing another cycle to occur.

In the third phase of their social learning theory, Wenger-Trayner and colleagues (2015) transcended the scope of CoPs and focused on the broader field of learning capability in *Learning in Landscapes of Practice* (LoP). Through their expansion of the concept of *competence* within an individual community, the theorists introduced the notion of *knowledgeability* across a landscape; the process of claiming *knowledgeability* being related to the recognition of legitimacy across multiple communities, all within one landscape of practice. The theorists acknowledged the “unavoidable” boundaries within a complex landscape as a locale which may “hold potential for unexpected learning. The meetings of perspectives can be rich in new insights, radical innovations, and great progress... engaging at boundaries can expand what a community sees as important or even core to its practice” (p.17-18). Each CoP holds its own histories and regimes of competence, which are suggested to be like mini-cultures and thus providing rich learning opportunities for other communities. Given the nature of the Canadian sport system with its multiple levels of organizations (i.e., local/club, regional, provincial, national) a landscape perspective provides an ideal framework for supporting social learning and change across the sport system and between communities/organizations.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory (1977; 1979) centres on human development and an individual's relationship with the changing environments (immediate settings, societal contexts) in which they live. Bronfenbrenner explained that

human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multiperson systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p.514).

This multiperson system is referred to as the Ecology of Human Development and is comprised of a *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and *macrosystem*. These systems aimed to provide a stronger understanding of human development in a variety of contexts. The microsystem consists of the individual and their immediate environments, such as their homes. This system also includes exploring the reciprocity between relationships such as those between a mother and her newborn infant, or in the context of sport, between an athlete and her coach. In this particular system, the researcher needs to consider her impact on the results of the study as they have a role in the microsystem, especially when several participants are involved. For example, if the researcher is studying the relationship between a coach and her athlete, the researcher needs to consider the impacts that her presence may have on this relationship, or how the relationship may differ if the researcher were not present. This is also the case for multiple participants. If the researcher is studying a coach with two athletes, she must consider how the relationship between the triad impacts their behaviours. The next system, the mesosystem, contains microsystems and is concerned with a specific period of time in an individual's life and their relationships between

several settings and how these various settings may have interdependencies, which in turn influence the individual's development. This may also include examining subsystems and higher effects that potentially exist across systems. The exosystem does not specifically contain the individual (immediate setting), as does the mesosystem, but consists of larger social institutions that have influence over the individual such as the government, informal social networks, and geographical mobility. The purpose of the exosystem is "to alert researchers to aspects of the larger environment that may be critical for the process of making human beings human" (p. 527). Finally, the macrosystem encompasses the higher order cultures and societal influences which impact the other systems. These influences could be both structural and in the forms of implicit and explicit ideologies. Importantly, Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggested:

Research on the ecology of human development should include experiments involving the innovative restructuring of prevailing ecological systems in ways that depart from existing institutional ideologies and structures by redefining goals, roles, and activities and providing interconnections between systems previously isolated from each other (p. 528).

This call for research acted as a well-suited backdrop for an innovative initiative to support the restructuring and redefining of existing systems across a Western Canadian province to support women and girls at every level in sport.

In 2012, LaVoi and Dutove applied a version of the Ecological Systems Model to a sport specific context, where they examined the relationships between women and settings, overtime, and how these systems influenced their opportunities to attain and remain in their coaching positions. Specifically, the authors examined the supports and barriers which influenced the coaches' experiences. More recently, LaVoi (2016) further nuanced this model in the context of

women in coaching and created the Ecological-Intersectional Model of barriers and supports for women coaches. In this model, the researcher described intersectionality as the various factors which make up an individual's identity such as gender, race, sexuality, and income. The inclusion of intersectionality into the revisited model provided researchers with the tools to further delve into "the experiences of women coaches along differential identity axes, and how women may experience – in similar and different ways – ageism, misogyny, homophobia, and sexism among other forms of oppression, over the trajectories of their coaching career and life course" (p.19). LaVoi recommended that with a stronger understanding of how intersectionality and power play into women's experiences, change may be achieved. This recommendation set the groundwork for these models to be applied to other coaching research, as well as other sport specific contexts with a focus on women, girls, and other marginalized communities.

Revan's Action Learning Approach

Revan's Action Learning (1982) approach, originally, aimed to enable managers to "be encouraged to learn with and from each other using the group review to find solutions to their immediate problems" (p.64). There were also strong ties to the leadership qualities of said managers and their abilities to recruit others to support the collective actions of problem solving:

For [the manager] has not only to be clear about what obstructions he needs to overcome, thereby to reach his goal: he must then be able to get on and see that the goal is actually attained. It is not enough that he know what to do and how to do it; he must actually then get it done. And this calls for human qualities that may go far beyond the intellectual demands of working out what to do; action, as distinct from diagnosis...Action means the support of others; it calls for qualities of leadership...And leadership is the ability to

enlist allies—those who will work with their leader, to carry out his ideas and to bring in additional resources when they are needed to overcome the unforeseeable snags (p. 68).

This initial definition has since been refined:

Action learning is a powerful problem-solving tool that has the amazing capacity to simultaneously build successful leaders, teams, and organizations. It is a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning as individuals, as a team, and as an organization while doing so (Marquardt et al., 2018, p. 4).

According to Raelin (2000) both social learning and action learning approaches consist of a group of people who care to make changes in their practices, with a particular focus on collective learning and collaborative problem solving, creating the possibility of a ‘plug and play’ pairing of the two approaches into a working framework. Moreover, action learning was an appropriate approach to explore the development of social learning leaders in the AWiSL. Considering this was a leadership role in a social learning initiative, action learning acted as a supportive approach for the leaders and others in the community to engage in collaborative learning and problem solving in real-workplace situations.

Chapter 3: Review of Literature

Review of Literature

This review of literature is presented in four main sections. First, the general literature on women in leadership and leadership development is reviewed. Second, literature on women in sport leadership and women in coaching is reviewed. Third, literature on women and girls sport participation is reviewed. The last section discusses areas of literature where gaps remain present.

Women in Leadership and Leadership Development

Challenges and Barriers for Women in Leadership

Men have historically secured the top leadership positions across organizations and institutions which has resulted in leadership becoming associated with the masculine. As seen in sport, leadership behaviours have been aligned with typically masculine attributes (Hill et al., 2016), which poses specific hurdles for women attempting to advance into leadership positions, as they feel that they need to negotiate their identities to demonstrate their leadership capabilities (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Moreover, women benefit from social spaces where women leaders can learn from and with each other (Bryans & Mavin, 2003), but they often experience challenges developing this social capital (Stead & Elliott, 2013) because of the large majority of men securing these positions. As a result, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in fields including the government and non-profit organizations (Madsen & Dahlvig, 2018), and the barriers and challenges women experience in sport are similar to those experienced by women in other fields including STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine) and higher education. For example, women are now earning more degrees than men, but men continue to hold many leadership positions in higher education and are in the position to choose who will take on future leadership positions and determine the

direction of future research (Hill et al., 2016). The challenges associated with advancing women in leadership are further complicated by their personal experiences of intersectionality including factors such as a woman's ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation (Hill et al., 2016). In an attempt to address these challenges and barriers, professional development programs for women have become increasingly evident in the literature.

Programs for Women Leaders' Development

According to Van Oosten and colleagues (2017), "Given the barriers, advancing and retaining women in traditionally male-dominated professions requires organizations to implement strategies for professional development tailored to address the gendered context of women's careers and lives" (p.3). One such strategy is women-only training programs (WOTP) for women's leadership development. WOTP have been well received in the literature and are effective due to gender related differences in learning, communication, problem solving, and other important variances (Chuang, 2019). WOTP or Women's leadership development programs (WLDP) are unique in that they emphasize learning through relationships and engagement in the co-creation of knowledge, rather than general leadership development programs which often focus on participants receiving knowledge from the instructor or expert (Sugiyama et al., 2016). They also provide a space for women to connect with other women in leadership positions which is important for their personal growth (Brue & Brue, 2016), to develop social supports (Lämsä, & Savela, 2019), and to be vulnerable (Selzer et al., 2017). Successful practices in these training programs to develop women as leaders have included role-playing, small group interactions, listening to experienced women speakers (Brue et al., 2016), exploring leadership effectiveness in male dominated fields (Van Oosten et al., 2017), engaging with others in identity work and personal reflection, discussing intersectionality, spending time

addressing barriers women face in leadership, and emphasizing the program approach or process rather than the content (Selzer et al., 2017). When WOTP are accessible to developing women leaders, participant outcomes have included increased confidence taking on leadership positions, skills for problem solving and managing anxieties (Brue et al., 2016), connections with other women that continued beyond the WOTP (Van Oosten et al., 2017) and in sport, greater assertiveness in decision making and a stronger sense of feeling that they deserve leadership positions (Pike et al., 2018).

Women in Sport Leadership and Coaching

Challenges and Barriers for Women in Sport Leadership

Women aiming to advance to leadership positions across sport organizations experience their own unique set of challenges and barriers. The perception of leadership behaviours and characteristics in sport has long been in line with the masculine and therefore is often embodied by men. This reproduction of masculinity in leadership continues to marginalize women and creates challenges for women to advance in organizations; indeed, in some areas, there has been a decline in the number of women in leadership positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Demers et al., 2019; Grappendorf, & Burton, 2017). Women feel that they need to work harder to ‘fit in’ to the male dominated culture seen in leadership, otherwise, they find leadership spaces to be unwelcoming (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019) and feel they need to act less ‘feminine’ to avoid tokenism (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Moreover, males are often in decision making positions (LaVoi, Baeth, & Calhoun, 2019) leading to “male dominance in authority, influence and power” in sport leadership (Ryan & Dickson, 2018, p. 334).

The issues related to the lack of women in leadership are not simply because of the number of women in the leadership pool, but women are confronted with issues along their

pathways to attaining leadership roles (Pape, 2020). Some studies have shown that although there are gender equity policies in place, they are often for funding purposes, rather than for actual practice and implementation, contributing to the slow rate of change in leadership (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Moreover, the introduction of policies does not always result in achieving gender equality, because it is changes at the informal level that create actual change (Pape, 2020). In addition to organizational and cultural barriers, women also don't always have the necessary supports in terms of mentors and networks of women. This dearth of female support coupled with women's lack of confidence and engagement in self-promoting behaviours, further complicates women's trajectories to leadership positions (Aman et al., 2018).

Another concern for women in leadership are the perceptions of those in other areas of sport, such as athletes and students, highlighting the larger cultural issues present in sport. For example, Schull and Kihl (2019) demonstrated that athletes have gendered expectations of leadership in sport and judge men and women differently. In some cases, men are excused for not showing athletes empathy, whereas women are penalized for not showing empathy because it is expected of them. In another study, Hancock and colleagues (2017) suggested that the leadership labyrinth for women (coined by Eagly & Carli, 2007; formerly referred to as the glass ceiling), a metaphor for the constantly changing pathways that women must navigate to reach a leadership position, is not just a problem at the highest levels of sport, although some believe that it is. In fact, in their study, male sport management students were more likely to believe the labyrinth no longer existed for women at all and was a myth. Male students were also more inclined to believe that women were content not achieving higher levels of leadership. It is evident that the culture surrounding women in leadership stems far beyond boardrooms and carries down to newcomers, identifying an area where change is needed.

Challenges and Barriers for Women in Coaching

For several decades, researchers have documented the considerable gender imbalances which exist for women in sport coaching, particularly at the high-performance level (Reade et al., 2009). This is largely due to the considerable barriers that women face in their access to coaching positions and development opportunities, along with opportunities for career advancements. More specifically, women in coaching feel undervalued, a lack of collegial support (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), the pressures of working in a male-dominated field, and job insecurity (Carson et al., 2018), to name a few. Considering women coaches are often one of only a couple of women (if not the only one) in their organizations, they experience a lack of support (Clarkson et al., 2019) and generally have shorter careers than their male counterparts due to occupational constraints (Cunningham et al., 2019). For example, when participating in coach development, women coaches have experienced perpetual stereotypical language, such as the facilitator referring to the group as “lads” when women were clearly present (Lewis et al., 2017).

This androcentric culture is also present in hiring processes where men are favoured over women (Burton, 2015; Clarkson et al., 2019) because coaching characteristics, particularly head coach characteristics, are often associated with the masculine (Madsen et al., 2017). Moreover, this stereotyping and discrimination has resulted in prejudice towards marginalized women, such as homosexual women in coaching (Keats, 2017), which creates a culture where women are just trying to survive rather than thrive in their coaching positions (Kenttä et al., 2020). These issues related to marginalization and intersectionality are further complicated for women of colour. Although women of colour in coaching are not a central focus of this dissertation, these coaching experiences are important to acknowledge. Women of colour experience additional barriers in

coaching which are political, structural, and representational (Carter-Francique, & Olushola, 2016) and women of colour often feel they need to legitimize their visibility as coaches because they are the only woman and the only black coach at a given time (Rankin-Wright & Hylton, 2021). The lack of diversity in leadership positions has also been identified as a concern to women coaches of colour, as this impacts the culture of organizations and has resulted in women experiencing racist and sexist comments from those on the homogenous leadership team (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2018).

Programs for Women Coaches' Development

In addition to the barriers experienced by women in retaining and in advancing their coaching careers, women experience specific issues with the coach education process (Lewis et al., 2017), but there remains to be limited exploration of the effectiveness of coach education for women (Denison, 2007) as coaching continues to be highly male dominated. Women consider coach education programs to be intimidating and unwelcoming as many coach educators are male and align with the culture of excluding women (Clarkson, et al., 2019); this is likely a reason for some women's preferences towards women-only development programs (Lewis et al., 2017). Despite these challenges, researchers have made some progress in identifying women coaches' preferences and "what has worked" in terms of coach education. Examples of programs that have been successful for women include mentorship programs to advance women in coaching, as these support individual and interpersonal level benefits (Banwell et al., 2019; Banwell et al., 2020). As well, the use of scaffolding has been well received for women's coach education and development (Allen & Reid, 2018) as a means to bring together various learning situations to support individual coach's specific learning needs (Wright et al., 2007). Ensuring that women have access to learning opportunities beyond formal training is also important, as too

much emphasis on technical training has the capacity to be damaging to women's confidence when entering the coaching field (Vinson et al., 2016). Rather, women look for ongoing learning opportunities and a learning culture, instead of a series of qualifications. Moreover, having supportive managers and others in higher positions may also play an important role in their development (Norman et al., 2018).

Women and Girls' Sport Participation

Women in Sport

According to Newland and colleagues (2020) "Over the last century, women across the world have benefited from improved access and opportunity to participate in sport – but arguably only in some sports, and most often at the lower levels of sport, as opposed to in the higher levels of professional sport" (p. 6-7). Regardless, data from the last few decades shows that women are still not participating in sport and physical activity at the recommended levels (O'Reilly et al., 2018) and studies have shown that this is the case for physical activity at the light, moderate, and vigorous levels. In one study (Thomas et al., 2019), first year Canadian university students showed a significant drop in their participation in physical activity and sport participation, with women unsurprisingly showing a steeper decrease than men. In addition to the general need for women to participate in higher levels of physical activity and sport, another issue is that men continue to take on decision making roles for women's sport. For example, men hold many coaching positions for female teams, thus women and girls are often coached by men and the decisions being made about these sports are also made by men (Newland et al. 2020). As with coaching, the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities further complicates sport and physical activity participation for women. For example, Indigenous women are less physically active than Indigenous men, and Indigenous people are less physically active than non-

Indigenous people (Stronach & Maxwell, 2020). It would seem that women are in need of initiatives and interventions to support their physical activity and sport participation throughout their lifetimes, along with the agency and autonomy to make decisions about what they need to achieve, if not surpass, the minimum government recommendations.

Girls in Sport

Statistics Canada (2019) indicates that girls between five and 17 are half as likely to meet the Canadian physical activity guidelines as boys, as the sport system in many ways is not built for girls (House of Commons, 2017). This lack of participation is also the case for Canadian adolescent girls' team sport participation. One study showed that girls' participation rates decreased by 38.4% between grades nine and 12, and found that "girls who did not participate in any team sports for all 4 years (non-participants) were more likely to be non-White and be lower SES compared to consistent participants" (Lau et al., 2019, p.621). Girls' dropping participation rates are attributed to a number of reasons including insecurities about their abilities, their bodies, and the perception of their sexuality and femininity, causing girls to often drop out of sport around age 14 (Newland et al., 2019). Girls who do choose to resist this trend and continue with sport are often treated differently than their male peers (Roper & Polasek, 2019) and experience discrimination. For example, in hockey, girls are an afterthought in terms of allocating ice time and they experience inconsistencies in officiating. Moreover, they feel as though the perception of girls hockey is second class to boys hockey (Adams & Leavitt, 2018). The fact that the low number of girls involved in sport experience discrimination is a problem, as this may disincentivize girls to maintain their participation, which has been known to lead to unhealthy behaviours. According to Torstveit and colleagues (2018), there was a correlation between adolescent girls' sport participation and their decreased engagement in unhealthy

lifestyle behaviours “including: substance use, irregular meal patterns, high intake of unhealthy food, low physical activity level, high screen time, using passive transportation, and having short sleep duration compared with adolescents not participating in organized sports” (p. 2389).

Notwithstanding the lack of girls’ sport participation, initiatives have been shown to support girls in becoming physically active when they are tailored to girls’ needs. One example was a program called *FitSpirit* which was successful in increasing the physical activity of adolescent girls, particularly for those who were not meeting the Canadian recommendations before the intervention (Paiement et al., 2020). However, sport and physical activity opportunities often do not suit girls’ specific preferences. Coen and colleagues (2019) found that physical activity programs in schools were not always appropriate for girls. The girls in this study expressed their interest in using outdoor and public spaces to be physically active, but this was not always a feasible option considering outdoor spaces are often associated with the masculine, while private indoor spaces are linked with the feminine. The range of individual, organizational, and cultural level barriers that exist for girls’ sport and physical activity participation, demonstrates the need for additional research and ground level work to create long-term change for girls. In Canada specifically, there is still a need to “to push and innovate in areas where change is most needed – sport program design, delivery, communication, and media” (Canadian Heritage, 2019, para.12).

Gaps in Literature

Although several scholars have explored the above reviewed areas of literature, gaps exist within the fields of women in leadership, women in coaching, and women and girls in sport in terms of both research and practical initiatives. Beginning with women’s leadership, there are still few studies exploring women’s development of their leadership capacities (Gipson et al.,

2017). Hill et al. (2016) recommend that to increase the representation of women in leadership substantially, there not only needs to be changes in learning and development opportunities for women; but major changes in the culture, policies, and practices of the organizations, providing an opportunity to implement and research these changes. In sport specifically, Evans and Pfister (2020) expressed that there are few longitudinal studies focused on women's leadership development, and overall, there is an emphasis on the barriers to women's attainment of leadership positions, and less about what is enabling women: "We know what prevents progress – we know less about what works" (p.20). This created a space for additional research.

For women in coaching, Clarkson et al. (2019) explain that "it is crucial that initiatives be put in place to increase women coaching networks and role models to ensure women...do not feel isolated, have adequate support, and do not leave [their sport] or the coaching profession early in their career" (p.79). Especially for women aiming to advance in their coaching to more leadership positions, Norman et al. (2018) suggested that there is no clear pathway for women to develop, particularly as coach developers. They also noted it would serve us well to be more creative with the promotion of leadership styles, rather than prescribing one way of doing things. Thus, further examination of initiatives to support women in forging their own pathways through coaching or to new leadership positions is warranted.

Finally, Newland et al. (2020) suggested that programming for girls should focus on empowering girls to feel confident in their athletics, with an emphasis on what it means to be a woman or girl in sport, in today's society. Once again, this opportunity sets the stage for initiatives and research, in this case, to explore girls' athletic programming.

Chapter 4: Research Context

Research Context

Gender Equality Network Canada

In 2017 a two and a half year initiative with the aim of advancing gender equality across Canada was developed and called the Gender Equality Network Canada (GENC). GENC was supported by a sector of the Canadian Federal Government (Women and Gender Equality Canada) and consisted of a collaborative group between 150 women across the nation to “work together to advocate for policy change, build inclusive intersectional leadership, and take collective action to advance gender equality in Canada” (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2020, para.3). Each of these 150 women was responsible for implementing an initiative into their nominated organization to support the mission of GENC. One of these 150 women was a representative from the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC); she developed the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) as her contributing initiative.

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program

The AWiSL sought “to increase gender equity and leadership diversity in Alberta sport organizations by building more inclusive programs and creating more opportunities for women to develop their sport leadership skills” (CAC, 2020, para.1). Through a partnership with the province’s governing Multiservice Sport Organization at the time, Alberta Sport Connection (ASC), the project lead from the CAC recruited six mentors to collaborate in the facilitation of the AWiSL (see Article Two for further information about the mentors’ leadership expertise). Specifically, they would be using a social learning approach (a CoP) to achieve the three program outcomes: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity/development, and knowledge transfer. Upon establishing the six mentor roles, the project lead and the ASC posted a call for applications for sport leaders wishing to be a part of this CoP. Applicants were required to

propose a gender equity related project that could be implemented into their sport organizations with the support of the AWiSL. 12 sport leaders and their accompanying sport organizations were recruited to participate in the AWiSL (see Article Four for further information about the sport leaders' proposed projects).

The CoP activities began (with all members; sport leaders, mentors, and the project lead) in October 2017 and continued until May 2020. These activities occurred approximately once a month both in-person (about twice a year) and online (see Appendix A for a full list of activities). During the activities, the CoP members would meet and engage in development opportunities with focused topics such as leadership development and gender equity. One example was a workshop to support the sport leaders' presentation skills and another was a workshop on gender bias in the workplace. In addition to developing the leaders and mentors, these meetings were used as a collaborative space for the sport leaders to work towards developing and implementing their project goals with the support of the other sport leaders, mentors, and researchers (myself and Dr. Diane Culver, to be explained below). To further support the ongoing learning of the sport leaders, they were divided into smaller groups ("pods") consisting of one mentor and roughly three sport leaders. This enabled the mentors to provide more one-on-one guidance to the sport leaders and an opportunity for the sport leaders to engage with each other on a more intimate basis.

Program Evaluation

In the Summer of 2018, myself with the support of my supervisor Dr. Culver were contacted to conduct a program evaluation of the AWiSL with a specific focus on evaluating the three program outcomes (gender equity, leadership diversity/development, and knowledge transfer) and the value created through this social learning initiative. In order to operationalize

and conceptualize the three main outcomes, during the first in-person meeting I attended, the CoP members were asked to participate in an activity where they identified key indicators to demonstrate the achievement of the three project outcomes. This enabled myself and Dr. Culver to have a better understanding of what these outcomes meant to the group; as well as this initiated the CoP members into the co-researcher role. In addition, myself and Dr. Culver consulted regularly with the project lead to support the facilitation of the CoP as it is our area of expertise. The program evaluation of the AWiSL is the primary focus of this doctoral dissertation. See Appendix B for a copy of the formal evaluation submitted to GENC in June 2020.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Methodology

The following chapter presents the various methods used to conduct the research for this dissertation; this chapter is organised by article and divided into five sections. The first section of on each article addresses the methodology used to guide the article. The second section situates the context of the article. The third, fourth, and fifth sections provide information regarding procedures including recruitment information, the participant samples, and the data collection instruments for each article. This chapter concludes with two general sections on data analysis and research quality. For an overview of the data collection timeline for the duration of the evaluation, see Appendix C.

Wenger-Trayner et al. (2019) suggested using a mixed methods approach to collect effect data (quantitative statistics) and contribution data (qualitative stories). Effect data might be rating scale results or open-ended questions from a survey, numbers of participants in a program, or reports of changes in practice. Such effect data afford a view of the effects of a social learning space at scale, aggregated “beyond individual claims or experience” (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019, p. 324-325). Such individual experiences can also be captured as contribution data; that is, stories that link specific activities (within the social learning space) to certain outcomes, by going through the value creation cycles. In this manner, individual and collective value creation narratives can be combined with effect data to make a plausible claim that certain changes in practice are an effect of learning in the social learning space. This approach guided the decision to use a primarily qualitative methodology, supported by descriptive quantitative data, in this research.

Article One: Case Study

In Article One, a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995; 2005) approach was fitting for the small sample size and the focus on the uniqueness of a women-only training program for coach developers (i.e., the case). This aligned well with Stake's (1995) views on the purpose and justification of a small case:

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself (p. 8).

This methodology supported the collection of rich participant accounts of their experiences and perspectives (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Specifically, Stake (2010) explains that by collecting rich descriptions, the reader is provided with "...abundant, interconnected details..." (p. 49), which captured the nuances of this pilot program. Furthermore, Stake (1995) considers a case study to be "...noninterventive and empathetic. In other words, we try not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case" (p. 12). This view guided the study methods, in an attempt to highlight the innovativeness of a program to support women in sport in their leadership development, while maintaining a constructivist lens to "preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening" (Stake, 1995, p. 12).

Context

This case study explored one of the 12 projects that was implemented by a sport leader ("Debbie") from the greater AWiSL. Debbie had developed two programs for her organization and the researchers explored her women-only training program (WOTP) for coach developers.

This program consisted of training 10 women to become certified coach developers while simultaneously fostering a social learning space for these women to develop leadership skills through ongoing interactions and activities.

Procedure

Recruitment. Approval to conduct this dissertation was received through the University of Ottawa's Research and Ethics Board in September 2018 (Appendix D). Initially, the AWiSL project lead suggested that one of Debbie's projects would be interesting to study, as she had received encouraging anecdotal feedback from the program participants since the program started. To recruit individuals for this case study, the primary researcher contacted Debbie and asked if she would be interested in participating in a study on her coach developer program. Upon receiving positive interest from Debbie (one of two program leads), Debbie then contacted two women who were actively participating in the program and the other program lead to inquire into their interest in the study. After receiving positive interest from all three parties, Debbie put the primary researcher in touch with the participants via email. The primary researcher then sent consent forms (Appendix E) for the participants to complete, sign, and return. This resulted in four interviews being conducted.

Participants

Four participants agreed to participate in this study. Debbie, as previously mentioned was a part of the AWiSL and acted as a program and events coordinator in her organization. She was one of the two project leads to run the WOTP for coach developers called the Women in Sport Leadership – Coach Developer Initiative (WiSL). The second participant was the other program lead; Debbie recommended his participation for this study, as he was a male facilitating the WiSL and Debbie thought his perceptions and experiences of the program would differ from hers

and provide additional insights. This second program lead is a Master Coach Developer and at the start of the WiSL, he was the manager of coach education at the sport organization. He then became the technical director of the sport organization, and more recently moved to work for the national sport organization. The first coach developer interviewed had been coaching for 12 years at various levels (from the club to the University level) with athletes ranging in their abilities; most often she coached soccer from U12 to U17. She was also an athlete herself at the University level. In terms of her full-time work, she is an educator. The second coach developer had been coaching since 2008 (11 years) and started coaching at the youth level. She began coaching for her child's team and over the last four years she has moved up to coaching more competitive teams. For her full-time work, she is a health professional.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-Structured Interviews. The researcher conducted one semi-structured interview with each of the four participants. Considering the different participant roles in the WOTP (program lead, sport leader/program lead, coach developer in training) three interview guides were developed (see Appendices F, G, H). Although questions were deliberately developed to capture the participants' experiences, the discussions remained flexible and the researcher often used additional probes to gain further insights from the participants. To facilitate the interviews, the researcher set up a time with each participant to conduct individual interviews via telephone or Zoom and audio recorded the interviews. The interviews lasted between 22 and 69 minutes ($M = 48.5$) and resulted in 64-pages of single-spaced data.

Document Analysis. In addition to the interviews, Debbie provided the researcher with recruitment documents that were used to advertise the WOTP. These documents included information such as a description of the program's application process, activities, goals, and the

evaluation processes. Debbie also provided a document which outlined what had occurred over the first year of the two and a half year program (data were collected shortly after the completion of the first year) such as activities that had been completed. These documents were used to augment the researcher's understanding of the program and subsequently the case.

Article Two: Interpretive Qualitative Methodology

In Article Two, an interpretive qualitative methodology (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) was used to explore the experiences of three mentors and the project lead (collectively referred to as Social Learning Leaders or SLLs) in developing their social learning leadership capabilities. Since qualitative inquiries are concerned with everyday experiences in specific contexts (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) this approach fit well with the purpose of the study. According to Hays and Singh (2012) "The importance of context as a characteristic of qualitative research refers to how participants create and give meaning to social experiences" (p. 6). In this study, the elements of the context included a social learning space for women SLLs, whereby they used an action learning approach to support their ongoing leadership development. This form of inquiry also enabled the researchers to generate a thick description of the participants' experiences to provide "insight and a deeper understanding to illustrate a phenomenon fully, rather than for generalizability to a larger sample" (p. 8). Considering the ways women learn to become leaders and the social situations in which they experience this learning remains underrepresented (Stead & Elliott, 2013), examining the context and experiences in which this learning occurred provided an opportunity to gather insight into "what worked" to develop these SLLs.

Context

As mentioned, this study explored the experiences of three mentors and the project lead in terms of their development of their social learning leadership capabilities. The project lead

(Holly) was primarily responsible for facilitating learning in the AWiSL CoP but shared this role with the mentors as well. This was the SLLs' first attempt at taking on a facilitator role in a CoP, providing an opportunity to develop their own leadership capabilities with other women.

Procedure

Recruitment. During the in-person CoP meeting in October 2018, the primary researcher provided all of the mentors and sport leaders with a letter of information regarding the program evaluation that would be conducted on the AWiSL (with the above-mentioned REB approval). All participants were then provided with a consent form to sign and complete which accounted for all of the data collected in Article Two (and Article Three to be further discussed below).

Participants

Four participants agreed to take part in this study. Initially, there were five mentors and a project lead involved in the AWiSL. For various reasons including work related commitments, two of the mentors did not participate in data collection for the full duration of the program evaluation. As such, their accounts of developing as facilitators were not included in this study as not enough data were generated to capture their genuine experiences. The project lead recruited the mentors for their various backgrounds and expertise in leadership. Examples of their positions and experiences which contributed to their expertise included a professor of leadership behaviours, a head sport scout, a former head coach, and an expert of leadership in androcentric spaces.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-Structured Interviews. The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews with each of the four participants. The first interview aimed to collect data based on their first year participating in and facilitating the CoP. The second interview was designed to collect

additional data from the first interview, 10 months later, to capture the participants' evolving experiences overtime. Both interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendices I, J) but remained flexible. To facilitate the interviews, the researcher set up a time with each participant to conduct individual interviews via telephone or Zoom and audio recorded the interviews. The first set of interviews lasted between 12 and 146 minutes ($M = 83$) and resulted in 93 pages of single-spaced data. The second set of interviews lasted between 22 and 62 minutes ($M = 43.5$) and resulted in 44 pages of single-spaced data.

Formal/Informal Conversations and Observations. The researcher received consent from all AWiSL participants to collect data through formal and informal conversations as well as observations during CoP activities (both online and in-person). Over the course of the evaluation, 42 single-spaced pages of notes were collected from these sources. Activity sources included conversations during in-person CoP meetings (i.e., speaking to a mentor after a workshop), observation notes during presentations (i.e., project presentations during the 2019 Canada Games as a way to transfer knowledge to the greater sport community), observations notes during small group discussions (i.e., during pod meetings or opt-in online courses), and observation notes from online discussions on the Slack forum. Specific notes that pertained to the mentors were used to inform Article Two and notes pertaining to the sport leaders were used to inform Articles Three & Four.

Article Three & Four: Collaborative Inquiry

In Articles Three & Four, a collaborative inquiry (CI; Bray, Joyce, Smith, & Yorks, 2000) approach was chosen as this methodology directly draws from the work of Heron (1981, 1985, 1988), Reason (1988), and Rowan (Reason & Rowan, 1981), aligning well with a participatory lens. As a participatory, action-based inquiry method, participants (or co-

researchers) were empowered to improve their practice, all the while developing new knowledge. Additionally, this specific methodology encouraged the establishment of peers (sport leaders and mentors in this initiative) as co-researchers to conduct research *with* people rather than *on* them to support the theoretical framework. Moreover, Bray and colleagues (2000) provided specific content for the facilitation of group learning (*Create the Conditions for Group Learning*), situating well with social learning theory. On a final note, CI encourages the co-researchers to contribute and negotiate all aspects of the inquiry design and execution, ultimately empowering the co-researchers' needs to be taken into account, optimizing learning opportunities. It is important to reiterate that the researchers did not join the CoP until one year into the project, thus these investigations would be appropriately deemed a *partial form* of co-operative inquiry, rather than a *full form* (Heron, 1996).

Context

Article Three examined the leadership development experiences of the 12 sport leaders during their participation in the AWiSL. Specifically, the AWiSL collectively fostered a CoP of femininity to enable these sport leaders to develop their leadership skills in an androcentric field. Article Four looked into the actual impacts of the 12 sport leaders' projects that were designed and implemented in their sport organizations to promote gender equity. The sport leaders submitted their own small-scale evaluations of their projects which included insights and perspectives from individuals who participated in these projects. These data were supplemented with the collection of perspectives from representatives (e.g., supervisors) in the sport leaders' organizations.

Procedure

Recruitment. As mentioned above, the sport leaders were recruited in 2018 for Article Three. The project lead contacted representatives from the sport leaders' organizations via email to inquire into any interest in participating in data collection for Article Four. Four representatives responded to this inquiry and were provided with a consent form from the primary researcher to complete and sign.

Participants

12 sport leaders (10 women and two men) agreed to participate in data collection for Articles Three & Four. Originally, 15 sport leaders were accepted to participate in the AWiSL but three ended their participation for various reasons including changes to employment and did not participate in data collection activities. Each of the 12 sport leaders held an administrative position at their sport organization, with positions ranging from coach development coordinator to executive director. These organizations ranged from sports clubs, to regional sport organizations. For Article Four, four representatives from sport organizations agreed to provide their perspectives on the AWiSL. These representatives worked directly with the sport leaders and could speak to the changes they had seen in the sport leaders and their sport organizations since the onset of the AWiSL. Their positions ranged from directors to executive board members.

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-Structured Interviews and Email Interviews (Sport Leaders; Article Three & Four). The researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews with each sport leader and two email interviews with select sport leaders. The two email interviews were sent to the sport leaders after two of the AWiSL in-person meetings. Considering not every sport leader attended

the in-person meetings, those sport leaders who were not in attendance did not participate in this form of data collection. The two semi-structured interviews followed an interview guide (see Appendices K, L) but remained flexible. To facilitate the interviews, the researcher set up a time with each participant to conduct individual interviews via telephone or Zoom and audio recorded the interviews. The first set of semi-structured interviews lasted between 18 and 47 minutes ($M = 34$) and resulted in 137 pages of single-spaced data. The second semi-structured interviews lasted between 18 and 58 minutes ($M = 38$) and resulted in 102 pages of single-spaced data. The first email interviews resulted in 15 pages of single-spaced data and the second resulted in 6 pages. These interviews were flexible and enabled the sport leaders to openly speak to their experiences at the in-person meeting.

Email Interviews (Sport Organization Representatives; Article Four). The researcher sent an email interview guide (Appendix M) to the sport organization representatives wishing to participate in the study. This resulted in 10 pages of single-spaced data.

Surveys. The researcher provided each sport leader with an initial survey in October 2018 (see Appendix N for the survey guide) to collect data regarding the sport leaders' participation in the CoP. This survey was completed during an in-person meeting using Survey Monkey software.

Final Evaluations (Article Four). Each sport leader participated in a workshop to develop program evaluations skills and conducted their own small-scale evaluations of their projects. In March 2020, the sport leaders submitted a final evaluation form (Appendix O) and any addition information/data they collected. This resulted in 142 pages of data, which included qualitative and quantitative information such as the number of girls who participated in their programs and quotes from individuals who participated in the programs. Although participatory

research does not traditionally include quantitative measures, Macaulay and colleagues (2013) argue that:

In practice, members of multi-stakeholder coalitions can use the most appropriate methods for answering their research questions – including qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Therefore, when researchers and non-academic stakeholders form partnerships to formulate and undertake research, the partnerships can determine how best to obtain some answers to their questions and design a study accordingly (p.161).

Much of the data in Article Four are qualitative; however, the final reports act as a support with quantitative indicators for “quasi-statistics”, a term used by Becker (1970) to describe simple numerical contributions (Maxwell, 2013). Bray and colleagues (2000) concur that quantitative measures have their place in CI, but caution that “qualitative experience is given priority over measures” (p. 92).

Data Analysis

To organize the various forms of generated data, all data were uploaded to a software program to support the analysis (Nvivo 11 and 12 software). The data were subsequently coded and analyzed guided by a thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) original article on thematic analysis has gained considerable traction in sport research over the last decade and a half and has “entered the ‘canon’ as a recognizable and reputable method” (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016, p. 191), proposed as a flexible guide for analysis. Moreover, our reflexive thematic analysis allowed for both inductive and deductive analysis, pairing well with the above-mentioned methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

Thematic analysis was completed through a six-step process (Braun et al., 2016), during which the researchers engaged in on-going reflexive interpretations of the data. Phase one included becoming familiar with the data by immersing in the reading and re-reading of transcripts, observation notes, and other generated data with an analytical lens. Specifically, this involved the creation of notes and reflections, and the start of developing categories to make sense of the 728 pages of data. Phase two, coding, took place alongside phase one. This consisted of developing initial codes based on the guiding theoretical frameworks and other more inductive codes, which included “‘tagging’ with a code each piece [of data] that has some relevance to your research question” (p. 197). Phase three built on the codes from phase two and included clustering to develop “higher-level” patterns, more specifically, initial themes. Braun et al. (2016) explain that this step moves away from specific points (codes) to more general nuances of patterns (themes). Phase four refinement, which requires revising, is the phase in which initial themes are revisited with the possibility that the themes may require minor adjustments or be “let go” all together. Considering these six phases are not distinctly separate, in this dissertation, themes were revisited during subsequent phases of data collection, to ensure the themes were still relevant to the growing and changing data sets. Phase five, naming, occurred when the themes were unlikely to change drastically, and analytic narratives were developed:

Analytic narrative refers to the descriptive and interpretative commentary you present to the reader, which provides the context of quoted data, tells them about what is analytically important, and how this addresses the research question. So here you are building depth and detail into the analysis (p. 200).

Phase six, which consisted of “writing up”, resulted in the development of four articles and the additional findings section of this dissertation. Braun et al. (2016) acknowledge that writing does

not occur once analysis is completed, but rather in conjunction with the previous steps. This was the case for this dissertation as data were collected and analyzed iteratively over a year and a half. Considering the length of this time period, extracts were noted through the previous five phases to ensure significant quotes and other forms of data were captured and put aside to be used as illustrative representations of the AWiSL experiences and impact.

Research Quality

The following section provides an overview of the steps taken to support the quality of this dissertation. Aligning with Burke's (2016) relativist approach, often used in sport and exercise science research, the criteria chosen to determine the research quality were study-specific, rather than selected from a general list. Burke (2016) explained that this approach supports the notion that knowledge is constructed by the assumptions of the researcher and the criteria selected are relative to the study as it advances over time. According to Sparkes and Smith (2009):

Various criteria, therefore, in list form may act as a starting point for judging a certain kind of inquiry, but these may not apply on all occasions and other criteria can be added to or subtracted from them depending on the circumstances (p. 495).

Therefore, not all criteria were applied to all four articles in this dissertation but were selected based on their relevance and application to the specific study.

First, multiple sources of data (e.g., interviews, surveys, observations) were collected throughout the completion of this dissertation to triangulate findings by examining the convergence, inconsistencies, and contradictions of several data sources (Mathison, 1998). According to Denzin (1978) multiple data collection sources may account for the weakness of some sources and strengthen others. In addition to the multiple sources, data were collected from

multiple participant groups (e.g., sport leaders, mentors, sport organizations, project participants) to capture the several perspectives, experiences, and outcomes of the AWiSL program.

Second, multiple researchers were included in the research process as another form of triangulation. Mathison (1998) refers to this as ‘investigator triangulation’ which is considered good practice. In this case, the other researchers were also involved (in various roles) with the AWiSL project and could therefore provide important insight into the development of the four articles. Moreover, these researchers also played the role of a ‘critical friend’ to further nuance and scrutinize the various aspects of the research process including acting as theoretical sounding boards and assisting with the analysis and interpretation of the data (Tracy, 2010).

Third, various participant groups were asked for their input throughout the research process to ensure interpretations were representative of their experiences. As explained by Creswell (2013), this does not always mean that all raw data and transcripts are given back to participants to initiate member checking, but rather they are provided with preliminary themes and analyses to receive their perspectives and input in terms of any missing content. Specifically, during in-person meetings, the AWiSL members were presented with themes and updates of findings throughout data collection and asked for their comments.

Lastly, data were collected over an 18-month period and were collected from the sport leaders and mentors on several occasions and through a variety of methods. Longitudinal qualitative research as a method for evaluation research is minimally explored in the literature (Molloy et al., 2002), but supports the concept of a metaphorical ‘audit trail’ to enable an external auditor (the reader) to make an informed judgment towards the quality of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter 6: Findings

Presentation of the Articles

The dissertation findings are presented in four articles and an additional findings section. In Article One (published in the *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*), one sport leader's gender equity and leadership development project, a WOTP for coach developers, is presented as a case study and includes four participants. In Article Two (published in *Action Learning: Research and Practice*), four AWiSL mentors' experiences developing their social learning leadership capabilities through an action learning approach are presented. In Article Three (in press for publication in the *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*), a CoP of femininity that was cultivated to support 12 sport leaders in their leadership development in an androcentric field is examined. In Article Four (published in *Sport in Society*), the results of the two and a half year AWiSL program, which includes increases in sport programming for girls and Indigenous youth, and the development of leadership opportunities for women in sport, are presented. Finally, the additional findings section presents a how-to model for building social learning spaces which is as a legacy tool from the program, and the examples of the overall value created through the AWiSL program.

Article One

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., & Din, C. (2020). Exploring a women-only training program for coach developers. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 28(2), 173-179. doi: 10.1123/wspaj.2019-0047

Abstract

The following practice paper introduces an innovative women-only training program for coach developers in a Canadian provincial sport organization. The dearth of women in coaching and sport leadership positions (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012) informs the program as a whole and the participant perspectives on what is working, in practice, for them specifically in a way that could support future sport leaders interested in increasing gender equity in their sport organizations and leadership skills in their female leaders. The aims of the coach developer program are two-fold: to promote women in leadership and to create a social learning space for women to connect and support each other in their leadership development. The purpose of this practice paper is to discuss the supports that have enabled the facilitation of this program and to explore the value of a women-only training program. Two women (out of a total of 10) participating in the program and two leads facilitating the program were interviewed for their perspectives. The lessons learned touch on the types of value that were created (immediate, potential, and applied) and the specific supports (micro, meso, and macro) that enabled the facilitation of the program. Finally, the authors discuss additional considerations (e.g., consistent buy-in from the organization is needed) with practical insights in the hopes of inspiring other sport organizations to implement similar initiatives for promoting women in leadership and coaching in sport.

Keywords: gender; leadership; social learning

Introduction

There is a considerable gender imbalance in leadership positions across several fields including healthcare, academia, and business (Kalaitzi, Czabanowska, Fowler-Davis & Brand, 2017). In sport specifically, we are seeing the number of women in leadership decreasing (Demers, Thibault, Brière, & Culver, 2019). There has been a notable shortage in female head coaches in the United States (Machida-Kosuaga, Schaubroek, Gould, Ewing, & Feltz, 2017), and a general underrepresentation of women in sport leadership positions on a global scale (LaVoi, 2016). Moreover, the number of women securing board membership positions on Canadian National Sport Organizations (NSOs) is consistently less than 30% (CAAWS, 2018). To explore this trend, in 2012, LaVoi and Dutove conducted a review of literature, using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977; 1979) to synthesize the barriers experienced by women seeking and retaining coaching positions at a variety of levels in sport. The barriers LaVoi and Dutove (2012) identified included a perceived lack of confidence and competence, feeling undervalued, and a lack of collegial support. In another review, Carson, McCormack, and Walsh (2018) recognized additional barriers for women coaches such as a lack of women in leadership positions to act as supports, the pressures of working in a male-dominated environment, and job insecurity. When women did secure coaching positions, they experienced a host of additional barriers as they attempted to take on new leadership roles. These barriers included perceived gender discrimination, which impacted the coaches' intentions to advance into leadership positions and fewer opportunities to participate in developmental challenges than their male counterparts (Machida-Kosuaga et al., 2017). In addition, Burton (2015) found males were predominantly holding the gatekeeper roles for delegating new leadership positions and tended to be favourable towards hiring men. In light of more than 20 years of research examining the

gender bias against women in coaching (e.g., Knoppers, 1992), it is concerning that this gender imbalance persists today.

In an effort to confront the barriers noted above, increase gender equity, and leadership development/diversity in sport organizations, an initiative in a Canadian province was developed: The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL). This federally funded project (from the Department of Women and Gender Equality; WAGE) was initiated in the province of Alberta by recruiting 12 sport leaders to plan, implement, and evaluate distinct programs in their sport organizations to increase gender equity and leadership development. For the purpose of this practice paper, we focus on one of these 12 sport organizations to take a closer look at their initiative titled the Women in Sport Leadership (WiSL). Readers are referred to Culver, Kraft, Din, and Cayer (2019) for more information on the larger AWiSL program. In this practice paper, we describe the systems which supported this initiative and the value of using, in this practice case, a women-only training program (WOTP; the model used for the WiSL) from the perspectives of two women in the program and two lead facilitators. Our purpose is to share the perspectives and experiences to provide readers with the opportunity to envision a vicarious experience and develop a naturalistic generalization (Creswell, 2013). This type of generalization can be defined as:

... a process where readers gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented... as readers recognize similarities in case study details and find descriptions that resonate with their own experiences; they consider whether their situations are similar enough to warrant generalizations (Melrose, 2009, p.599).

Thus, readers wishing to create a training program that enables learning and leadership development opportunities for women in sport organizations may reflect on this practice paper

and consider whether it fits into their own contexts. The next section discusses other WOTP to situate the current program.

Women in Sport Leadership

Women-Only Training Programs. Kane (2016) argued that the situation for women in leadership has not changed even though “sophisticated on-the-ground initiatives for change have been undertaken, the intended outcomes have not materialized, at least in any significant way” (p. 36). Kane (2016) explained that some of the persistent barriers for women coaches include the lack of institutional support to access professional training and development opportunities, and the lack of women for networking and mentoring. Thus, implementing a new initiative with the hopes of breaking this cycle and supporting women in sport leadership is warranted.

Organizations across many fields have initiated continuing education programs to empower women and create opportunities for leadership development. One such example of an empowering initiative for women is gender-specific programs or WOTP seen in business (Bullough, De Luque, Abdelzaher, & Heim, 2015), academics (Gronowski & Burnham, 2018), as well as various workplaces (Chuang, 2019) including sport (e.g., Allen & Reid, 2019; Belding & Dodge, 2016). According to Chaung (2019) “due to gender difference in learning, communication, emotional intelligence, motivation, leadership, problem-solving (... and the list goes on), WOTP can provide a supportive and comfortable learning environment to enhance women’s confidence, skills, continuous development and readiness for future work” (p. 10). Chuang (2019) continued by explaining “literature indicates men tend to dominate learning settings and working environments while women are shyer from dominating a group with mixed genders” (p. 8). Considering the “old boys club” in sport coaching is deemed a contributor to the decrease in female coaches (Lumpkin, Favor, & McPherson, 2013), creating spaces for a WOTP

could mitigate this barrier. As such, the WOTP was an appropriate approach to apply to the WiSL initiative. The aim of this practice paper is to provide a snapshot of the program from the perspectives of two coach developers (CDs), as well as the two leads who promoted this initiative in the organization. This snapshot illuminates the potential of executing a WOTP for CDs when the appropriate supports are in place and will hopefully provide context and examples for other wishing to implement a similar initiative.

Description of WiSL

The WiSL is a 2-year WOTP that sets up 10 women to become certified CDs with the skills to promote and facilitate learning for coaches. The women have cultivated a social learning space as this approach underpins the WiSL program and is the same one used by the greater AWiSL program. Social learning spaces are facilitated when groups of practitioners who care to make a difference in their context come together, share problems, and co-create solutions and ultimately, improve their practice (Wenger, 2011). In addition, an Ecological Systems approach accounts for the various systems which have supported the implementation of this program. The next section provides an overview of these two guiding theories for future iterations of a similar program. Following, we present information about WiSL participants, examples of activities, lessons learned, and additional considerations.

Conceptual Framework

The WiSL accounted for both the systems that enabled the CD's learning (how) and the perceived value of participating in a social learning initiative (what) using two theories. Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) accounts for "how" systems have enabled the learning in this community, whereas Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat's (2011) Value Creation Framework (VCF) reveals "what" value has been created for these women in this

social learning space. The EST has previously been used to identify barriers for women in leadership across sport systems (Burton, 2015; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012) and the VCF has been used as a tool to assess value, particularly in the context of social learning spaces for women coaches in sport (Bertram, Culver, & Gilbert, 2017; Culver et al., 2019). Below are descriptions of ecological systems and value creation cycles along with examples from the WiSL.

Ecological Systems. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner (1979), the three ecological systems include Microsystems (Micro), Mesosystems (Meso), and Macrosystems (Macro); all three systems play a role in supporting the program. A Micro system is a series of interpersonal relations experienced by an individual. For example, the relationships cultivated between the CDs, the leads, and others involved in this initiative enabled the CDs to discuss and learn from others. A Meso system comprises the interrelations between several settings experienced by an individual. For example, the organizational supports and opportunities that were deliberately put into place allowed the CDs to have the space and capacity to learn. A Macro system includes the cultures and ideologies as a whole that exist around the individual. For example, the cultural influences and practices which enabled and prevented learning for the CDs throughout this initiative.

Value Creation Cycles. For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the first three value creation cycles according to Wenger et al., (2011). These cycles consist of Immediate, Potential, and Applied value. Immediate value is an activity or an interaction that inherently creates value. For example, CD 1 participates in a Mentorship Monday meeting. Potential value is an activity or interaction that leads to an idea that has potential to become valuable at a later time. For example, CD 2 participates in a Mentorship Monday meeting and explains that she has a tool that she uses to assist with her confidence when presenting. CD 2 shares this tool with CD 1.

Although CD 1 has not yet used the tool, there is potential for it to become valuable to her in the future. Applied value occurs when the potential idea is applied into a new context. For example, CD 1 delivers her first training (which requires presenting) and she uses the confidence tool she received from CD 2.

Participants

To gain insight into the WiSL, two of the women participating in the CD program (CD 1 and CD 2) and two leads (Lead 1 and Lead 2) facilitating the program shared their perspectives. Although the accounts of these two women do not capture the experiences of all 10 women in the program, we feel their diverse coaching experiences and locations provide important insight into the program and create a naturalistic generalization for readers. For example, CD 1 had been coaching for 12 years with a variety of age groups and levels and works in the education system. CD 2 had also been coaching on and off for the past 12 years (mostly coaching her children's teams) but became more deeply involved in coaching in the past four years and works as a health professional.

For the program leads, we already had a relationship with Lead 1 through the AWiSL and she suggested that in addition to her perceptions of the program, Lead 2 (who is male) should share his perspectives as his experience may have been different from hers and she recognized the influence of his support throughout the program. It is important to acknowledge that although the program was specifically developed for women participants (to create a leadership development opportunity) male leads were welcomed to facilitate the program.

Activities

This initiative offered the CDs a number of training opportunities, hands-on activities, and social learning engagements. This section describes several activities from the first year of

the program. In terms of training, the women participated in a weekend-long training where they were introduced to the CD role. This consisted of a training program which focused on developing learning facilitator skills. In addition, they attended another weekend course to gain insight into the competencies expected of them to eventually achieve their C license for coaching their sport. As for hands-on activities, the CDs were given the opportunity to co-deliver a workshop with an experienced CD, to gain practical experience. This was followed by an opportunity to work alongside an experienced coach evaluator to gain an understanding of the expectations of evaluators during a formal coach evaluation. An example of a social learning engagement that took place, was the monthly Mentorship Monday meetings, where the CDs would meet with an expert or experienced CD and exchange experiences, co-create knowledge, and foster learning as a group. These interactions extended to an online platform (WhatsApp) where the women exchanged knowledge (i.e., articles) to help each other during periods where they were not meeting. Finally, the women participated in and presented at a Women in Sport Conference. This enabled them to listen to and participate in lectures from a variety of women in leadership roles (in sport and other fields) and provided them with an opportunity to work with an expert and develop their presentation skills. At the end of the first year, the CDs completed a formal reflection on the first year of the program and assisted with setting up actions for the second year.

Lessons Learned

Supports to facilitate a WOTP for CDs

This section explores, from the perspectives of the two CDs and the two leads, the various systems (Micro, Meso, and Macro) that, for the most part, supported the women's learning and development, in the CD program. It is our hope that the direct quotes taken from the

participants will inspire others to learn from their experiences and implement their own WOTP for leadership development. It is also important to note that the CDs and leads experiences are not isolated to specific levels in the EST model as “all levels are not mutually exclusive and intersect in multiple and dynamic ways” (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012, p. 20).

Micro level - creating spaces for connections (social learning). Identifying the specific micro level supports is important in terms of developing leadership opportunities for women in sport, as there is often a focus on the barriers women face in securing and retaining leadership positions in sport (LaVoi & Duvote, 2012). The strong sense of connection experienced by the women throughout the program played an important role in building a supportive network for their development: “To me a big part of it is the connections that I've made with some of the other participants in the group. So just having different people to bounce different ideas off of when you're maybe struggling with something. It's given me other options to look to for help” (CD 2). The WiSL provided coaches with training to become CDs and promoted a social learning experience where the women engaged in on-going interactions (both online and in-person), which was particularly important given the geographical distance between them: “We don't want it to end because we don't want to lose our touch with each other, because everyone is from all over the [province]” (CD 1). The participants are a geographically dispersed group of women, coaching and leading at a variety of levels and living in communities in many instances a four-hour drive away from other participants in this social learning space. Despite challenges to physical proximity, the participants in this program used digital platforms to connect and develop relationships.

In addition to making connections with other CDs, the participants appreciated the opportunity to meet with other women in leadership positions. Cragg, Costas-Bradstreet, Arkell,

and Lofstrom (2016) explained that there is a lack of women in leadership positions across Canadian sports. Thus, woman coaches wishing to advance in their careers do not have the necessary role models and women in supportive roles to enable their development. The CDs had a variety of opportunities to interact with women in leadership roles at the Women in Sport conference (both in sport and other fields) and were paired with an expert who could support them in developing their leadership capacities, such as their presentation skills:

[She] came and helped us with our presentations [at the conference] then she gave us feedback. So, things we did well, things that we could look to improve on and then general comments which is also so nice. I know as an [educator] I love hearing feedback because that's how I grow and so it was nice to have someone be there to help guide us in our presentation, and then when we actually did our presentation give us feedback on it. So that whole experience was just cool (CD 1).

Meso level – using organizational leverage to support women in leadership. Women-only programs and events are important for maintaining women's continued participation in sport (Newland, 2019). This practice paper provides insight into a WOTP where the organization took pride in supporting women in their development. According to Burton (2019) "sport organizations led by those who value gender equity and foster a diverse organizational culture had more positive organizational outcomes for women and men" (p. 261). In this specific case, Lead 2 intentionally sponsored and facilitated growth opportunities for Lead 1 and the CDs:

Like I did with [Lead 1], what I've done with other female coaches...[Lead 1] is an outstanding leader, she just needs to be given the opportunity to lead and so we talked about it, she reluctantly accepted the opportunity to take on more leadership. Early on I

supported her a bit more and then after that I made myself difficult to get a hold of at times and then other times not so difficult because she figured it out (Lead 2).

In turn, Lead 1 became more assertive and confident and even advocated for the CD program to push forward during a period when the program was not being prioritized:

It's made me realize that yes, there are certain things that I can push forward with, move forward with and it's okay. And I feel like the group, the coach developers, appreciated that and were feeling definitely like things were stagnating a little bit so I think they felt like, 'okay now we're, you know, we're getting some progress on here' (Lead 1).

In sport organizations, women have often been denied access to resources and opportunities (Aicher & Saga, 2009). Significantly, in this case, we see the opposite. Lead 2 declared his sponsorship role and continued to leverage his access and support to the CDs and Lead 1 after his position changed from a local to distal level:

So, one of the coolest parts about all of this is that my new role is ensuring that we have really competent coach developers across the country getting opportunities to get identified, trained, mentored, evaluated and certified. So, the 10 women that participated in this program were all participating in a coach developer program and so I will be able to help encourage [sport organizations] to ensure that these women are getting opportunities. So again, I'm in a sponsorship sort of role due to the job that I'll be doing, it was just one of the reasons why I took on the job because now I can have a similar sort of influence across the country, not just in the one province (Lead 2).

The program leads also ensured the program supported participants' connections beyond the CD group. Wells and Hancock (2017) explained that networking is essential in sport, specifically for women's advancement in sport organizations. The leads facilitating this program picked up on

these networking needs and offered the CDs mentorship and networking opportunities (e.g., at the Women in Sport conference) to support them in making these crucial connections.

Macro level – remaining aware of the androcentric culture and having a strong male ally. The gendered communication that prevails across sport is so dominant that at times it is challenging to recognize. McGinnis and colleagues (2003) illuminated this point in the titles of tournaments; “the” championship is used for men, contrasted by the women’s championship. This was mirrored by CD 1 as she spoke about her newfound awareness of the term “man on” when speaking to groups of women or girls: “I guess this would have been the biggest learning curve and still is because I still say ‘you guys’ and I don’t mean to” (CD 1). This deep-rooted, androcentric culture was experienced by the CDs during their training. Although the WiSL provided the CDs with the tools to break through the glass ceiling that so often blocks women in sport leadership (Walker, Schaeperkoetter, & Darvin, 2017), these women still faced push-back from male participants in the courses they were facilitating. Specifically, CD 2 from a rural community suggested that her presence in a leadership role will be an on-going challenge and opportunity for both herself and the androcentric sport community. She described a situation where she was challenged by a male counterpart:

It was just a couple of weekends ago, one of the guys at our table, kind of a young guy, really challenged me on like ‘just get up there and lead something’. And I actually really, he just got my back up because it was like he challenged me in front of everybody and it didn’t feel like a supportive thing, it just felt actually super intimidating. And yeah it was actually super uncomfortable (CD 2).

Thus, it is important that the topic of sport being androcentric is included in CD programs to prepare women and men for navigating these challenges.

According to Auster and Prasad (2016), those who are in power determine what leadership looks like. And considering gender-based discrimination is so deeply embedded into coaching, some men cannot even conceive of having women in certain coaching positions (Walker & Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Lead 2 became aware that women were not being given opportunities to take on leadership roles and chose to challenge that culture:

I learned during the first weekend that there's not enough instances of sponsorship for women where there are individuals that have the capacity to open doors, that are prepared to open the doors and get out of the way. And so, I'm a believer in equality of opportunity and if we don't create and ensure that there's sufficient opportunities for women to get similar types of training, to get similar types of opportunities as men might get, and to get the, you know, the necessary supports to help them along that pathway, we don't have any hope of having an increase in leaders who are women, in my opinion (Lead 2).

He admits that there are not enough people with his credibility, power, and perspective on this issue of opening doors for women, but the WiSL is an example of the potential impact of taking an active and consistent stance supporting and empowering women in sport. Moreover, Lead 2 participated in the on-going dialogue surfacing prominent ideologies, such as the double bind for women in organizations:

Just this last Monday we got into the juicy topic of the double bind that female leaders have when it comes to, you know, if they're a strong leader often they're judged in a negative sort of way. If they're not a strong leader then they're judged in another negative sort of way. So, you can't win (Lead 2).

Shaw and Hoerber (2003) previously described the double bind in sport where women who are assertive are considered too aggressive, while men using the same directness are seen as leaders.

Lead 2's role in this program may broaden his understanding of gender inequality and inform his modifications of coach education programs in his new positions. Thus, including male leads in this type of program may be beneficial for the CDs and beyond.

Value created for women CDs when social learning supports are in place

The following section explores the value of social learning experienced by the CDs through their participation in the WiSL. Considering the WiSL program is still in its beginning stages, it is plausible that value creation will continue and extend as the CDs have time to implement their learning and impact the sport contexts in which they lead.

Immediate value. The CDs were constantly inspired just by being in contact with other women in the same position: “When we do get together, we get to feed off of each other and learn from each other” (CD 1). These connections have also been important for the CDs in terms of problem solving and accessing resources beyond the scope of the project:

You just have more resources to draw from which is helpful right? So, whether that's 'okay you know I'm really struggling with this in my coaching', I can throw that out to a few other people and get their input and what they think might work (CD 2).

Potential value. As mentioned above, the CDs had the opportunity to engage with women leaders and have access to meaningful developmental opportunities. This instilled a desire to take on other opportunities so that they could pay it forward and act as leaders to other women coaches in the future:

When we got to present at the Women in Sport conference for [the province], it just made me hungrier to want to get all of my things that I need so I can be a [certified CD] so I can help develop coaches (CD 1).

The connections developed between the CDs also enabled them to consider other perspectives with the potential to refine their own coaching: “Different people, different perspectives. They look at things differently and it gives you other ideas....” (CD 2).

Applied value. In addition to learning new skills, the CDs described an improved sense of confidence: “I think the program helped a lot... maybe it gave me more confidence to keep pushing through things that maybe normally I would have given up on” (CD 2). This led to CD 2 to taking on a leadership position at an upcoming competition, something that she may not have otherwise done: “[Lead 2] had suggested that would be a good leadership opportunity for me so I’m doing that. So, I think that wouldn’t have happened if I wasn’t in the program” (CD 2). For CD 1, she has applied her learning from the WiSL to her coaching, education, and CD practice. She now focuses on guiding learning, rather than just providing the learners with the answers:

Being a [CD] the biggest thing that I’ve taken away from that learning so far is guiding, guiding people to some point. So, I’m the one not giving answers but asking questions to get them to where I would like them to be or where they would like to be. Because it’s not always what I want and so I think even just like in my personal life having conversations with friends or that kind of stuff too is just giving me a different perspective. But I think the biggest impact has really been in my [education] career and just connecting the lengths from coaching to [education] and bringing both, both of those things into everything I do (CD 1).

Additional Considerations

Although the WiSL is in its first iteration, we draw two additional considerations from this initiative and recommend them to organizations creating and supporting a similar WOTP in sport. It is important to reiterate that this practice paper does not capture the experiences of all 10

CDs in the program but reflects the perspectives of four individuals with different backgrounds and positions informing our practical recommendations.

Including a male ally may create specific challenges. The male ally in this project, Lead 2, explained that it was challenging at times to help some of the CDs as they continued to voice their distrust and poor experiences with men in sport: “We’re getting a chance to hear different sorts of takes and stories... if negative stories are going to be shared, somehow a man was involved” (Lead 2). Although Lead 2 wanted to support the CDs in achieving success, years of systematic discrimination made it difficult for the women to disregard their previous experiences. He suggested that it is not only men who perpetuate the double standards in leadership, but it is other women who also create these barriers by not letting women make mistakes and stumble on their journeys to leadership development:

I was horrific in my first five years, it was awful. And so, I stumbled my way to success because it’s part of the learning process. So, I just don’t think women are given... enough leeway to stumble their way to success early on by men and women (Lead 2).

Burton (2019) explained that “sport operates within a wider context of societal norms and practices” (p. 259), highlighting these persistent examples of gender inequality in leadership that extend far beyond the sport landscape. Thus, it is essential that champions like Lead 2 and Lead 1 continue to push against the many levels of resistance because changes are beginning to occur. For example, the larger AWiSL program is funded by a sector of the Canadian Federal Government (Women and Gender Equality). This financial investment and national recognition demonstrated a commitment to change and progress at a cultural level toward empowering women in sport.

Consistent buy-in from the organization is needed. Lead 1 experienced some challenges with her sport organization in terms of prioritizing the CD program at times. However, she was able to create buy-in through her promotion for the program, and the support and sponsorship from Lead 2. She explained that despite her discomfort with assertiveness, she was going to advocate for the program. She decided:

I'm going to start saying a little bit more like 'this is what we're doing, if you have anything more to add but we're going to proceed with some of this stuff' ... That's out of my comfort zone, doing some things like that especially when I don't know people (Lead 1).

Through Lead 1's perseverance to move beyond her comfort zone, she was able to secure the necessary funds to move the CDs forward with their learning. Lead 1 also truly believed in the power of this program to increase gender equity and improve women's leadership capacity. Her deeply held beliefs fuelled progress despite waning organizational support at times, Lead 1 reflected:

Even, you know from the sort of top down, everybody is getting better and stronger in their roles because of this program. I think it would be, I'm trying to think of ... a negative; you know and I really can't, I can't think of a negative. I think everybody's benefiting which is really neat (Lead 1).

Conclusion

According to Cunningham and Ahan (2019) there is "ample evidence of access discrimination in sport" (p. 87). The practical examples highlighted in this paper serve the dual purpose of sharing examples of how one sport organization is taking active measures to change gender inequity and support women's leadership in the organization. More specifically, through

developing a women-only cohort of CDs, the organization of focus has begun the slow process of changing the sport leadership landscape. We wish to draw specific attention to the strengths and potential implications of bringing a group of women together and enabling them to engage in leadership development through social learning opportunities. Support at the micro, meso, and macro levels of sport and the context women work in, is essential. Sport organizations striving to shift toward gender equity and increase the number of women in leadership roles should carefully plan for ways to influence all three levels of their organization and the system. Social learning spaces are valuable when designed, organized, and facilitated in ways that are meaningful and engaging for the specific women participating. More specifically, a champion (Lead 1) with a firm belief and conviction in the value of the network of women, one who will ensure inclusive ways to connect over time and great distance is essential for success. Allies make a difference, and, in this case, the sponsorship role of the male ally played by Lead 2 had an essential impact on this program's early success. We recommend this style of women in sport program because it can benefit women with different biographies and women living across rural and urban areas. Sport organizations should consider translating promising practices and lessons learned to their unique contexts and facilitating similar programs to promote gender equity and leadership development for women in sport.

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Article Two

Kraft, E. & Culver, D.M. (2020). Using an action learning approach to support women social learning leaders' development in sport. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, 18(1), 52-66. doi:10.1080/14767333.2020.1862050

Abstract

This paper examines an adapted action learning approach to develop four social learning leaders. The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program is a social learning intervention with the goals of supporting women in developing their leadership capabilities and increasing gender equity across sport. To support the facilitation of this initiative, four social learning leaders engaged in action learning to develop their leadership capabilities and facilitation skills.

Considering facilitators' development experiences have not been extensively explored in the context of action learning and social learning working in combination, examining the implications of an action learning approach for women social learning leaders' development was warranted. We used an interpretive qualitative methodology to interview and observe the four social learning leaders to gain insight into their experiences building their facilitator capabilities and the implications of coupling an action learning and social learning approach for development. The participants discussed the importance of developing self-awareness, engaging with and embracing uncertainty, and building trusting relationships. The findings from this action learning focused initiative highlight the importance of social learning opportunities for women to create networks and spaces where they can safely feel vulnerable and subsequently develop their leadership capabilities.

Keywords: action learning; social learning; community of practice; leadership development; social learning leaders

Introduction

Social learning is an important strategy to facilitate adult learning. Wenger's (1998) concept Communities of Practice (CoP) is influential as a model to support social learning in fields including education (Culver, Kraft, and Movall 2019), business (Aljuwaiber 2016), and sport (Bertram, Culver, and Gilbert 2017). CoPs are spaces where people engage in collective learning in a shared domain (Wenger 1998). This learning encourages CoP members to co-create knowledge, apply this knowledge in their own contexts, and share back with the group to continue the cycle of ongoing learning and development. Another key aspect of social learning is the potential to develop one's own reality through interactions with others. According to Cunliffe (2002), our dialogical practices and interactions with others enable us to make sense of our social realities in relation to others, but also our sense of self. Considering action learning (AL) involves cycles of action and reflection to support change, adapting AL by coupling this approach with CoPs, provides a unique opportunity for individuals to engage in ongoing interactions and collaborative learning activities, while advancing their own reflective learning and practice. Both approaches consist of a group of people who care to make changes in their practices, with a particular focus on collective learning and collaborative problem solving (Raelin 2000). Such groups can be considered social learning spaces where social is in reference to the interactions and relationships between the individuals involved, learning is intersubjective as individuals engage in joint inquiry through these interactions, and space refers to the relationships of those in the space (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). According to Wenger-Trayner (2013), theories in the social sciences and humanities do not replace each other, but rather build upon each other. Thus, we draw from both a CoP and AL approach to present an initiative to promote social learning leadership.

The literature suggests that the facilitator(s) role plays an essential part in cultivating and sustaining CoPs in sport (Bertram et al. 2017). To our knowledge, the development of facilitators to promote learning in CoPs has not been extensively explored and is the focus of our study. We explore how facilitators used an AL approach to build their social learning leadership capabilities, as well as what they learnt through this experience. Jacobs explains the AL process: ‘with the support of a small group (a ‘learning set’) of peers/ colleagues, it is a process of reflecting on, and making sense of, past events and behaviours and identifying action that can be taken...at future events/activities’ (2008, 222). A small group of facilitators engaged in a training program for social learning leadership and maintained ongoing interactions as a group. Specifically, they used an AL approach to frame their ongoing interactions, support their deliberate reflective practices, and make actual changes to their facilitation of the CoP, contributing to the lack of research on facilitators’ development in the context of CoPs.

We (the researchers), who were a part of the CoP, delved into the facilitators’ experiences of engaging in AL to develop their social learning leadership in a reflective and meaningful way. This paper focuses on the social learning leadership development of four women: a project lead and three mentors in a CoP. The project lead took on many aspects of the facilitator role, while the mentors collectively facilitated several activities and smaller group discussions throughout the project. Examining initiatives which encourage reflexive practice in leadership roles is timely, as those in leadership positions in organizations are at times ‘limitedly thoughtful about what they do, the way they are and what relations they are involved in’ (Alvesson, Blom, and Sveningsson 2016, 173). Moreover, women leaders experience challenges developing social capital (Stead and Elliott 2013) and benefit from social spaces where women leaders can learn from and with each other (Bryans and Mavin 2003). AL has been used in other contexts to

develop women leaders, rather than using traditional leadership training (Box and Ellis 2018), however, there is limited research examining AL as an approach for women leader's development in male dominated fields including sport. This paper will answer the following research question: How has a group of women social learning leaders' (learning facilitators') participation in an AL initiative influenced their personal and collective learning, and their social learning leadership capabilities?

Alberta women in sport leadership impact program

The program was developed with the purpose of supporting women in sport in their leadership development and to create more inclusive programming for women and girls. Three main outcomes guided this initiative: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity, and transfer knowledge across sport in a Canadian province. The CoP that facilitated this initiative consisted of one project lead, three¹ mentors, and 12 sport leaders; the collective group met approximately once a month online and in person twice a year. During these meetings, the CoP members participated in activities to develop their leadership (e.g., workshops on presentation skills) and skills to push gender equity forward in sport (e.g., learning about gender bias in the workplace). Each sport leader also implemented a project into their sport organization to promote gender equity. A main role of the facilitators (the project lead and mentors, herein to be referred to as 'social learning leaders' or SLLs) was to support the sport leaders in their execution of these projects and in their overall leadership development. In CoPs, SLLs may be referred to as 'facilitators' of social learning. In AL a facilitator may be referred to as a 'set leader'. We have chosen to use the term SLLs, as it is used in the context of social learning when focusing on the

¹ Initially, four mentors were asked to be a part of the CoP. One year into the program a fifth mentor joined and two stepped back for work related commitments. During data collection there were three mentors involved in the CoP.

development of leaders' capabilities (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2014). Despite the general leadership expertise of the SLLs outside of the CoP (see Table 1 for additional background information), their nascent social learning leadership capabilities were developed through this initiative.

The social learning leaders

The project lead is defined as the person who initiated the CoP and, planned most of the meetings and activities; the agenda for meeting activities was sport leader driven and the SLLs were responsible for logistics and developing meeting content according to the sport leaders' needs. The project lead was also responsible for reporting to the agency who granted funding for this initiative; the federal government of Canada (Women and Gender Equality). The mentors are defined as leaders within the CoP who shared some of the facilitator roles, such as facilitating small group learning and development. The three mentors were each partnered with three of the sport leaders and met regularly as a small group (which were referred to as 'pods' in this case, but are often referred to as 'sets' in AL literature), or one-on-one to provide guidance to support the sport leaders. During these pod meetings, the SLLs would work collaboratively with the sport leaders to solve problems that arose for the sport leaders, such as experiencing barriers (i.e., financial) from within their sport organizations when attempting to implement their gender equity projects, or resistance from men in the sport community when attempting to implement leadership development opportunities for women. We have chosen to focus on the development of the leadership capabilities of the SLLs in this social learning initiative that used an AL approach.

Previous studies have explored the development of facilitators in learning opportunities such as problem-based learning (PBL; Salinitri, Wilhelm, and Crabtree 2015). In this example,

‘Facilitators need to create a collaborative and cooperative learning environment with free discourse within their small group’ (2015, 76). To support these facilitation skills, a training program was developed for the facilitators which included an opportunity to work with an experienced facilitator. Using another approach, Western facilitators ran an AL program to train Chinese managers to become AL facilitators (Brook and Abbott 2019). The Western facilitators used a Revans-based approach to AL and were interviewed to examine this experience. In the current paper, we are concerned with the development of women social learning leaders as facilitators in the context of sport, which to our knowledge, has yet to be explored.

The next section describes the formal and informal training experienced by the SLLs to build their social learning leadership capabilities through AL. AL was appropriate for the SLLs’ first experiences in their respective roles as they were in the process of active learning and implementing solutions throughout the project. AL has been described as ‘an educational strategy, used in a group setting, that seeks to generate learning from human interaction arising from engagement in the solution of real-time (not stimulated) work problems’ (Raelin 2000, 66), thus pairing well with a social learning approach.

Social learning leadership training and development through AL

Formal Training. The two social learning theorists behind the CoP concept (Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner) ran a workshop with the SLLs, to become familiar with social learning theory and to be coached by highly experienced facilitators. This training assisted the SLLs in mobilizing this new knowledge of nurturing CoPs, all the while developing their social learning leadership capabilities. Overall, this training was well received by some mentors and less so by others. For example, one SLLs described an instance where she derived an activity from the formal training and used it with the sport leaders during a CoP meeting. While another mentor,

when asked about her experience of the training, could not recall any specifics as the training did not resonate with her. Thus, the inclusion of other (informal) methods of training were necessary.

Informal Learning. Wenger-Trayner's (2013) 'plug-and-play' principle, which enables two theories to be used in tandem, in this case AL and social learning, was used as a means to adapt AL to frame the SLLs' development. Approximately once a month, the SLLs met to engage in discussions, share ideas, and problem solve issues that may have arisen in the CoP as a whole or in their individual pods. They engaged in collaborative activities and conversations to continuously develop their leadership; facilitating the application of their learnings back into the CoP. By deliberately meeting, the SLLs could report back on their challenges and successes and continue the cycle of AL where they shared, applied their learning, made adjustments, reported back, and repeated.

This paper explores the SLLs' experiences as they developed their social learning leadership capabilities through AL. The next section describes the methods used to conduct this study, followed by the findings and discussion.

Methodology

An interpretive qualitative methodology (Merriam and Grenier 2019) was fitting for this study as 'all qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The *primary* goal of a basic, interpretive study is to uncover and interpret these meanings' (2019, 35), which was the purpose of capturing the SLLs' development journeys. Moreover, Rheinhardt, Kreiner, Gioia, and Corley explain that 'fitting the [research] process into a previously used or preconceived methodology does not connote rigor, as each study is unique and therefore likely to require at least some degree of customization' (2018, 518). Thus, an interpretive qualitative methodology provided a structure to guide the

present study, with the flexibility to adjust as the study was conducted. We did not participate as SLLs in the Alberta Women in Sport Impact Program but were interested in collecting the experiences of the SLLs. Therefore, we aligned with a constructivist lens to collaborate with the participants and co-construct realities (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018). We received ethical approval from their university's Research and Ethics Board, then recruited the four SLLs; their names have been anonymized to protect their identities. The primary source of data was two semi-structured interviews with each participant. The first author partnered with the second author who critically assessed the first interview guide and suggested feedback. The first author utilized the interview guide for the first set of interviews and refined the questions for the second set. The first interview included questions such as 'Do you believe that your participation in the community (in a leadership role) has led to changes in your practice? Please explain'. The second interview included questions such as 'Have you gained any new perspectives or competencies through your leadership role?'; and 'What are some of the challenges you experienced in your leadership role? Facilitating social learning?' The first author also engaged in formal and informal conversations with the SLLs in-person, and took observations notes while participating in the in-person and online CoP meetings over the period of a year. This observational data informed the inclusion of some probing questions in the second interview guide. Considering the data were collected from a small group, the observational data helped contextualize and triangulate the results of the interviews. As suggested by Mathison (1988) triangulation plays an important role in monitoring the convergence, inconsistencies, and contradictions of different data sets. For a visual representation of data collection methods, see Table 2.

The data were analyzed iteratively throughout data collection following Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) six steps for thematic analysis. The participants' interviews were transcribed verbatim, resulting in 137 pages of data. Next, phases one and two were completed, as the first author read over the transcriptions, and created initial codes. This was followed by phases three to five: theme development, refinement, and naming. Finally, the concluding phase required the write up of an actual report. For an illustration of the analysis process, see Table 3.

Findings

The following section presents the main themes resulting from our analysis: developing self-awareness, engaging with and embracing uncertainty, and building trusting relationships.

Developing self-awareness

Learning from the mentors. Arguably, the most influential activities experienced by the SLLs throughout their training and ongoing AL, were those that encouraged learning from each other to develop their own self-awareness. Joan explained that observing other mentors was important for her own development: 'My greatest education has been in observing. The way everyone is trying to make this work for themselves; and observing really different perspectives and different ways of being, especially in relation to leadership'.

Leslie found it helpful to rely on the other SLLs to gain different perspectives and reinforce that she was on the right track in her role:

[Learning from the other SLLs] just reinforced how I wanted to engage with the [sport leaders] and more so was around troubleshooting... I mean Tara and Joan are two completely different leaders, like Joan is really action energy, Tara is reflective... Tara makes me think about what I'm doing in my own life and in this project, and Joan keeps you motivated if you're on the right track.

Learning from the community. The SLLs also attributed their learning to the sport leaders. Considering the SLLs used an AL approach, they engaged in conversations with the sport leaders to increase their self-awareness and refine their leadership:

We all have connected differently with different people and those connections are definitely what makes me excited about the community. And the people who are willing to talk with me [sport leaders] and be interested in progressing have been very inspiring to me (Joan).

Holly, the project lead, chose to participate in an optional leadership activity with other mentors and sport leaders. She considered this to be a significant leadership development opportunity that helped her reflect on her values around leadership:

One [activity] for sure is around clarity around my values and how that will lead in my leadership philosophy and decision making which I think is... it's quite big... Yeah, and that was through the process of the leadership course.

Engaging in and embracing uncertainty

An important learning for the SLLs was their capability to engage in uncertainty. The SLLs supported the sport leaders in achieving their project goals, but each sport leader showed different levels of engagement. For Tara, this meant letting go of her perfectionism and not letting the engagement (or lack of engagement) from the sport leaders impact her self-acceptance and growth:

After you get the self-awareness, the self-acceptance is there. Just because I rock doesn't mean I'm going to get every horse to drink, right? And I'm okay with that, which is real growth. That's good for me because I'm a perfectionist... I don't think it's changed what I

do. I think it's just helped me do it better...all I can do is bring myself to the table every day.

Leslie came into the CoP expecting that she would need to adapt to support the sport leaders and did not place any parameters around her role:

The word mentor...it wasn't a firm definition. I expected to be a consultant, facilitator, learner, guide. I expected to wear a lot of different hats; [but] maybe somebody who hadn't worked with a variety of people or maybe done it on a more professional level, where they worked strictly with motivated people, might have looked at our role differently... You're going to have to bring whatever type of leadership that is called for depending on the person.

Joan expressed that learning to engage in uncertainty was something that may not have come naturally for the SLLs; because of their different backgrounds, it was sometimes a challenge to embrace the discomfort of uncertainty:

It takes much more patience, right? And comfort with a mess. I think it takes a lot of comfort with everyone moving in a different way, at a different speed than you do... You do have to let people come and go... [The sport leaders] have to discover through experience and their own learning, and I think most of us weren't socialized to lead that way.

In addition, Joan expressed that it was equally important to pay attention to the sport leaders in order to determine the impact of the SLLs' leadership role in this less conventional structure of learning:

It can be difficult to know what your impact is when you do this kind of leadership and so it's important to be comfortable paying attention to the subjective and serendipitous, that we can't measure...that's where the really meaningful stuff has happened for me.

Despite the SLLs' growth, there were challenges with sport leader engagement. Leslie explained that she had never had this experience before and had to adjust her leadership strategies accordingly:

I've never worked with a group where people didn't respond and that for me has been a whole new sort of piece; and I'm still trying to sort of show up on their doorstep...[The sport leaders] got to communicate that, that it's been frustrating, and the challenges and opportunities to pick my brain on how better to deal with it

Joan agreed suggesting that 'the biggest challenge is wondering why everybody doesn't kind of show up'.

Tara's views towards her leadership changed as she participated in this AL experience and she began to appreciate that people show up for various reasons, and that it is not her responsibility to create accountability for anyone else. She acknowledged that this transferred into other aspects of her life:

I'm learning that [my] feeling valued is not the responsibility of the [sport leaders] ... feeling valued is up to me to be able to look in the mirror and be proud of the contributions that I'm making. So, there's a feeling of, "what do I need to feel valued as a leader, everything that I do". And if I bring myself to the table in every context, that helps me sleep very well at night.

Building trusting relationships

Relationships with the community. Leslie came into the CoP about a year after it began. She considered this to be a challenge in terms of establishing a strong and trusting relationship with her pod:

I can't emphasize enough the importance of building a relationship early... I think my biggest challenge was coming in part way. I mean of my group I already had a prior relationship with two of them, so you know they had a good sense. There's a bit of a sense of accountability because we know each other... The other people, you know, I didn't have a chance to set parameters... I missed that window and I don't believe I've ever sort of made it up.

Holly's recollection of how the CoP concept was initially introduced to the group further validates Leslie's thoughts on establishing trust. Holly attributed the success of the CoP to their initial cultivation of a safe and trusting space:

It's very open, transparent and it's something that we did as a group together... I know that's what I was hoping would be the outcome of that [first] meeting. A few of the participants told me... "You set this up really well. I think people feel safe and comfortable and welcomed and will want to engage".

Relationships with the project lead. The mentors found that having trust in the project lead was an important factor in the development of the community and in their leadership development. Joan appreciated the freedom they were given to grow into their roles and the unwavering support of the project lead:

If somebody in the mentor team had said "Hey Holly could you do this for us mentors?" She would have done it right... gee I can't understate how good it's been to have someone

at the helm who is open to every idea... people have to realize that the one who is cutting the cheque has to have a very, very strong level of confidence and ability to listen to all the ideas, and she does.

Leslie agreed and expressed her appreciation for the supports and creativity that were ever present in Holly's leadership to enable the mentors' development:

We had everything we needed. Holly was always available. There was always creativity around whether we did webinars or sessions, the calls we had with the other leaders, you know were always productive; lots of great ideas there.

Holly exemplified the skills necessary to lead a CoP and AL effectively. Holly did however describe that there was a considerable time commitment on her part for taking on this leadership position. She was responsible for a variety of tasks and wanted to bring these learnings forward to others wishing to take on a similar position, as she found it was worth the effort:

People need to be aware of the time investment for the [project lead]. But ultimately, I think it's a good way for people to connect in today's world and all the things that we have to do. So, I'm hoping that at the end of the project we'll be able to demonstrate that and have some really good learnings our group can refine and share forward.

Discussion

The following section discusses the findings of this study and contextualizes them in current literature. Specifically, we discuss the ways in which AL influenced the SLLs' personal development and the development of their social learning leadership capabilities, and what they learnt through this experience.

Ways of learning

Creating a learning space and network for women. According to Higgins and Aspinall AL involves ‘a group of people working together on their ‘doing’ and ‘learning’, allowing time and space for questioning, understanding and reflecting’ (2000, 16). In the case of facilitators, Pierce, Cheesebrow, and Braun (2000) support this approach as they suggest that facilitators should take part in groups with other facilitators to deepen their learning and gain insight into others’ professional practice. Despite the 20 years passed since these recommendations, evidence of such opportunities for facilitators to engage with peers to develop their roles is still rare (Perry and Boylan 2018). In this study, the SLLs created opportunities to participate in AL to strengthen their social learning leadership. This is important, as the ways women learn to become leaders and the social situations in which they experience this learning remains underrepresented (Stead and Elliott 2013). Moreover, women have historically been left out of research on management and organizational studies (Bryans and Mavin 2003). The SLLs’ experiences illustrated how this initiative for women was impactful for their leadership development, as they had access to other women in similar roles who could share other perspectives and provide feedback.

Creating a space for vulnerability. According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner engaging in uncertainty can be defined as:

... a state of being in tension between caring to make a difference and having a clear path to get there. So, we are not just talking about a cerebral form of uncertainty or an intellectual bracketing of subjectivity to explore different options...but it is also experienced more viscerally, in the body and emotion, or more personally, as a sensing vector of identity (2020, 20).

By using a collaborative approach to learning and having a willingness to engage in uncertainty, the SLLs were able to engage in mutual leadership development, or ‘leaderful’ practice (Raelin 2010). For women in sport, it is challenging to show vulnerability as there are already barriers put up for women in this field (Kenttä, Bentzen, Dieffenbach, and Olusoga 2020). Women also understand strategic alliances differently than men in organizations and have different needs for social networks (Bryans and Mavin 2003). By having a safe space with other women to engage in uncertainty and have the freedom to make mistakes, reflect, and learn, these women could engage in AL in a meaningful way.

Creating equitable relationships. In experience-based learning approaches, Andresen, Boud, and Cohen suggested that there should be an equal relationship between the facilitator and learners as this cultivates a space for negotiation and ‘gives the learner considerable control and autonomy’ (2000, 226). Although the relationships we explored in the context of social and AL were between the SLLs, the mentors described this same sense of control and autonomy they felt while navigating their nascent social learning leadership roles. This was created through Holly’s strong leadership. The mentors had the space to negotiate the meaning of their roles which is a cornerstone of social learning theory (Wenger 1998).

Another relationship was between the SLLs and sport leaders. In the problem-based learning literature, Johnston and Tinning (2001) explained that group-reflection, consisting of a small group of colleagues, who meet on a consistent basis, could be effective for sharing perspectives and developing facilitation practices. Though the SLLs were learning from each other, engaging in small groups with the sport leaders was also important to their leadership development. By engaging with a small group (of SLLs and at times the sport leaders) the SLLs

had the opportunity to make sense of their experiences to create actions for moving forward (Jacobs 2008).

Contributions to AL. This study utilized Wenger-Trayner's (2013) 'plug-and-play' principle to advance AL by demonstrating an adaptation of this approach. We collected the SLLs experiences of participating in an initiative that intertwined the strengths of both AL and social learning theory as a means to collaboratively support their social learning leadership development. Raelin (2006), had previously identified AL as an appropriate means to promote collaborative leadership and move away from an individualistic approach. However, in this paper, we build on the use of AL for collaborative leadership development by placing an emphasis on the social nature of this type of learning and how it is particularly important in the context of women's social learning leadership development.

What was learnt

Developing self-awareness and trust. According to Raelin, AL, 'relies on feedback, which by focusing on the participant's values and behaviour ensures that any actions are seen not as neutral stances but as positions with point of view and anticipated consequences' (2000, 67). This aspect of AL validates the SLLs actions to tune into the feedback from the sport leaders to support their changing needs. However, an important learning for the SLLs was their awareness that it was the sport leaders' responsibility to learn, as they have control over this process (Moon 2004). The SLLs provided the sport leaders with the material of teaching (e.g., presentations on leadership development) and the opportunity to engage in that learning, but it was the responsibility of the sport leaders to actively participate in the learning. And, although the SLLs were disappointed in the lack of accountability seen in some sport leaders, Wenger-Trayner and

Wenger-Trayner suggest that this should not be a source of upset for the SLLs or a poor reflection of their leadership:

Increasing levels of participation and volume of contributions is often a good thing. But when they become goals in themselves for those who cultivate the process, they easily become a distraction from what matters... why people are there in the first place: to make a difference to something they care about (2020, 32).

Another key learning for the SLLs was the importance of establishing trust from the onset of the AL. According to Gillespie and Mann ‘leaders are believed to play the primary role in establishing and developing trust in teams and organizations’ (2004, 589). This supports Leslie’s perception of the challenges she experienced attempting to make up for the time she had missed in the CoP.

Contributions to AL. A final learning from this study, was the SLLs’ appreciation for having the ongoing support and interactions with each other to develop as facilitators of social learning. The activities they participated in (such as formal and informal learning activities) serve as examples of how to support women in their leadership development in sport or other male dominated organizations aiming to find a sustainable way to advance women in their leadership development through AL. Although there are some longitudinal studies examining the experiences of new SLLs (or facilitators; e.g., Scott [2019]), few studies have explored the experiences of a group of women navigating this new role, particularly in the context of sport. The learnings from the women SLLs in sport after collaborating and supporting each other for over a year, advance our understanding of how AL facilitated their leadership skills and identity development which may be insightful for future AL activities. Moreover, the intention of this initiative was to develop these women as SLLs, but the practical examples and findings (i.e.,

engaging in and embracing uncertainty) may be transferred into other AL contexts focused on developing women's leadership capabilities.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the learning experiences of SLLs and the development into their social learning leadership capabilities. We hope to illuminate the experiences of using an AL approach to inspire social learning leadership, specifically for women who may not otherwise have this space to be vulnerable. Beyond this, we feel that coupling an AL approach with deliberate social learning opportunities for SLLs expands our understanding of the potential of AL. Whereas Raelin (2000) proposed AL and CoPs as two theories/approaches for workplace learning, the evolution of the social learning theory framing the concept of CoPs has permitted us to inter-weave these two approaches.

Given the flexibility of social and AL, we recommend that other communities and organizations consider implementing a similar type of approach to develop leadership capabilities in their own contexts. It is recommended that women use an AL approach to build strong and trusting relationships with peers to receive new perspectives and build their own self-awareness.

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Table 1.

Participant information

SLL Position	Title (in their organizations)	Area of expertise
Holly (project Lead)	- Director - Coach	- Inclusion - Diversity
Joan (mentor)	- Professor - Coach	- Leadership behaviours
Leslie (mentor)	- Head scout - Former head coach	- Leadership in androcentric spaces
Tara (mentor)	- Consultant - Former head coach	- Leadership - Business

Table 2.

Data collection methods

Data collection tools	Dates	Data collection methods
Interview 1	Fall 2018	Online
Interview 2	Summer 2019	Online
Formal and informal conversations	October 2018-October 2019	In-person
Observational data	October 2019-February 2020	Online and in-person

Table 3.

Data analysis

Data analysis steps	Actions
Phases 1-2: Familiarizing and coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transcribed data verbatim (resulting in 137 pages) - Developed initial codes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applied value ○ Aspirations ○ Barriers ○ Confidence ○ Enabling value ○ Gender equity ○ Immediate value ○ Knowledge transfer ○ Leadership development ○ Next steps ○ Orienting value ○ Potential value ○ Realized value ○ Strategic value ○ Transformative value
Phases 2-5: Theme development, refinement, and naming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collapsed and refined codes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applied value ○ Aspirations ○ Background ○ Challenges ○ Conflicting ideas ○ Creating space for accountability ○ Creating trust ○ Impact ○ Learning from other mentors ○ Learning from the community ○ Opt-in ○ Potential value ○ Reaching out to the sport community ○ Realized value ○ Social learning ○ Strong lead ○ Supports ○ Training ○ Transformative value ○ Uncertainty - Developed and named themes:

- Learning from others
 - Having a strong and adaptable project lead
 - Engaging in and embracing uncertainty
 - Formal training
 - Challenges
- Refined and named themes:
- Developing self-awareness
 - Engaging with and embracing uncertainty
 - Building trusting relationships

Phase 6: Writing up

- Data were collected and analyzed iteratively over a year and a half period. Thus, theme development and writing took place throughout this process. The final write up of the themes occurred once the themes had been revised and negotiated and the researchers were satisfied that they were representative of the overarching themes experienced by the SLLs.
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Article Three

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (in press). Navigating the labyrinth of leadership in sport: A community of practice of femininity. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 1-31.

Abstract

The following qualitative study examines a social learning initiative to support the leadership development of women in sport. Specifically, a Community of Practice (CoP) of femininity was cultivated to inspire women (and male allies) to develop their leadership capacities in the male-focused and dominated field of sport. Data were generated from 12 sport leaders (10 women and two men) over a year and a half to collect their experiences of participating in this initiative. Data collection included interviews, observations, surveys, and informal discussions. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The themes discussed include: supports to develop confidence, improved leadership skills, self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence, increased leadership opportunities, men supporting women in leadership development, and the value of social learning. The findings provide steps that can be used to nurture women leaders in other fields where masculinity is dominant. This may allow other CoPs of femininity to emerge to support women in their leadership development.

Keywords: leadership development; community of practice; sport; social learning

Introduction

When it comes to leadership positions, it is promising to note the progress women have made in several fields such as business and politics (Lyness & Grotto, 2018). Women are now securing positions of power in many private and public sector organizations (Rhodes, 2017). This progress for women in leadership is important for a variety of reasons. Women can see themselves reflected in roles with positional power when leaders are female. Role modelling and mentoring of women by women holds leadership development promise, when mentoring focuses on “helping women traverse the route to the top from role models they can identify with” and helps them achieve leadership success (Chrobot-Mason, Hoobler, & Burno, 2019, p. 117).

Research from a range of contexts and sectors clarifies the value and impact of having women in leadership positions. According to Goethals and Hyot (2017), women may apply different leadership strategies than men and bring unique perspectives to values and ethics when they lead. Despite knowing the evidence-informed benefits of bestowing positional power to women in organizations, they continue to be underrepresented in government, education, and non-profit leadership positions (Madsen & Dahlvig, 2018). One key factor that restricts women from moving into leadership roles is their lack of access to meaningful and effective leadership development opportunities (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011).

Our purpose in this paper is to describe how access to a leadership development opportunity supported women sport leaders in building their leadership capacities, and the impact of this opportunity on male allies. Similar to other disciplines and fields, leadership opportunities for women in sport are limited. In some cases, such as head coach positions, there has actually been a decline in the number of women in these leadership roles in recent years (Acosta & Carpenter, 2019). Thus, studies examining development opportunities to promote and

retain women in sport leadership positions are needed. The research question which guided our inquiry is: How is leadership learned using a Community of Practice (CoP) approach and a two and a half year initiative focused on improving leadership skills and capacities for women in sport? The next section delves into social learning theory (CoPs) and how this theory informs the project of focus specifically and leadership and sport broadly.

Barriers to Leadership Development

According to Mate, McDonald, and Do (2018), women experience barriers to leadership development opportunities through both covert and overt instances of discrimination in male-dominated organizations. The discrimination that inhibits women's career advancement opportunities is prevalent across several fields including healthcare, academic, and business (Kalaitzi, Czabanowska, Fowler-Davis, & Brand, 2017), despite the evidence showing that offering women leadership opportunities may increase the productivity of an organization (Coleman, 2010). This access barrier was originally referred to as the glass ceiling, an invisible impediment preventing women from attaining leadership roles. More recently, this phenomenon has been labelled in the literature as the *labyrinth of leadership*. Eagly and Carli (2007) describe this metaphor as "passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead... for women who aspire to top leadership, routes exist but are full of twists and turns, both unexpected and expected" (para.6). Although the labyrinth may exist regardless of whether women have access to leadership development opportunities or not, having access to these opportunities could at the very least prepare women for navigation through the labyrinth. Literature exploring women's experiences developing their leadership capacities and how to effectively develop women leaders remains scarce (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017); it is a central focus of

our inquiry. The purpose of this paper is to describe and examine a social learning initiative framed to develop the leadership skills and capacities of 10 women leaders in sport.

Women's Leadership in Sport

Women in sport experience many challenges along their paths to reaching leadership positions, because sport is a deeply gendered space where women are often considered the “other” (Burton, 2019). When a dominant group defines, diminishes, and disempowers another group we witness othering. Groups who are othered are reduced to subordinate status relative to the in-group or those in power (Jensen, 2011). Through the process of othering, women experience discrimination in many forms, for example, when women are not provided with the same organizational resources that their male colleagues can access, they experience treatment discrimination (Greenhaus, Parasurman, & Wormley, 1990). Treatment discrimination and the negative stereotypes associated with women in sport impact how they are viewed and limit their access to leadership opportunities (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). In addition to these negative perceptions of women, LaVoi, Baeth, and Calhoun (2019) explain that in some cases, men hold gatekeeper positions in sport and decide who will have access to leadership in sport programs. Gatekeepers control access to resources and experiences in a group – they determine who is welcomed and who is denied access to positions in a group. When gatekeepers in sport organizations are male, they are more inclined to give leadership opportunities to other men (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). To address the barriers to leadership development and positions for women in sport, a social learning initiative was framed to support women in sport organizations through access to leadership development opportunities not otherwise available to them. We describe this initiative, the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL), in the following section.

Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program

In 2017, the AWiSL received a grant from the federal government (Women and Gender Equality) to develop a program to increase gender equity and leadership diversity across the province of Alberta, Canada. To frame this initiative, the program lead initiated a social learning approach, more specifically a CoP (Wenger, 1998). One of the aims of this program was to provide 10 women and two male allies, (the 12 were universally referred to as sport leaders in this project and paper) from various sport organizations, with leadership development opportunities. In addition, each of the 12 sport leaders was tasked with developing and implementing a project in their sport organizations aimed at increasing gender equity. Examples of these projects included implementing a women's-only coach developer program to increase the number of female coach developers, and facilitating women's-only clinics and training opportunities for coaches and referees. Six mentors were also a part of this CoP and played an important role in supporting the sport leaders and each other in developing their leadership capacities. These mentors also worked with the sport leaders to facilitate the achievement of their specific gender equity project goals. The CoP met approximately once a month for two and one-half years, both in person and online. These meetings included professional development activities, check-ins, and informal discussions. Example topics from these meetings included workshops on presentation skills, unconscious biases, and the skill of confidence. Learning opportunities focused on developing communication and time management skills were also included over the span of this CoP. In addition to the group meetings, one of the mentors facilitated a leadership skill-development online course in which a small number of the sport leaders and other mentors opted to participate. This group met regularly to learn about evidence-informed leadership best practices, to read and discuss leadership literature, to identify and live

into their core values, and engage in other social learning activities to develop their leadership skills.

Theoretical Framework

Communities of Practice – Social Learning Theory

The CoP approach was originally presented by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger subsequently took a deep dive into the concepts in his 1998 text *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. CoPs are described as a group of people who engage in learning because they care to make a difference. More specifically,

Members of a community of practice may engage in the same practice while working on different tasks in different teams. But they can still learn together. A learning partnership around a practice is a different structuring process than working on a joint task (Farnsworth, Kleanthous & Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p.143).

CoPs have been used for many purposes and in many fields including medical education (Cruess, Cruess, & Steinert, 2018), teacher education (Trust & Horrocks, 2017), business (Harris, James, & Harris, 2017), and sport (Bertram, Culver, & Gilbert, 2016). A CoP offers a site for knowledge sharing and developing, and improving practice among other goals. In our case, the ongoing interactions between the AWiSL CoP members were focused on developing the sport leaders' leadership capacities and increasing gender equity across the region. In the next section, we discuss gendered CoPs and what this means for leadership CoPs.

CoPs of Masculinity and Femininity

According to Paetchter (2003) CoPs are aligned with masculinities or femininities because knowledge and power are associated with the masculine or feminine. Burkinshaw

(2015) builds on this point by explaining that roles in the workplace have specific gender expectations. For example, CoPs in higher education and leadership are generally CoPs of masculinity because of the underrepresentation of women in higher education and leadership. That is not to say that women are not present in these CoPs, rather they are predominantly populated with men, and leadership is generally associated with masculinity (Burkinshaw, 2015). As a result, women experience challenges in leadership CoPs: “Women are disadvantaged and disorientated within leadership communities of practice of masculinities. Often women doing leadership means many women face a contradiction between their identities that arise from societal roles and contexts” (p. 39). Burkinshaw (2015) continues that in higher education and leadership CoPs, there is a constant negotiation of meaning. Women are negotiating the meaning of being a leader while facing a misalignment with their feminine identity. Sport is also very much associated with the masculine. Burton and Leberman (2017) argue that “all processes in sport operate within a shared understanding of sport as masculine” (p.19). So, how do we nurture a CoP to develop women leaders when both leadership and sport are associated with the masculine? In this program and our research, we have deliberately fostered a CoP of femininity to enable women sport leaders to develop their leadership capacities in a setting that predominantly focused on women and women’s needs. Acknowledging that sport and leadership align with the masculine, we intentionally developed a CoP of femininity. We believed this could empower women to negotiate their identities and develop leadership skills without being obligated to replicate male leadership characteristics. Our design and facilitation of this CoP was focused on supporting women sport leaders in building the characteristics they sought in service of becoming successful leaders.

Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative inquiry approach and aligned with a constructivist lens. Both the participants and the researchers played active roles in co-constructing realities (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018) as they were able to meet and discuss the sport leaders' experiences in the CoP on several occasions over the year and a half period.

Participants

As mentioned above, 12 sport leaders (10 women, two men) participated in the CoP evaluation. Initially, the CoP consisted of 15 sport leaders, but three leaders had to end their participation for reasons such as employment changes. All participants held an administrative position at a sport organization, with positions ranging from coaching development coordinator to executive director. The types of organizations also ranged from regional sport organizations, to multisport organizations, to sport clubs.

Data Collection

In 2018, two researchers were invited to conduct a program evaluation of the AWiSL CoP to assess leadership development, gender equity change, and knowledge transfer. In this paper, we focus on the leadership development piece. Upon receiving ethics approval from the University's research and ethics board, the researchers sent a recruitment text to the lead of the CoP to distribute to the sport leaders. The primary researcher then attended a CoP meeting and received signed consent forms from all interested participants. Data collection began in 2018 and continued over a year and a half. Although data were collected from the sport leaders and mentors during the project, the data included and analyzed in this paper are solely from the perspective of the sport leaders, focusing on their experiences in a CoP of femininity.

The majority of sport leaders participated in an initial survey, two semi-structured interviews (that were conducted one year apart) as well as a number of informal interviews and discussions with the primary researcher. A few sport leaders were not able to participate for the full duration of the AWiSL initiative. The researchers did however retain the data collected from those participants and have included their accounts in this study. Examples of interview questions included: Did you engage in any memorable conversations/interactions with others from the CoP (mentors/sport leaders) which may have impacted your leadership development? Did this program allow you to take on any additional leadership opportunities/roles? The primary researcher also participated in several of the CoP meetings and took field notes to supplement the survey and interview data. In addition, a small group of sport leaders, mentors, and the primary researcher participated in the above-mentioned opt-in opportunity called the Leadership Legacy course. The course meetings were usually hosted online, and the group had on-going interactions via Slack (an online collaboration hub) where they could engage asynchronously in discussions, share resources, create threads for sharing books or podcasts or other relevant information mainly related to leadership. The primary researcher participated in a number of these meetings and used the Slack channel to collect additional observational data on the sport leaders' experiences with leadership development. The researchers chose to engage with various data sources to capture the richness of the sport leaders' experiences in a CoP of femininity for leadership development.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed iteratively and inductively throughout data collection using Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) six-phase guide to thematic analysis. This guide was chosen as it has "entered the 'cannon' as a recognizable and reputable method of qualitative analysis" (p. 191)

and has been used in previous research focused on leadership in sport (Slater, Barker, Coffee, & Jones, 2015). The six phases include phases 1-2: familiarization and coding, phases 3-5: theme development, refinement, and naming, and phase 6: writing up. The primary researcher was responsible for collecting most data, which she sent to graduate students to transcribe verbatim or used NVivo transcription software, resulting in 260 pages of transcriptions. After familiarizing herself with the transcripts, she engaged with the other forms of collected data, such as surveys, observations notes, and field notes. Although the interviews accounted for the majority of the data, Mathison (1998) suggested using other sources to triangulate the data and explore any convergences, inconsistencies, and contradictions that occurred. Following, the primary researcher developed initial codes which she then discussed with the second author. Examples of these codes included: confidence, leadership development, organizational supports, barriers, male allies, social learning, and knowledge transfer. The authors then collaborated on the development, refinement, and naming of themes. Considering data were collected and analyzed over a year and a half, new codes were constantly generated, and preliminary themes were developed as new data were introduced. Specifically, the authors reviewed the transcripts and codes for instances of leadership development and examples (positive and negative) of the sport leaders' experiences participating in a CoP of femininity. The themes were then adjusted overtime as the sport leaders continued to develop their leadership capacities. These adjustments were necessary to ensure the themes continued to be reflective of the sport leaders' experiences as they evolved during their participation in CoP activities. The write up was also an iterative process as data were used to write a series of focused papers on this program (e.g., Culver, Kraft, Cayer, & Din, 2019; Culver, Kraft, & Cayer, 2020; Kraft & Culver, 2020; Kraft, Culver, & Din, 2020).

Research Quality

The use of the term validity for assessing the quality of qualitative research has long been contested (Eisner, 1991) as it is argued that this notion is fundamentally aligned with quantitative research and that qualitative data may continuously be reinterpreted (Angen, 2000), therefore rendering “validity” an ill fit. According to Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), criteria to determine the so-called “validity” of research should be relative to the case. Thus, the authors aligned with a relativist approach to develop criteria that were relevant to the research at hand. Burke (2016) suggests a list of criteria that may be suitable for research in sport and exercise, of which the following were deemed appropriate for the current research on women in sport leadership: substantive contribution, width, and credibility. As mentioned above, sport and leadership are generally associated with masculinity; in our research, we have created a *substantive contribution* by developing a CoP that aligns with femininity. The activities and interactions were not geared towards replicating typical, masculine leadership styles, but rather supporting women in developing their leadership skills and capacities relative to their own needs. As for *width*, the primary researcher conducted a survey, interviewed the participants both formally and informally, monitored the Slack channel, and engaged in numerous in-person discussions and conversations with the sport leaders. This immersion into the CoP, allowed the researcher to collect numerous accounts and narratives of the sport leaders’ experiences with the CoP of femininity to substantiate the interpretations of the data. Finally, the researchers gained considerable *credibility* with the CoP. One author was the lead of this project, one was a mentor and led the Leadership Legacy course, and two of the authors became immersed in the program through attending the online and in-person CoP activities over a period of a year and a half.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we present the six major themes that reflect and describe the sport leaders' experiences participating in a CoP of femininity to develop their leadership skills and capacities. These themes are: supports to develop confidence, improved leadership skills, self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence, increased leadership opportunities, men supporting women in leadership development, and the value of social learning. We discuss these themes in relation to current literature to contextualize our findings.

Supports to develop confidence

Many of the women credited the CoP activities and opportunities to engage in leadership discussions with like-minded women and male allies, as a contributor to their increased confidence. Jane explains:

I definitely would say I have more confidence now. I think we had a lot of opportunities to stand up in front of a group of people and talk about something that we were passionate about in a lot of different formats. Lots of those were formally prepared, lots of them were informal. So, I have a lot more confidence maybe kind of speaking like my truth or what's important to me. That's another thing I think I really took away [from the CoP]... the thing about our presentations and our slides and not having a lot of words and how when you stand up there you should just be talking from your heart or talk about what's important to you. And I think even outside of just presenting, I can take that to my every day when I'm in meetings or when I'm in different groups just talking about like, what I know or what I believe in more confidently.

In Rebecca's experience, she had previously described herself as an introvert. But being a part of a group of individuals who supported her growth, enabled her to gain more confidence in herself:

I definitely have prospered from it; the confidence I guess is the big one knowing that the social aspect for me, it's confidence. And I'm quite an introvert, so to be put into that position where I have to...I have to socialize, and I have to do that it's been very beneficial in that sense. It's forced me to get out of the shell a bit.

Karen mirrors this sentiment, feeling that not only has her confidence grown, but her identification with the term *leader*: "I did not view myself as a leader before, I think the change in me is profound and my confidence has grown so much. I have a real, truer perspective and, I think, appreciation of the value I can bring... Yeah, it's been huge for me". In Wenger's (1998) CoP text, identity is a key element in negotiating and developing one's practice. Karen's quote captures the augmented alignment between her identity and leadership, stemming from her increased confidence. This seems to differ from women's previous experiences in CoPs of masculinity, where their identities and leadership created an internal conflict. According to Burkinshaw and White (2017): "in order to 'fit in' women were continually walking a tightrope because of the exclusionary structures and practices embodied through communities of practice of masculinities that made their leadership much more precarious than was the case for male colleagues" (p. 7). For the women in this CoP of femininity, they were not faced with the same tension of attempting to align with masculinity, when this was not authentic to their values. Although many leadership traits are often seen as masculine, the sport leaders were in a space where they could build their confidence and develop leadership skills that aligned with their personal values, rather than trying to 'fit in' to a role. Further to their identity development, the increase in the sport leaders' overall confidence may play a key role in their access to future opportunities. Mathipa and Tsoka (2001) explain that confidence is a possible barrier in the advancement of women into leadership positions and that, "Confidence is important in

leadership because performance is based on it. Confidence actually drives performances” (p. 327). By supporting these women in building their confidence, they may have gained the necessary self-perception to take on future leadership roles.

Improved leadership skills

In addition to feeling more confident in themselves and their leadership capacities, many of the women touched on the specific skills they developed as a result of their participation in the CoP. Ellen discussed the changes in her communication skills:

I’ve definitely developed on the communication side, again just always being reminded how important communication is and the way you communicate, and [that] different people will respond in different ways. And communication, I know I’ve kind of always considered a strength of mine and relationship building, but at the same time, I feel like I’ve developed more of a professionalism over the last two years. And knowing, like I used to get offended really easily and now I’ll sit back and listen and be like ‘OK is this really something to be offended about? Or respond to? Or do I just kind of let this one go?’

Earlier this year, Ellen was unexpectedly placed into a new leadership position in her sport organization. Because Ellen was prepared with important new leadership skills, this sudden change gave her the opportunity to effectively put them into action:

Actually, just recently, just before our last meeting took place, my supervisor was let go and I was then assuming the role of the head of our [sport] department. So, there were a lot of pieces in there about communication and leadership and organization that I had to put into practice right away.

Susan's job included using her communication skills to have discussions with different groups across the sport system. By participating in the CoP, she gained a sense of support from the women and male allies, which enabled her to become more confident talking about gender equity and refined her communication skills:

I think it has increased my competency to just kind of take tasks head on. We're actually doing meetings with every league, so it's my job right now. I'm going up to every one of our leagues and discussing exciting stuff like bylaws, regulations, and policies to make sure they understand [the importance of gender equity]. Sometimes I might have been intimidated a bit to do that... go into these groups or talking about the females in the sport and coaching and why it's important.

Danielle found that her communication style improved across her time participating in the CoP and she is now more secure in her leadership style. She also attributed a higher effectiveness across her team to this improvement in her communication skills.

Just in everyday interactions with our team. I think the biggest thing it has made me more comfortable in my authentic leadership style, which is huge... because I am communicating better with the team, upwards and downwards like all the way around, three-sixty. Yeah, we are more effective as a team. And personally, yes because it makes me feel more confident and comfortable in who I am.

Another sport leader (Jane), found that her access to new leadership skills also had an impact on her role in her organization. She expressed that some of these new skills were not anticipated:

So, I got really unexpected things I think from participating in [the CoP]. I think presentation skills were really big one. I think also leadership skills because we had that opportunity to work so closely with [one of the mentors] through the Leadership Legacy

group. We also did really great work with Brené Brown's work in giving us little projects to kind of focus on more of... the connection side of leadership, which I think is often undervalued or ignored but has a really big impact on my work.

Previous literature has suggested that leadership CoPs produce and reproduce hegemonic masculinity (Karatas-Özkan & Chell, 2015). However, we can see in this case, that the women were able to develop leadership skills that are not necessarily a reproduction of hegemonic skills, but skills that aligned with their authentic leadership styles. For the sport leaders, developing their communication skills was important for their workplaces. In a CoP of masculinity, developing strong and confident communication skills may not be considered a priority, but for women, a lack of assertiveness has been identified as a barrier in sport (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Kilty, 2006) and therefore those skills are important. As mentioned in Jane's quote, another strategy that was appreciated by the sport leaders was the use of resources from other well-known women leaders (including Brené Brown, 2018) to support their specific development needs as women.

Self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence

As mentioned above, leadership (especially in sport) is often associated with masculinity. Kristen experienced considerable backlash from other sport organizations (particularly from men) while leading a new sport program. However, she realized that despite the struggles she endured, she knew that by pushing through and maintaining her leadership role, she would inspire other women to do the same:

Because I was a female leader heading [the program], I think my role inspired other women. I actually heard that a lot from other women. I even heard it from mothers who I would see [playing the sport] because we encourage parents to come because we need

additional people to be at the end of the group... So, we try to have a very inclusive program. And so, I noticed that a mom would say ‘you’re the one that inspired me to get into [the sport]; I haven’t [played] since I was young’. So, I think I never really thought of myself as a leader. I knew I was beginning a group, but I thought of it more as an organizer type of a leader. I didn’t know that I was a female leader that people looked up to.

Similar, to Kristen, Amanda did not recognize the importance of her influence in a leadership role prior to her participation in the CoP. By developing a newfound awareness, she knew that she could use her influence to keep pushing gender equity forward in sport:

I think now I understand a little bit more just the impact I have within our organization. So, it was still the same role, but understanding that, you know, my behavior or the words I use has an impact on the people around me every day. So, understanding that piece of it, then I guess just making sure that we’re always working towards pushing [gender equity] forward and not taking for granted the opportunity that we have to develop things right now.

In Karen’s experience, she became more aware of her reactions to others. She deliberately reflected on her reactions and changed her actions to enhance her leadership role as a female sport leader:

Well I think one thing that I’ve learned from [CoP mentors] for sure is really being self-aware and thinking about, you know, ‘Why am I feeling like this and why am I reacting like this? How do I want to react to this? How am I going to be the most effective kind of leader in this situation?’ So, I think those [are] very specific practical tools. So, here is where I am. ‘Why am I feeling like this?’ You know, ‘how can I adjust and head in a

better direction?’ So yeah, I think just sort of practical everyday kind of tools and thought processes to put into place. I think it has made me more effective in my role.

The sport leaders described a heightened awareness of their influence and how they believe it inspired others in their organizations and other women. Kane (2016) suggests the absence of women in leadership roles can create a vicious cycle for other women:

One could even argue that the lack of women in leadership roles sets up a classic Catch-22 dynamic. Research has shown that under circumstances of insufficient information – which is certainly the case if we don’t see or experience women as leaders – people rely on traditional (stereotypic) notions about gender and leadership capacities (p.37-38).

This organizational dynamic reinforces the masculinization of leadership roles and upholds gendered beliefs about who should lead, thus perpetuating discrimination against women and keeping them out of positions of authority and power.

Increased leadership opportunities

The women in the CoP proudly described their increased confidence and leadership skills which they see serving them well in their futures in sport. It is vital to note, many women in this study took these skills and confidence and secured new leadership opportunities they may not have otherwise had as a result of their participation in this two and a half year CoP of femininity. For example, Ellen’s opportunity to move up to a new leadership role appeared quickly after joining the CoP:

I mean being part of this Community of Practice, my first year in this role I was standing in front of our entire group of Athletic Directors and board and executives presenting on the importance of developing female coaches in all of our sport. And without this

Community of Practice, I would not have been in a position to do that. I would have just been a body sitting around the table raising my hands to vote every once in a while.

Rebecca was also recognized as a leader in her organization and was entrusted with running her gender equity project on her own. Today, she is the primary point of contact for a women's mentorship program:

Yeah... I've been able to take the project and completely run with it. So, the fact where everybody just refers back to me with any questions. Whereas before I went to the meeting and presented and it was still kind of a shared project.

Hayley described a similar experience, where she was originally part of a larger collaborative group running her sport's regional gender equity project. She was then supported by her CEO to take on a leadership role and ownership of this project with one other colleague:

So, my role evolved with the organization. You know at first, we're like cool here are these projects and it was like I...had a hand in it. And then [the CEO] was like 'you know what, I don't, I can't own this. I need you to own this with [a second sport leader] supporting'. So, I think for both [the sport leader] and I, we were able to then dive into our academic backgrounds, our previous and current experiences of being in school and being able to talk to researchers. You know it was just something that wouldn't have happened otherwise or at least not within this timeline.

The sport leaders felt that having the support of the CoP enabled them to take on additional leadership opportunities in their own sport organizations. This mirrors other initiatives supporting women in sport. For example, in the United States, there is the Alliance of Women Coaches, which is an organization that supports women as they develop as leaders (LaVoi, 2014). On a global scale, there is the Women's Sport Leadership Academy which aims "to be a

central point of reference for scholars and activists involved with women and sport, and to support the education and development of women leaders from countries where women face particular challenges” (Pike, White, Matthews, Southon, & Piggott, 2018, p.812). Having this kind of community available in Canada supports another group of women in developing these skills to take on leadership opportunities. It is also important that the sport organization recognizes the sport leaders’ leadership skills and capacities. Kilty (2006) explains that women have felt that they have been passed over for leadership opportunities for “exhibiting an atypical/unfamiliar leadership style” (p.224). This is another reason to have a leadership network of supportive women and male allies to provide additional credibility to the sport leaders’ skills and capacities.

Men supporting women in leadership development

Although the CoP was primarily focused on developing women’s leadership capacities and skills, two men chose to participate in the CoP to support women in leadership. Shawn acknowledged that: “For me as a guy in the room, one of the few guys in the room, there is tremendous personal learning for me”. This shows that the CoP was also an important learning opportunity for men. The male sport leaders also shared their experiences working in an androcentric field and identified some of the work that still needs to be done to promote more women in leadership. Shawn described the stereotypes that he sees in sport:

If a guy screws something up, he screwed it up. You know, Tim or Johnny screwed it up. Whereas when a woman screws it up in high level sport it’s ‘that woman screwed it up’. And it’s a gender thing, it’s not, it’s not an individual, it’s the gender. She screwed it up, ‘I told you, women can’t be at this level and they don’t know what they’re doing’. And so that dynamic, I think is, for me... teaching men just some of the differences in the

approaches [to support women in leadership] ... and maybe some different applications for how we enable, support, inspire, and sponsor our women leaders.

Shawn had recently moved to a different region and expressed that he was seeing the same barriers for women in leadership all over the country:

It's amazing having moved across the country from the Alberta Program in the challenges that we're facing and trying to address with the projects out there, and listening to some of the challenges out here that our organization is hearing; and trying to plan out the projects this week, they are so similar... It's interesting to me, similar organizations, but the two sides of the country and how the rhetoric is very similar in looking at these sort of leadership projects and the need for them.

The second male who was part of this project, Paul, was able to leverage his participation in the CoP to support more women in leadership roles and hoped that this would lead to future generations of women enriching sport through positions of authority and power:

We were able to push to the point where we now have these two women as certified learning facilitators who are now going to be able to go in and deliver a course, which we've not been in a position to do before. So, for us, it has helped push that agenda forward. By putting these two women in a role where they will now have influence over this generation; that's next. You know, for example, generations of [women] coaches coming in by virtue of the fact that we have them certified and they're going to go deliver that course. It was all really through the support and the interest behind it from this program.

The male allies in this CoP developed a strong understanding of the gender inequities that exist in sport and may use their leadership positions to promote and support women in leadership. In

recent literature, Kraft, Culver, and Din (2020), also found that strong male allies played an important role by leveraging their leadership in sport organizations to support women in breaking down barriers in sports culture. LaVoi and Wasend (2018) also highlighted the significance of having male and female allies in sport organizations to create a climate where women are supported and valued and have the opportunities to secure leadership roles, such as head coach positions.

The value of social learning

The sport leaders expressed the value of participating in a CoP of femininity which enabled them to achieve their goals and develop their leadership capacities. Caitlyn considered the CoP to be important in making her feel like she was not alone in her journey to develop as a leader in sport and push for gender equity:

Honestly, I sometimes feel like the [CoP] is like a big support group. And so, for me, the confidence comes from knowing, I sound really cheesy, but from knowing that I'm not alone and that this is something that others value. And so, it's not me being idealistic or, self-serving isn't the right word, but it's helpful to know that there are other people who are fighting the same things... [this] adds credibility to what I'm doing.

Shawn builds on this by sharing his appreciation for having a group of women leaders together working to overcome their shared challenges: "I think the power of the community is in getting of bunch of motivated female leaders in the room and getting them working together, and hearing the commonalities between their challenges". Finally, Karen found considerable value in meeting with a group of like-minded individuals to build connections and learn from the various opportunities the CoP offered:

I think that coming together and actually being able to be together in person, you have like those real comfortable one-on-one conversations and learning concepts together. All of that really kind of bonds you. Another one would be the optional offerings like the leadership courses and stuff. Those are kind of interesting too because it was a different way to learn from each other, but in a smaller group setting... with a specific focus.

Ten years ago, in a session conducted by Dr. Penny Werthner, women coaches were asked to describe why there was a lack of women coaching at the national level. One participating coach mentioned that “the best aspect of the session was hearing the voices of other female coaches – voices that she noted were a silent minority when they gathered at her sport organization meeting” (Werthner, Culver, & Mercier, 2010, p.49). We found similar accounts from both the women and the men participating in this CoP of femininity. There was great value in having a group of women and male allies come together to create a space for underrepresented voices in sport leadership to be heard and strengthened.

Implications and Conclusion

The results of this study provide insight into sport leaders’ experiences participating in a CoP of femininity for leadership development. This two and one-half year experience enabled them to negotiate and identify the meaning of leadership, rather than participating in a CoP of leadership that explicitly or implicitly reproduces characteristics of masculinity. The implications of this study highlight that women may be supported in their leadership development through a CoP that aligns with concepts of leadership as they pertain to women. Organizations, including sport, education, medicine, and others, may consider replicating a similar social learning initiative to enable women (and male allies) to engage in ongoing learning opportunities to support each other in their leadership development journeys. Specifically, the authors

recommend that similar initiatives are carefully designed and facilitated in male-dominated contexts like sport. Framing CoPs of femininity could disrupt the othering and gatekeeping features of organizations where women are diminished and prevented access to leadership positions. The CoP of femininity we co-created with sport leaders in this project positively impacted participants' leadership development. We imagine similar impacts in unique contexts are possible based on our collective experience of this social learning initiative.

We recommend framing a CoP of femininity in relation to the needs and projects participants identify and seek support for implementing in their unique context. More specifically, the lead of this initiative made a point of relying on the sport leaders to drive the selection of activities (workshops, presentations, etc.) the CoP undertook based on their specific and changing needs. This enabled the sport leaders to develop leadership skills that were relevant to their own contexts, rather than hyper-masculine and hegemonic skills that are typically associated with leadership and sport. The authors recommend readers to (Culver, et al., 2019; Kraft, Culver, & Din, 2020) for practical insight into the inner workings of this CoP including specific activities used to facilitate and promote learning, challenges, and lessons learned. An example learning activity CoP participants engaged in was an interactive workshop on unconscious biases, which is suggested as an important topic in women's leadership development opportunities (Madsen & Andrade, 2018). The authors also suggest reading (Culver, Kraft, & Cayer, 2020; Kraft & Culver, 2020) for additional information about social learning theory. More specifically, to host an effective CoP, learning how to frame, facilitate, and assess this type of social learning initiative is important. Finally, this study primarily used the perceptions of the sport leaders for data collection. Future iterations of this research may

include collecting accounts from those who work with the sport leaders to further support (or oppose) the accounts of the sport leaders' development, including more men.

Considering women are still faced with a number of barriers when accessing leadership development opportunities and leadership positions in sport, it is important to create nurturing environments to support women in their growth. Although we have seen positive trends in the number of women securing leadership positions in many fields, the balance remains uneven. In Canadian sport, only 39% of sport board member positions are currently held by women (Canadian Women & Sport, 2020). The nurturing of CoPs of femininity for developing women leaders in the androcentric field of sport shows there is potential to even the playing field, empower women in leadership, and inspire future generations of women leaders.

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Article Four

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (2021). Increasing gender equity in sport organizations: Assessing the impacts of a social learning initiative. *Sport in Society*, 1-29.
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Abstract

This article describes an initiative to promote gender equity across sport organizations in Western Canada. Twelve sport leaders and six mentors cultivated a Community of Practice (CoP) as a space to co-create solutions to existing problems, and advance gender equity in sport. Each sport leader implemented a project to promote sport participation for women, girls, and in other disadvantaged communities. Our study examines the results of these projects in terms of the impact on their sport organizations and participants, and the types of value that were created. Data were collected from the sport leaders, the program participants, and the sport leaders' supervisors, and analyzed inductively and deductively. This resulted in three main themes: increased equity; long-term investments and organizational buy-in; and increased confidence, comfort, and connection. The data highlights an increase in equity (i.e., sport opportunities for girls) and the creation of some types of value (i.e., strategic value).

Keywords: gender equity; leadership development; communities of practice; women; girls

Introduction

Maintaining women and girls' participation in sport and physical activity has long been a concern in Canada (Donnelly, Norman, and Kidd 2013) across demographic categories, levels and roles (Canadian Heritage 2019). Fewer athletes, coaches, and leaders in sport are female and this is in part a result of a higher number of barriers to sport and physical activity participation experienced by women and girls when compared to men and boys (Sport for Life 2020). In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to study women and girls in sport and “there are more competitive opportunities for women and girls in more sports. Canadian female athletes are increasingly participating in high performance sport and regularly achieve success internationally” (Canadian Heritage 2019, 10). This increase, however, is not mirrored in women and girls' participation at every level, including recreational sport. Despite the physical, psychological, and social benefits of sport participation (Canadian Women & Sport 2016), when girls transition to adolescence there is a notable decline in their participation (Kjønniksen, Anderssen, and Wold 2009). In fact, by age 14, girls drop out of sport at double the rate of boys (Sabo and Veliz 2008). So why are women and girls² choosing not to participate in sport or physical activity?

Gender disparities in sport and physical activity

Girls and adolescence. According to Pila et al. (2020, 1) “Positive evaluations of one’s physical fitness (i.e., how the body functions) have been associated with higher future expectations for sport success, higher motivation, commitment, and subsequent behavioral

² We would like to acknowledge that the terms “women”, “girls”, and “females” have different individual and institutional definitions and that gender is a socially constructed concept that is fluid and changing. Although sporting institutions often use strict, biological-based definitions of gender, in the context of our paper and the initiative to be discussed, we accepted all individuals who self-identified as the above-mentioned terms.

engagement in sport”. For girls, this association between physical fitness and sport success may contribute to their lack of sport participation; there are societal pressures for girls to fit within a specific physical model which may be intensified in certain sports environments (Sabiston et al. 2014). Girls and boys are also treated quite differently in sport, in that boys are praised for their aggressive behaviours while girls who exhibit similar behaviours may be ridiculed and their sexuality questioned (Roper and Polasek 2019). In addition to societal pressures, girls face a host of other barriers such as lower quality sport program offerings and few role models to look up to (Hall and Oglesby 2016).

Women. Unsurprisingly, the statistics for women’s participation in sport beyond adolescence are not much better. According to Statistics Canada (2016), only 19.7% of women (above 15 years old) regularly participated in sport over the last 12 months, with this number dropping as low as 11.4% in specific provinces. One study suggests that “From a sport participation point of view, we are nearing crisis mode” (O’Reilly, Brunette, and Bradish 2018, 22). Women also experience a number of barriers limiting their sport participation, such as concerns for personal safety (Wesley and Gaarder 2004), a lack of time, and other competing priorities (O’Reilly, Brunette, and Bradish 2018). Work in the United Kingdom suggests women are not participating in sport and physical activities because of fear related to their appearance, abilities, and priorities (Sport England 2015). Specifically, women did not want to appear sweaty, wear tight clothes, or appear unfeminine; they were concerned that they were not fit enough, would hold back the group, or bring the wrong equipment; and considered family, work, and time with friends to be more important (Sport England 2015).

In addition to the lack of active participation, there are considerable barriers preventing women from taking on leadership roles in sport, including coaching positions. Some of these

barriers include time away from their families and the pressure to continuously prove themselves to their male counterparts (Carson, McCormack, and Walsh 2018). Women coaches also often experience a lack of professional social networks and role models (LaVoi and Dutove 2012), and experience “developmental dead-ends” where they begin surviving instead of thriving (Norman and Rankin-Wright 2018).

Other marginalized populations. Although this paper will primarily focus on women and girls’ sport participation, it is also important to acknowledge other individuals in disadvantaged settings who are facing similar challenges in Canada; many women and girls have complex intersectional identities that exacerbate their lack of access to sport. For example, urban Indigenous youth (girls and boys) experience comparable roadblocks to women and girls when it comes to sport and physical activity participation including a lack of access to resources, racism and discrimination, low self-confidence, and limited supportive networks (Mason et al. 2019). This is also the case for many New Canadians, who experience a host of hurdles including cultural barriers, public policies barriers, and institutional/organizational barriers (Curtin et al. 2018). How are we addressing these barriers and inequalities across sport?

Increasing gender equity

Many studies across the globe have aimed to identify the means to support women and girls along with other disadvantaged communities in sport. For example, it has been suggested that there is a need for policies to support women and girls as players and leaders in sport, and a need for sport organizations to establish the capacity to introduce associated initiatives (Hanlon et al. 2019). Other studies have echoed similar results supporting the idea that policy can be an important tool for initiating change in sport clubs and communities (Skille 2008). Moreover, studies have continued to focus on identifying key barriers in an effort to promote sport

participation for females (Allison, Bird, and McClean 2017). Despite the number and quality of studies conducted to promote gender equity in sport and physical activity, there is a great need for research assessing initiatives aimed at increasing gender equity and examining specific change efforts. In Canada specifically, there is still a need for on-the-ground work in gender equity “to push and innovate in areas where change is most needed – sport program design, delivery, communication, and media” (Canadian Heritage 2019, 12). O’Reilly et al. (2018, 24) mirrored this call to action by recommending that we can all play a role in advancing women and girls’ sport participation and that there is a need for “research to assist the advocacy and advancement of women in sport and women in leadership positions in sport”. These calls to action informed the purpose of our following study: To examine the impacts of a social learning initiative to promote women and girls’ development and gender equity at several levels of sport across a province in Western Canada. For the purposes of our program, gender equity initiatives were defined as increasing opportunities and reducing barriers to sport participation and leadership for self-identifying women and girls, through unique projects that aligned with the organizations’ priorities. The theoretical framework which helps us understand this intervention at multiple levels is LaVoi’s (2016) Ecological Intersectional Model (EIM), to be further discussed below.

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) was a social learning initiative developed with the goal of achieving three main outcomes: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity/development, and knowledge transfer. This project was funded by a sector of the Canadian federal government (Women and Gender Equality) and was supported by the hosting province’s governing Multiservice Sport Organization (MSO) at the time (Alberta Sport

Connection). To frame this initiative, the project lead decided to use Wenger's (1998) concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) and bring together a group of women and male allies to work toward the three project outcomes collectively. The project lead invited five mentors with various leadership backgrounds and expertise in gender equity and sport to support and facilitate the social learning. Examples of their expertise included a professor of leadership behaviours, a leadership consultant in sport, a director of diversity and inclusion, and former head coaches and scouts. A call for applicants was then posted by the province's MSO to recruit sport leaders from various sport organizations to pitch a gender equity focused project and be selected to implement it with the support of the AWiSL. Twelve sport leaders (10 women and 2 men) were selected to join the AWiSL to develop their leadership capacities and to implement their gender equity projects, supported in the CoP. For details about the 12 sport leaders' project plans, see Table 1. and for further information about the AWiSL CoP, we direct the reader to (Culver, Kraft, Cayer, and Din 2019).

Conceptual Framework

When applying to the AWiSL CoP, each sport leader proposed a project with a clear focus on gender equity. However, over time, some of these projects expanded beyond women and girls (and some initially looked beyond gender), with a focus on the intersectionality of women and girls and the many ways in which their identities and backgrounds also influenced their sport participation. For example, some of the sport leaders' projects emphasized the inclusion of Indigenous youth, New Canadians, and persons with (dis)abilities in their projects. As such, we found LaVoi's (2016) EIM to be appropriate for framing our study. In 2012, LaVoi and Dutove presented an ecological model of barriers and supports for female coaches, based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977, 1979, 1993). The 2016 EIM, explores the

individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal influences of women's experiences in sport coaching. Specifically, LaVoi includes the intersectionality of women's identities and how these play into the systems which support or oppress women coaches. Because our study examines the 12 sport leaders' projects to support gender equity across a diverse set of organizations and programs, we chose to explore the ways these projects influenced (or not) concrete, sustainable change for women and girls across the systems.

Methods

Aligning with a participatory worldview, we used a collaborative inquiry approach (Bray et al. 2000) and qualitative methods to guide our study. This enabled us and the participants (to a large extent the mentors) to negotiate the research design and execution. Maxwell (2013) supports such an approach by suggesting that a research design should maintain a certain amount of 'elasticity' as changes to design are inevitable and should be welcomed as the research is conducted. The following research question guided this collaborative inquiry: How has a social learning intervention aimed at promoting gender equity impacted various systems across the Canadian sport landscape?

Recruitment

The sport leaders for this initiative were selected by the project lead and mentors in the Fall of 2017. The project lead contacted two of the authors to conduct a program evaluation of this two and a half year social learning initiative and its three main outcomes: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity/development, and knowledge transfer (see Culver, Kraft, and Cayer 2020 for further information). We received ethical approval from their university's Research and Ethics Board prior to beginning data generation. Once we joined in October 2018, the sport

leaders were each provided with a letter of information regarding the expectations of their participation in the research, should they choose to participate. All 12 sport leaders expressed interest in participating in the research. The primary researcher then attended an in-person CoP meeting where she obtained signed consent forms.

Data Generation

Between 2018 and 2020 (an 18-month period), over 700 pages of data were collected from the sport leaders, mentors, individuals from the sport leader's organizations, and individuals who participated in the sport leader's projects. Specifically, a survey and a series of 3-4 interviews were conducted with each sport leader and mentor over the 18-month period. The surveys were completed through an online system and the interviews were completed over Zoom. Examples of interview questions included: Was the community successful in moving gender equity forward (either in your organization or across the province)? Could you provide specific examples/indicators of these advances in gender equity? Where are you specifically seeing these changes? Do you think this would have been possible without the CoP? In addition, the primary researcher collected observation notes while attending four in-person CoP meetings and events. The AWiSL also had an online SLACK platform where information was shared and discussed; this acted as a supplemental observational data source.

In order to collect perspectives from outside of the sport leaders and mentors, the primary researcher was put into contact (via the AWiSL project lead) with individuals from the sport leaders' organizations (e.g., a supervisor) who could speak to some of the gender equity changes happening in their organizations. Each organizational representative received a consent form to sign along with a short online interview to be completed and sent back via email. Examples of questions included: What kinds of changes have you noticed in your sport organization since the

sport leader joined the AWiSL? What are some of the impacts of the project (in your sport organization) in terms of increasing gender equity and leadership diversity (if applicable)? Further to these perspectives, the sport leaders were also trained and conducted their own small-scale evaluations of their projects, collecting quotes from individuals who participated in their projects as well as other data (e.g., the number of girls who participated in their project). These evaluations were submitted to us and included in the data set for this project.

Data Analysis

In keeping with the collaborative approach, data were analyzed throughout the generation period to inform future forms of data collection. Interview data were transcribed by student researchers or through NVivo transcription software and subsequently uploaded into NVivo analysis software. Guided by Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) six-phases to data analysis, we analyzed the various forms of data deductively, using LaVoi's EIM (2016) to account for the various systems across sport that were impacted by this social learning initiative. The data were also analyzed inductively to stay open to codes that may exist outside of the model. The six-phases to this thematic analysis guide include: phases 1-2: familiarization and coding, phases 3-5: theme development, refinement, and naming, and phase 6: writing up. To support the trustworthiness of our study, we aligned with Burke's (2016) relativist approach to develop criteria for judging the research quality. She suggests rather than relying on a universal set of criteria, the researchers should choose criteria that are relevant to the research at hand, as judging the quality is also the responsibility of the reader. Thus, we propose the following criteria: substantive contribution, coherence, and credibility. Considering the AWiSL is underpinned by social learning, our study provides a *substantive contribution* in terms of highlighting the systematic layers of sport that are affected by longitudinal, on-the-ground social initiatives. In

terms of *coherence*, we were able to collect accounts from individuals who either planned, implemented, participated in, or observed the sport leader's projects. This created a meaningful picture of the concrete impacts of this initiative. Finally, we performed dual roles as researchers and AWiSL mentors. As such, we were engaged in the AWiSL and CoP throughout the initiative. This provides *credibility* to our interpretations and negotiations of the data.

Results

The following section introduces the three main themes and subsequent sub-themes that were developed through our analysis of the two and a half year AWiSL CoP. The three themes include: increases in gender equity; long-term investments and organizational buy-in; and increases in confidence, comfort, and connections. It is important to note that many of the sport leaders' projects are still ongoing. The data in this section are representative of the sport leaders' final evaluations submitted in March 2020 for the AWiSL initiative and data collected until April 2020.

Increases in gender equity

Table 2. represents the impact on gender equity based on the sport leaders' 12 projects. The findings include examples such as increases in girls participating in sport programs, and the results of small-scale research projects to develop an understanding of the experiences of women parasport athletes and women with (dis)abilities in sport.

Long-term investments and organizational buy-in

Table 3. represents examples of the long-term investments and buy-in from the sport leaders' organizations. Initially, the sport leaders were each provided with \$3000 dollars to use for the implementation and execution of their projects. This table is representative of how the

organizations have chosen to integrate their own investments to sustain these projects over the long-term, including financial investments, policy changes, and integrating these projects into their regular programming.

Increases in confidence, comfort, and connections

This section provides a selection of quotes from representatives in the sport leaders' organizations and from individuals who participated in the sport leaders' projects. These are presented in three sub-themes: confidence, comfort, and connection. These quotes shed light on the perceptions of the personal and organizational impacts of the projects that aimed to support development and gender equity across sport.

Confidence. By developing programs that were specifically geared towards women, girls, and other disadvantaged communities, many of the project participants felt empowered in their sport participation and were able to build their confidence accordingly. In coaching specifically, one participant felt that she was trusted in her role and could visualize her continued coaching in the future:

With the help of the Female Apprenticeship program and the [organization's] coaching staff, I was able to gain such a vast array of knowledge and experiences far sooner than I would have ever thought I could. This program and the coaches gave me the confidence in my coaching ability and showed so much trust in me that I can't imagine a day when I'm done coaching anytime soon. I look forward to being back on the [organization's] Coaching Staff for the upcoming season!

A second participant in a coaching program mirrored this confidence and described her increased feeling of security as a coach. She also appreciated having opportunities to feel challenged in her coaching as she continued to learn and grow:

Well my experience was very beneficial to my growth as a coach because it was such an interesting year where we were constantly challenged as a coaching staff and had to be very open minded and I feel like we tried everything...I just feel so much more confident with my decisions as a coach. I also liked that I got to be a part of a team of coaches not just in [one sport] but with everyone...who is working hard to implement a big culture change.

In a final example, a participant from a one-day women's-only course expressed how her confidence increased simply from being with a group of other women which is often not the case in her male dominated role: "The most thorough refresher I have attended. The confidence that one gained from one afternoon and the networking was fantastic. Real games situations at the stations were a great idea."

Comfort. In addition to an increase in confidence, the participants expressed stronger feelings of comfort by being in groups and programs that did not intimidate or exclude as we have seen in sport. When sport organizations offer training programs for their members (i.e., coaching, apprenticeship, officials) women find they are one of the only, if not the only female, participating in the program. As a result, these situations can be quite isolating. For one participant, having access to a training program where she felt comfortable was important for her to feel supported when speaking up: "I enjoyed the program as it gives us a freedom of speech zone without judgement. That we are able to empower women referees no matter age or skill. I would attend the event again!" Another participant described a similar experience where she felt

safe asking more basic questions: “It was a welcoming experience being with all females, felt comfortable to ask even common plays to clarify calls. Really good day.” Finally, a participant from a program geared towards Indigenous youth sport participation expressed a newfound sense of security trying out a new sport that ultimately brought the participant happiness: “I was that kid that didn’t want to [participate in the sport] because if I did it wrong or if I fell, then I was scared of the other kids making fun of me. But now, I’m a [sport] leader here... feels great, it just makes you feel happy.”

Connection. The sport leaders’ organizations had a shared goal of increasing gender equity across the province. As a result, many connections were made within and across organizations to achieve this goal. One representative from a sport organization spoke to the internal connections that were created since the sport leader implemented her project:

Since [the sport leader] has been involved in the AWiSL program, [the sport leader] has initiated several new programs. There has been an obvious increase in women connecting, either through the programs that are offered or through club-related Facebook groups. It is encouraging to see women keeping in touch and keeping active outside of organized programs. The new events have brought new people out to the club and provided fun and competition for current members. [The sport leader] does an excellent job of encouraging and supporting women leaders.

Another representative from a different sport organization described the importance of making connections with other organizations in the AWiSL, so that they could continue with their collaboration to support gender equity:

We value partnerships (especially with other sports) and we have continued to keep conversations going with other sport groups to learn from each other, help each other, and

hopefully work towards some mutually beneficial goals that make all-female sport better for the athletes.

A third representative from another sport organization expressed a similar appreciation for the inter-organizational connections that had been established. In addition, she found that their organization came out with a stronger understanding of the diverse needs of female athletes in the province:

We have a better understanding of the needs of a [sub-population] of female athletes in [the province] thanks to the findings from [the sport leader's] project. Our organization is also better positioned to be involved in coach development and leadership opportunities...Being involved in the AWiSL has also been great for our organization in terms of building partnerships.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to examine the impacts of a social learning initiative to promote women and girls' development, and gender equity across sport in a Western province in Canada, guided by LaVoi's (2016) EIM. Although the EIM was developed with women coaches in mind, we found this model to be appropriate to examine the impacts on women and girls in other sport related roles such as athletes and leaders. Women and girls experience a host of barriers to sport participation and the intersectionality of their identities further complicates this participation. The AWiSL focused on supporting a group of women and male allies in planning and implementing projects for long-term, sustainable change at all levels of sport, and there was a need for longitudinal research exploring the long-term impacts of such programs (Pike et al. 2017). The following section will discuss the results of our study through the lens of LaVoi's (2016) EIM and situate these results within current literature. The results indicate change and

buy-in on the individual/interpersonal systems level, as well as some examples of impact on the organizational systems level.

Individual/Interpersonal Level

Impact was measured at the individual level through examining the numbers of girls and women participating in programs; most sport leaders' projects increased the numbers. Many of these programs had role models, mentors, and networks of women woven into the planning to inspire women and girls to get involved in sports; the increase in participation numbers shows the potential momentum for them to stay involved. Both women and girls experience a lack of role models in sport (Hall and Oglesby 2016; LaVoi and Dutove 2012). Allison, Bird, and McClean (2017, 33) explain that having women role models has the capacity to "begin to inspire young people to initiate and maintain sports participation, and begin to change the social norm around what it is for women to be 'sporty'". Our findings suggest having a network of women as a safe space for training and development is of great value in gender equity work. This is mirrored in previous literature which suggests that bringing like-minded women in sport together has the potential to encourage interactions for years (Marshall, Demers, and Sharp 2010).

At the interpersonal level, we found many sport leaders participating in this initiative experienced an increase in their confidence from being in a room with other women, highlighting an example of knowledge transfer. A lack of confidence is well documented in the literature as a deterrent to women and girls' participation and progression in sport at various levels (Fielding-Lloyd and Mean 2011; LaVoi and Dutove 2012; Lirgg 1992; Norman 2014). The feelings of intimidation that often accompany sport participation in a male dominated field are minimized through the creation of women-only spaces. The high number of women who attended programs across the projects indicates these interventions were well received. Kilty (2006, 229) found

similar value with women-only coach education programs: “Female coaches who have attended the conferences have repeatedly recognized the value of interacting with other female coaches, sharing ideas and common experiences”.

Other individual and interpersonal impacts that surfaced in a few projects were related to Indigenous youth (girls and boys) and women and girls with (dis)abilities. The experiences of Indigenous youth are noticeably missing from youth sport literature (Dubnewick et al. 2018) and there is a need for more research to “understand how sport and activity experiences can be respectful and meaningful to Indigenous participants” (Mason et al. 2019, 554). Although Indigenous youth experiences were not a central focus of our study, highlighting these voices was important to further understand the intersectionality of women and girls sport participation and the types of programs that were valued. In terms of women with disabilities, there are few studies focusing on this sub-population of women, and many gaps remain including a lack of focus on women with low levels of physical functioning (Cottingham et al. 2018). By capturing the experiences of 10 women with a (dis)ability in sport, a sport leader gave voice to women who may not have otherwise had the platform to share their stories.

Organizational Level

When it comes to planning and implementing programs for women, there is often a focus on the impact of these programs from the participants’ perspectives (Banwell, Kerr, and Sterling 2020). An important finding from our study is the notable changes which occurred at the organizational systems level when organizations truly believed in and supported the sport leaders’ projects. According to Soler et al. (2017, 284), when implementing gender equity programs at the University level:

Research stresses that gender equity actions must consider not only the participation rates but also the attitudes and experiences of the people who implement them. The beliefs of the people in charge of implementing policies and of translating words into actions are essential to the success of projects.

This is particularly important as some organizations deny or rationalize existing gender inequities (Hoerber 2007). The representatives from the sport leaders' organizations included in our study demonstrated that their attitudes influenced the success of the projects. These representatives saw the value of transferring knowledge and collaborating with other organizations in the AWiSL, and the benefits of programming geared towards the unique needs of women and girls, such as women-only training programs. Organizational level buy-in was further seen in the sport organization investments in sustaining specific sport leaders' projects through policy changes and financial resources. Policy change and financial support highlight organizational commitment to achieving long-term change for women and girls.

Connections, collaborations, and investments supported at the organizational level in the AWiSL social learning initiative also demonstrate examples of *enabling* and *strategic* value. Wenger-Trayner et al. (2019) explain that when an organization gets better at supporting social learning this creates enabling value, showing the organization's commitment to the work being done by a CoP. When quality conversations are happening between significant stakeholders, this creates strategic value. Not only were the organizations increasing the numbers of girls and women participating in sport, they were also creating important connections, relationships, and transferring knowledge across the sport landscape as a result of this initiative. The sport leaders were also empowered to take advantage of the new knowledge and insights they generated during their participation in the CoP, about developing women-only programs and programs for

girls. This was then brought back to their sport organizations where the sport leaders engaged in conversations with decision makers about strategic initiatives to support women and girls, resulting in the integration of programming. The sport leaders were able to lead with confidence along side the other CoP members.

In terms of specific programming, the sport organizations further maintained long-term change through the implementation of mentorship and women-only training programs. Krahn (2019, 125) suggested that “creating sport policy that seeks to advance women in sport leadership positions through formalized mentorship and/or sponsorship may provide a way in which to create a more concrete approach to the advancement of women in sport leadership”. Many of the gender equity projects involved setting up mentorship and networking opportunities for women and integrating these programs into their regular, yearly programming. In some cases, they also committed to bringing mentee women coaches back the following year to continue supporting their development. In a recent study, Banwell, Kerr, and Sterling (2020), captured the benefits of mentorship for women coaches on the individual and interpersonal level. Our results build on these findings by drawing attention to the benefits of organizational level buy-in to sustaining these much-needed programs for women.

Finally, one organization created a significant change through their integration of broadcasting female sport games. Historically, there has been less coverage of women’s sport than men’s sport and when women’s sport is covered, it is often the sports that are deemed acceptable for women, such as gymnastics (Canadian Women & Sport 2016). This organization decided to broadcast their women’s games in a “non-traditionally” female sport, prioritizing women in sport, and dismantling stereotypes and specific barriers to gender equity in this space.

Conclusion and Future Recommendations

Our study explored a Canadian gender equity initiative to support women and girls' sport participation and development. Considering men are still participating in sport at higher rates than women (Statistics Canada 2016), there is a need for further intervention and research. The sport leaders participating in this initiative developed programming for women and girls from a variety of backgrounds and sport contexts (i.e., New Canadians, Indigenous youth, coaches, sport leaders, officials, etc.). This enabled a province in Western Canada to support women and girls at many levels across the sport system and created sustainable changes. Our study sheds light on the potential implications of having supportive organizations that are willing to buy-in and invest in equity-focused programming over the long-term, rather than implementing short-term, band-aid approaches without sustainable longevity.

Limitations of this research include a minimal exploration of societal level impacts or changes in terms of LaVoi's (2016) EIM. Future research should focus on the higher level social and cultural changes that may occur with longitudinal, gender equity initiatives. Although our data generation took place over a year and a half, social learning interventions often require time to see different types of value occur (Bertram, Culver, and Gilbert 2017; Culver, Kraft, and Movall 2019). Thus, researchers should monitor gender equity initiatives over several years to provide additional opportunities to collect participants' and organizations' perspectives of the programming, and to monitor the ongoing recruitment and retention of women and girls in sport.

Sport organizations interested in creating gender equity and building sustainable programming which welcomes and retains women and girls in sport across levels, roles and contexts can learn from the AWiSL example. Organizational support is crucial, women-only programming is important, and change should target the individual, interpersonal, and

organizational levels. Our findings suggest we can move beyond the fix-the-women narrative (Shaw and Frisby 2006) and begin creating a sport system where women and girls are integral. The relationships women leaders in this project developed across the sport landscape energized and strengthened their work in their home contexts.

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Table 1.

Sport organizations and sport leader project goals

Organization	Project
Organization 1	Women/girls access to physical activity due to disability
Organization 2	Female coach mentorship
Organization 3	Female leadership/coaches for sport programs
Organization 4	Female leadership in First Nations communities through sport
Organization 5	Female coach mentorship
Organization 6	Female coach certification
Organization 7	Female head coaches
Organization 8	Participation of New Canadian girls/women in sport, culturally competent coaches
Organization 9	Female coach mentorship in college
Organization 10	Female coach development
Organization 11	Female leadership, Officials/Coach Developers
Organization 12	Research on impact of girl's programs

Table 2.

Impact on gender equity

Sport Organization	Gender Equity Advances
Organization 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through an interview with 10 women, the sport leader studied parasport inclusion from the perspective of women experiencing disability. This resulted in the production of a paper (to be submitted for publication) to highlight the two primary study themes: (1) within (para)sport and (2) beyond (para)sport. These two themes broadly captured participants’ perspectives across a continuum of inclusion to exclusion in sport.
Organization 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program for girls brought together U14 girls across the province, for a mentorship weekend led by women alumni of the organization. Over two years, the number of athletes increased from 40 to over 100. - The mentor program consisted of five mentor coaches who facilitated group learning sessions for younger women coaches.
Organization 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women. - The number of female participants have increased in the summer program, youth program, and other programs. - Increase in the number of women instructors or assistant instructors. - A female program facilitator has been trained for certification.
Organization 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased the number of Indigenous youth participating in sport programs (in-school and after-school) by over 100 participants.
Organization 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in female coaches for the following: registration numbers, on female teams, and achieving higher level certifications. - Introduction to coaching clinic developed for mothers with children playing the sport.

- Developed a female apprentice coach program.
 - Organization 6
 - Increase from one to four learning facilitators in the province – two of which are women.
 - Organization 7
 - Increase in female coaches.
 - Five mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women.
 - Organization 8
 - Developed programming for New Canadian and Indigenous girls.
 - Provided coach development workshops for women.
 - Organization 9
 - Implemented a mentorship program for women coaches.
 - Mentees continued coaching with their respective teams the following season.
 - Organization 10
 - Five women-only clinics have been run for coaches and attended by 87 women.
 - Now streaming girl's sport games.
 - Organization 11
 - Implemented a training program to train and certify 10 women coach developers.
 - Implemented four women-only referee training programs attended by 161 women.
 - Organization 12
 - The organization is working with researchers to examine data from their programming and current curriculum to inform future curriculum development for their events and programming for girls. They have developed key findings and recommendations to implement into their programming.
-

Table 3.

Long-term investments and organizational buy-in

Organization	Long-Term Commitment
Organization 2 - Financial investment	Program for girls is now supported by the club's philanthropic group to continue annually hosting the program.
Organization 5 - Policy change	In 2019-2020 it was recommended that registered female sport teams have a female coach. In 2020-2021 this will become a requirement.
Organization 10 - Policy change	As of 2017 at least one female coach must be registered to all female teams.
Organization 11 - Changes in regular programming	The women-only referee training program has now been embedded into the organization's referee program.

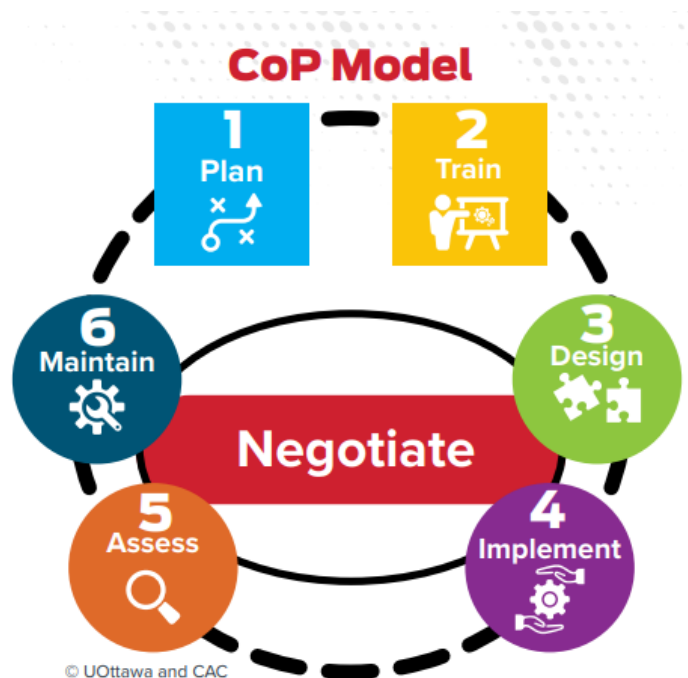
Additional Findings

Further to the four articles presented, there are additional findings from the AWiSL program evaluation. This section includes a how-to model for building social learning spaces and the process behind developing the model, and examples of the perceived value created through the AWiSL program. Specifically, the value creation is presented from the perspectives of the sport leaders over the year and a half of data collection and is accompanied by a commentary on the characteristics and dimensions associated with each value cycle.

How-To Model for Building Social Learning Spaces

As mentioned above, one of the key outcomes of the AWiSL program was *knowledge transfer*. Through the year and a half of data collected, myself, my supervisor (Dr. Culver), and the CAC project lead used the information from the CoP initiative to develop an evidence based how-to model for sport organizations wishing to introduce their own context specific social learning spaces, to innovate and create sustainable change in sport. This step-by-step model guides sport organizations to plan, train, design, implement, assess, and maintain a CoP (see Figure 1). Specifically, the authors draw from the AWiSL program to relay best practices, while also integrating experiences from other sport specific CoPs (e.g., parasport CoPs). See Appendix P to access the full pdf of this model and the accompanying step-by-step guide.

Figure 1



The Process

Given that one of the requirements of the WAGE grant was to leave a legacy for other sport organizations, the AWiSL project lead had the goal of creating a how-to CoP model from the onset of program. She brought this to the attention of myself and Dr. Culver so that we would consider this goal during data generation. Throughout data generation, special attention was paid to the processes (e.g., activities, strategies) which may have contributed the success of this CoP; these processes were identified and coded in the data. In October 2019, a preliminary how-to model was presented at one of the in-person CoP meetings to introduce the ideas to the sport leaders and mentors, and ask for their feedback (i.e., Is this model representative of your experience? What else is important and should be included in the model? Is there anything that should be removed?). After receiving feedback and making changes over several months, the key steps of the model were solidified, and a preliminary guide was developed. Over the next several months, the project lead, myself, and Dr. Culver participated in numerous meetings to negotiate the visual representation of the model as well as the content for the accompanying guide. Once a draft of the model and guide were completed, a graphic designer was brought in to assist with developing a graphic of the model that was reflective of our vision of the how-to process. Several more meetings took place over a period of subsequent months to continue refining the model and guide. The final document was officially launched, in English and French, through the CAC website in October 2020 to share with the Canadian sport community. On November 23 and 25, an English language and French language Webinar were hosted for the CAC Partners to further explain the model. Over 50 individuals representing national, provincial, and multiservice sport organizations, as well as individual coaches attended.

Value Creation

Another key outcome of the AWiSL, which used a social learning approach to frame the initiative, was to capture the perceived value of the program. According to Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019 “value here refers to importance, worth, or usefulness rather than moral standards, even if the two are related” (p.323). As previously mentioned, there are eight value cycles (see Table 1 for a brief description of these cycles) matched in four pairs (see Table 2 for examples of pairs) which can be created through social learning (Wenger et al., 2011; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, in 2020). Experiences of the value in each cycle can be internal (i.e., attitude changes occurring within the CoP) or external (i.e., outside funding is secured by the CoP); and positive, negative, or neutral. These dimensions “illustrate in a rich way the range of forms that value can take at each cycle” (Wenger-Trayner, & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 77). This section provides a series of AWiSL sport leader quotes to illustrate examples of value created at each value cycle, followed by a brief comment on the main characteristics of participating in the social learning space (i.e., caring to make a difference, engaging uncertainty, and/or paying attention), as well as the value dimensions as per Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020). For an example of a completed value creation story that highlights a sport leader’s experience of several value creation cycles, see Appendix Q.

Table 2.

Value Creation Flows

Flows	Description
Immediate-Potential	CoP member 1 gains a new idea from a meeting which may lead to a change in the future
Potential-Applied	This idea is then applied into a new context
Applied-Realized	The applied idea results in a positive change
Realized-Immediate	CoP member 1 shares this positive experience with CoP member 2, leading to immediate value for CoP member 2

* Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020

Immediate Value (*What's the experience?*)

Sport Leader 11:

"I mean I just think anytime that you get a group of people together who have so much knowledge and experience, there's always something that can be gained from that. And so, I think just having everybody together and learning from other people, I think that that was probably to the best part."

Value Dimension:

This sport leader explains the positive value she immediately felt by connecting with others around what she *cared to make a difference* about.

Potential Value (*What comes out of it?*)

Sport Leader 4:

"The one meeting... the unconscious bias was very interesting because I find myself even just like every day, when you look at somebody and I'm like 'okay what's my bias, where am I filling in the story?' And then the inclusivity which can be anything, it doesn't have to just be the LGBTQ2I [community], it can be para-athletes, or yeah minorities."

Value Dimension:

This sport leader was *engaging uncertainty*. She did not necessarily have all of the answers regarding inclusivity, but she had a heightened awareness of bias which could become useful to her. Her increased critical awareness is a positive dimension of potential value; she is now reflecting on her personal biases, based on information she gathered through the CoP. Had she been defensive we would have seen an example of negative potential value.

Applied Value (*What do you learn by applying it?*)

Sport Leader 5:

“When I was having those struggles and [a mentor] was sending me that information... she actually sent me a talk that Brené Brown had done, and it set me on like reading all the Brené Brown books. Then I started thinking like ‘What other information is out there? What other books or podcast can I look at that will help me grow as a leader in the community?’ And then I have shared some of that with other females in the community that have come up against the struggles or situation; to share that information with them.”

Value Dimension:

This sport leader exemplified the experience of *caring to make a difference*. She took the resources from a mentor and cared enough to explore other resources (books, podcasts) and apply her learnings by sharing them with other women. She was able to reuse and repurpose information from the mentor and apply this to a new context; a positive applied value example.

Realized Value (*What does that change?*)

Sport Leader 12:

“[A sport leader] was talking about it one day at the Community of Practice, about how their registrations were declining for the conference and they were looking for new things and new ideas to do, and I just kind of mentioned ‘what about a multi-sport aspect where you’re not focusing so much just on sport but overall leadership skills and PD development?’ And [it] kind of just grew from there. It was, it was really pretty exciting to run. Obviously, we always want attendance to be higher, but I think the participants

that were there really appreciated the ability to share their stories in their own sport context but understanding that we're all pretty much facing the same challenges across sport."

Value Dimension:

This sport leader was *paying attention* to the ongoing discussions that were constantly taking place in CoPs. She identified an opportunity to create a connection with others in her CoP which resulted in her personal achievement. This also resulted in the collective achievements of the sport organizations in successfully bringing together women from multiple sports for a leadership conference for women.

Transformative Value (*Does the difference make you have broader effects?*)

Sport Leader 6:

"I think I would have been a lot more sort of passive about things...maybe part of that is just being here for as long as I have, but kind of... just going through the motions and just doing my thing. I think I'm more apt to look a little more at 'How can I do this differently? How can I do this better?' You know? And I think that's a direct result of this [CoP]. It's just looking at things in a different way than I always did."

Value Dimension:

This sport leader described her desire to continue *making a difference* in a position that she had been in for some time. She explained that there was now a drive to push herself, and to look at her job and experiences in a different light than she had in the past, which shows a change in mindset and an example of rethinking how to make a difference.

Strategic Value (*What is the quality of engagement with strategic stakeholders?*)

Sport Leader 12:

“You know there’s several people in our organization that I’ve had conversations with, in regard to trying to get more female leaders and coaches and officials in our sport. So, I think those strategic conversations have been a result of this project.”

Value Dimension:

This sport leader showed her drive to *make a difference*. She had conversations within her organization because she cared about females in her sport, and this showed a negotiation of success criteria with an important stakeholder.

Enabling Value (*What makes it possible?*)

Sport Leader: 15

“The condition that [the sport organization] gave me is freedom to organize it how I wanted to. I think they were very trusting to let me do it.”

Value Dimension:

This example demonstrated the organization’s willingness to *engage uncertainty*, trust the sport leader, and distribute leadership. This enabled the leader to make unrestricted choices for her organization.

Orienting Value (*What else is potentially relevant?*)

Sport Leader 1:

“I think it’s also just given me...a better understanding of the Canadian sport context. So, some of the values and the goals of the Coaching Association of Canada how that ties

back to the Alberta Sport Connection. So... what impact our centre could potentially have on Alberta and how that would look across Canada.”

Value Dimension:

This sport leader described how *paying attention* and raising her awareness of how her organization fits in the greater context of the Canadian sport system, could in turn influence the possible impact of her organization across the country.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Discussion

The following chapter is presented in four sections. First, a general discussion to highlight the key findings from the above four articles and additional findings are presented. Second, further elaboration on the theoretical contributions from this dissertation is discussed, followed by the third section which touches on the practical implications. Finally, in the fourth section, limitations of this dissertation are presented in conjunction with recommendations for future research.

General Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate a social learning initiative to support an increase in gender equity, leadership development/diversity, knowledge transfer, and value creation across sport organizations in Alberta. The findings from this evaluation were presented through four articles and an additional findings section. The following section summarises these, before a broader discussion of the whole dissertation. In Article One, a case study of a sport leader's project was conducted to examine the perceived value of a WOTP for coach developers and to illuminate the specific supports needed to provide this type of training for women. The findings provided examples of the implications of this program for CDs and identified practical supports (on the Micro, Meso, and Macro levels) that were deemed significant for the facilitation of learning for women CDs. Article Two examined a blended action learning and social learning approach for the development of leadership capabilities in a group of women mentors (social learning leaders). The findings provided a theoretical contribution by demonstrating the potential of using the 'plug-and-play' principle (Wenger-Trayner, 2013) to interweave two approaches to support the social learning leaders' development. Article Two also provided practical examples of 'what worked' in the mentors' development experiences. In Article Three, a CoP of femininity

for leadership development was deliberately facilitated to support the sport leaders in developing their leadership skills. Considering CoPs for leadership development are generally masculine, the alignment with the feminine provided theoretical implications for a less traditional social learning approach to support women leaders. In Article Four, LaVoi's (2016) EIM framed the gender equity and leadership development results of the AWiSL. This provided a theoretical contribution as LaVoi's model has previously been used in the context of women in coaching, rather than women and girls in sport on a broader scale. Moreover, this article highlighted practical examples of how the sport leaders leveraged the supports in their sport organizations to sustain their projects in the long-term. Finally, the additional findings section included the how-to model which provides a practical contribution to social learning theory, whereby a step-by-step guide is available for those interested in fostering social learning spaces to create change. In addition, the perceived value created from the perspectives of the sport leaders provided tangible, practical examples of value creation at every cycle.

Theoretical Contributions

Blending Theories (Plug-and-Play)

According to Wenger (2013):

...social theory contributes to knowledge by producing perspectives, which can be used to make sense of the world. This sense making purpose entails a complex relation between theory and practice. The two can inform each other, change each other, but do not determine each other. Moreover, because perspectives can coexist, social theory does not progress in a linear fashion, with one theory replacing another, but by assembling a puzzle of interacting pieces (p. 1).

Taking this outlook on the interplay between theory with practice, the articles combined action learning, ecological systems theory, and social learning theory using Wenger's "plug-and-play" principle. Although other studies have utilized an action learning approach along with some elements of a CoP (i.e., Box & Ellis, 2018), these were not deliberate attempts to intentionally blend the two. This has also been the case for studies cultivating a CoP while blending some elements of action learning (Warhurst, 2006). In our case, a CoP was purposefully nurtured and guided by the key elements of a CoP (i.e., mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire; Wenger, 1998). The SLLs in this CoP used an action learning approach to support their leadership development and to mutually engage in the ongoing process of reflection. This was followed by making actual changes to their practice (acting as social learning leaders for the sport leaders) and discussing the results of these changes. Moreover, the EST and social learning were coupled to explore a WOTP for coach developers, and used to assess the impacts of a social learning initiative for women, girls, and other marginalized populations. By applying these theories broadly across the sport system, our understanding of the various intersectional identities and systems levels which influence women, girls, and other marginalized populations' participation in sport was strengthened. Furthermore, capturing multiple perspectives (i.e., sport leaders, project participants, sport organizations) in addition to coaches' experiences, provided insights into what was working in terms of moving gender equity forward in sport through social learning initiatives. Combining these approaches also illuminated what still needs to be done in both theory and practice.

A CoP of Femininity

In Article Three, the deliberate cultivation of a CoP of femininity for leadership development was fostered to support women across sport in the growth of their leadership skills.

This article was framed by Paetchter (2003) and Burkinshaw's (2015) concepts of gendered CoPs, where they argued that CoPs could either align with the masculine or feminine, depending on the members and goals of the CoP. Paetchter's work in particular has been considered "useful in analyzing sport as a collective mechanism of gender constitution" (Schwyter, 2008, p. 96). For example, studies have explored CoPs of masculinity in football (Parker, 2006) and lacrosse (Schwyter, 2008). In the study of these CoPs of masculinity, it was evident that the men felt they needed to uphold the hegemonic norms (Paechter, 2003) to gain and maintain legitimacy in their communities. Specifically, lacrosse was very much associated with male, heterosexual privilege (Schwyter, 2008) and football players felt they needed to adopt hyper-masculine culture in their own lives to gain acceptance (Parker, 2006). This is also seen in other physical activity related CoPs, such as physical education CoPs of masculinity. For example, a study of young men felt that they needed to demonstrate their physical prowess to gain legitimacy in the CoP of masculinity through actions such as playing rough and playing football (Atencio & Koca, 2011). In this case, masculinity was established through the male members' mutual engagement in physical education and the reproduction of certain behaviours that were typically viewed as masculine (e.g., playing football, violent behaviours), which had been negotiated during informal time. The members also made a point of marginalizing men who did not align with the masculine practices of the CoP; an act that was considered necessary to maintain the constructs of this CoP of masculinity. Young men who showed interests in other activities like dance instead of sport were ridiculed and harassed by being called derogatory terms related to their sexual preferences, and were ultimately not considered legitimate members of the community. These practices extend well beyond sport; men in more traditionally male dominated fields are considered full members of their communities and therefore have the power to maintain the masculinity of a

CoP and continue to marginalize women (Taber, 2011). However, attempting to mitigate this exclusive and segregating culture in CoPs is not simply fixed by including more women: “It is therefore key that other theories and lenses... are used to bring in a sociocultural power analysis that does not merely accept established communities of practice but opens them up to critique” (p. 345).

As highlighted in Article Three (and noted in the other papers), the findings demonstrated the potential implications of taking a CoP that was traditionally masculine and aligning it with the needs of women as well as male allies. In terms of theoretical contributions, Article Three was unique in that it supported the needs of women and the activities that were deemed beneficial to their leadership development, without becoming a CoP of femininity that excluded male perspectives. This collaborative space allowed women to develop their leadership capacities and enabled men to experience forms of leadership that differed from the norm; women in leadership have been known to inspire and motivate others, build strong relationships, and are effective working in teams (Gipson et al., 2017). These are important leadership qualities for all: men, women, girls, and boys. Moreover, studies on gendered CoPs in sport (as seen above) often examine CoPs that are primarily, if not exclusively masculine, giving way for the opportunity to explore a CoP of femininity in sport that was developed through the AWiSL. The women noted on numerous occasions throughout the initiative (and mentioned in the articles), that their confidence had increased. This newfound confidence coupled with a comfortable learning environment enabled the women to learn from their peers in a meaningful way, through a leadership CoP.

Practical Implications

Bridging Silos and Creating Alignment in the Canadian Sport System

According to Barnes and colleagues (2007), there was a need for greater collaboration and partnerships across the Canadian sport system: “the system coupling and interaction required within the Canadian sport system involves a significant practical challenge, requiring strategic development, management, leadership and planning” (p. 569). This lack of collaboration seemed to hold true in the Alberta sport system when initiating the AWiSL program. In order to address this lack of alignment and collaboration, other disciplines, such as oncology, have used CoPs as a way to forge partnerships across silos and bridge gaps in knowledge and practice. Fung-Kee-Fung et al. (2008) explained that CoPs may be used to:

“facilitate linkages and help align projects with executive sponsor objectives... to recognize and celebrate the successes of [community members] across the province by sharing these successes within the [greater community] and in the broader [disciplines’] system... to connect [community members] with similar projects and research interests and to offer them templates and guidance. (p. 182)

Fung-Kee-Fung (2008) led an initiative to bring practitioners involved in cancer surgery together through an integrated CoP model. This model was implemented in various interdisciplinary CoPs, each of which had a specific project related to different oncology specializations. Similarly, social learning framed the AWiSL which was innovative in doing just that: creating an initiative to promote shared learning, collaboration, and the co-creation of knowledge all in the service of long-term change across the province (and beyond) at most levels (i.e., clubs, PSOs, NSOs, sport boards). All four of the papers in this dissertation and the additional findings touch on the various ways in which this systematic connection and breaking down of silos was

achieved. This may serve as a model for other initiatives across the Canadian sport system, specifically in other provinces to create similar partnerships to support gender equity and leadership development across sport. Moreover, achieving greater alignment across the sport system supports other initiatives with similar visions, such as the Sport for Life (2019) *Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity 3.0* goals.

Using a Landscape Approach

Building on the previous point, the AWiSL included a multi-level, landscape of practice (LoP) approach to social learning, and involved key players and organizations from across the sport system. The AWiSL initiative truly spanned all levels of the Canadian sport landscape; it was funded by a department of the federal government (WAGE) and led by an employee of a national non-government organization (the CAC), who partnered with a provincial multiservice sport organization (ASC), mentors, and 12 provincial sport/multiservice sport organizations. The sport leaders from these 12 organizations each implemented and evaluated a program aimed at greater equity and leadership development. As researchers, we were able to generate data across all levels from national to individual participants in the CoP and even some of the participants in the sport leaders' programs. This resulted in four articles, which collectively touched on the landscape of practice. The articles recounted the experiences of several key stakeholders in sport including CDs, directors, professors, head coaches, assistant coaches, athletes, and more. By including these varied voices, we were able to see the impacts of a social learning initiative well beyond increasing the number of women and girls in sport. We were able to illuminate several other advances in sport including the development of stronger male allyship and the implementation of policies to create actual change in the sport organizations.

Considering LoPs are a fairly recent contribution to the literature (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015), there is limited research exploring this approach in sport; however, there is a presence in other fields. For example, in the medical community “The boundaries between communities of practice are particularly fertile settings for learning, either through occasional forays across borders or through complete multimembership of two or more communities of practice” (Hodson, 2020, p. 504). In higher education, having members engage in a landscape approach “requires extending themselves beyond an area of expertise to navigate a broader landscape of practice” (Brown & Peck, 2018, p. 234). For the sport leaders and mentors, they were able to meet regularly and engage in boundary encounters, where there were opportunities for them to take part in learning that may not have otherwise been available in their individual sport organization (or communities). By leveraging these opportunities to learn what other organizations were doing across the province, the sport leaders were inspired to make changes in their organizations, which subsequently spread across the country (i.e., other provinces have expressed interest in replicating the women-only officials training program). Using a LoP approach enabled the sport leaders to engage with different sports and organizations, and take knowledge from these communities and apply it to their own contexts. Moreover, the collection of the sport leaders’ and mentors’ experiences demonstrated that using a LoP approach could result in value being created in all value cycles, over time. Considering enabling, strategic, and orienting value are relatively new additions to the VCF (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger Trayner, 2020), this also served as a contribution in terms of demonstrating these values in a real-world context. With the success of this approach, other initiatives may consider using this example of a LoP to take advantage of the potential learning which exists at

the boundaries of communities, rather than continuing to develop social learning spaces with community members engaging in homogenous practices.

Practical Activities from Programming to Policies (What Worked)

Much of the literature on women and girls in sport focuses on the barriers preventing their participation. We chose to use a “what works” lens to capture the potential of using social learning to support the advancement of gender equity and leadership development. For example, Articles One and Two were unique in that they focused on sub-populations (women coach developers and women SLLs) that are not well represented in the literature. By providing examples of activities that were well received by the participants (i.e., networking opportunities for the coach developers and regular, deliberate social interactions between the SLLs) other organizations creating programs for women may utilize these examples in their own contexts to support women in their leadership development in sport and other fields.

In Article Four, the findings highlighted a number of actual programs that were implemented by the sport leaders (i.e., mentorship programs for women). The article also noted ways in which the sport leaders leveraged the AWiSL initiative to create buy-in from their sport organizations and maintain the longevity of their projects (i.e., secure funding for their programming). Considering the lack of girls and women participating in sport, this dissertation aimed to contribute to both academic and applied fields of sport by suggesting programming opportunities that have been successful in recruiting women and girls to participate in sport in all roles. Additionally, the examples of strategic changes in the organizations (i.e., developing policies for women and girls or integrating WOTP into the organizations’ regular programming) serve as examples for how organizations can support women and girls in sport at the organizational level.

Moreover, the articles provided many instances of the four ways of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical, as identified by Heron and Reason (1997). For example, the SLLs demonstrated experiential knowing through the development of their social learning leadership capabilities while concurrently working with the sport leaders. In another example, the CDs were able to develop specific knowledge and skills in relation to the CD role, demonstrating their practical knowing.

A Step-by-Step Model

Although CoPs are well cited in sport literature (Bertram et al., 2017; Culver & Trudel, 2008; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017), there are limited practical examples of “how-to” go about implementing this type of social learning intervention. The *Communities of practice: A how-to model for building social learning spaces* (Appendix P) was specifically developed with this in mind. The model provides a six-step guide to plan, design, implement, assess, and maintain a CoP as a high-value, low-cost initiative to connect people with a passion for learning, developing, and growing together related to their practice. This model is evidence based and, to a large degree, based on the experiences and lessons learned through the AWiSL CoP. It is also informed by other CoPs the authors (myself, Dr. Culver, and the AWiSL project lead) have worked with in sport, including parasport CoPs. The guide briefly touches on the Wenger-Trayner’s social learning theory as well as the various roles that may or may not be present in a CoP based on the goals of the community members. In addition to planning, facilitating, and assessing a CoP, final key aspects to this guide are the recommendations for integrating legacy plans to sustain the CoP over the long-term, rather than implementing a one-shot approach as often seen in intervention research.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

This dissertation provides several contributions to the fields of women in sport and social learning but is not without limitations. First, the AWiSL focused on one province in Canada. There were some interactions with other Western provinces who expressed interest in taking part in some of the sport leaders' projects (i.e., BC and Saskatchewan showed interest in the WOTP for officials), but the primary focus was Alberta. Also, the CAC (the National Sport Organization that received the grant for this initiative) is located in Ontario, and therefore there were some discussions with Ontario organizations as well. However, the mentors and sport leaders were located across one system, the province of Alberta, and therefore this initiative was mostly isolated to this one area. This project creates an opportunity for other provinces and territories to replicate a similar social learning initiative. The application of a similar initiative would likely transfer effectively to other provinces in particular, as they operate using comparable systems. This however sheds light on another potential limitation, which is the possible transferability of this initiative to other countries. Considering that sport systems in other countries operate differently and may include hierarchical systems and organizations that are privatized, it may be more challenging to implement a similar type of landscape approach with the buy-in of significant stakeholders.

Second, the majority of sport organizations involved in this initiative were PSOs, with some involvement from organizations at the club level and other institutions. This limited the scope of what could be assessed through this evaluation in terms of impact across the entire province at all levels. Other initiatives for women and girls (in or beyond Alberta) may consider including greater diversity of sport representation to ensure organizations at all levels are

involved in advancing their policies, programs, and cultures to be more supportive and inclusive of women and girls' sport participation.

Third, myself and Dr. Culver did not become involved with the AWiSL until about one year into the program. Having been involved from the onset of the program, there may have been additional opportunities for data collection and contributions in terms of how the initiative evolved over the full two and a half year period. This may have also enabled the collection of data from sport leaders who ended their participation in the initiative early. Collecting these accounts and diving deeper into the various needs of sport leaders to maintain their involvement in this type of initiative may be insightful for future iterations. Specifically, learning about the different forms of social capital (see Putnam, 2000 for further information) that created value (such as potential value) for the sport leaders, could direct the types of activities integrated into future programs. Moreover, our collection of data from the sport organizations (beyond the sport leaders) was limited. Setting up supplementary opportunities to generate the perspectives of others in sport organizations over a few years may also be insightful in capturing the various stakeholders' experiences of this initiative, to provide more of a landscape perspective and obtain a stronger sense of the value created (i.e., enabling, strategic, and orienting value). Additionally, capturing data over a few years may create stronger links between the numerous examples of increased confidence and actual increases in gender equity and leadership diversity. In other words, this would enable researchers to see if the increases in confidence experienced by the participants led to more women taking on leadership roles and having a stronger voice, or perhaps a greater number of girls participating in sport. On a final note, having been involved in the CoP from the beginning may have provided us with the opportunity to frame the initiative using Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) VCF. Framing has been suggested as an

effective method for intentionally designing and planning activities to engage in social learning (Duarte, Culver, & Paquette, 2020; Culver, Kraft, & Cayer, 2020) which may have furthered the value created through this initiative. For example, having learned early on that building confidence and voice was key to many of the members of the CoP, an assertiveness activity may have been integrated into a meeting.

Finally, future research should prioritize the overall diversity of the sport leaders, mentors, and others involved in social learning initiative to ensure all voices are heard. The CoP was overwhelmingly comprised of white women and men from a specific socio-economic bracket. Prioritizing the inclusion of different perspectives and experiences from across sport, with an emphasis on intersectionality, may yield other important results and provide additional understandings of the needs of women and girls to better inform our sport system.

Conclusion

The four studies presented in this dissertation collectively demonstrated the implications of planning, implementing, and evaluating a social learning initiative to support an increase in gender equity, leadership development/diversity, and knowledge transfer across the Canadian sport system. The findings contribute to our understanding of how to develop and foster programming to support women and girls in all roles in sport. Article One provided insight into the systematic levels which may be leveraged to advance women in their leadership positions in coaching, as well as the importance of integrating male allies to further support women's learning opportunities. Article Two demonstrated the potential of coupling an action learning and social learning approach to enable social learning leaders' development of their leadership capabilities, as well as the importance of cultivating spaces for women to network and learn from each other in their journeys to leadership development. Article Three detailed the theoretical

contributions of fostering a CoP of femininity for the development of sport leaders' leadership skills. Article Four highlighted the actual gender-equity-related changes which occurred across the province of Alberta in terms of policy and programming, as a result of the sport leaders' implementation of their gender equity projects. This article also shed light on the impacts of these programs from multiple perspectives. As well, the potential of going beyond the coaching context with the Ecological Intersectional Model and using this model to conduct research with women and girls across multiple levels of sport was addressed.

These four articles contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of women and girls in sport and provide suggestions for additional research opportunities to continue empowering and supporting the increase in gender equity, leadership development/diversity, and knowledge transfer across sport. As we move forward with the CAC and continue to spark interest in the CoP/LoP concepts across the sport landscape, it is our hope that the successes of social learning will develop and expand women and girls' sport and leadership participation opportunities. Considering there is still much work to be done in both the academic and practical fields of women and girls in sport, this dissertation aimed to inspire future research and on-the-ground initiatives to provide this population with equitable access to the many offerings in the field of sport across Canada. With greater representation of women and girls, there is an opportunity for future generations to see themselves reflected in a more inclusive sporting culture. Furthermore, the articles in this dissertation advance our understanding of social learning spaces as a mechanism for broader changes in sport settings, and leave us with additional questions to be answered. What will these gender equity (or other) initiatives look like in the long term: In five years from now? Ten years from now? Without the support of government funding and social learning consultants? Although we were able to capture 18 months of growth

and change, the impact of such an initiative may continue to be studied and questions may continue to be answered for years to come.

Statement of Contribution

I, Erin Kraft was responsible for gathering and analyzing all data collected for the four articles in this dissertation, along with writing the papers and this dissertation in its entirety. Dr. Diane M. Culver reviewed and provided feedback for all parts of this dissertation and played an integral role in the shaping and organizing the four articles. Although the focus of my research changed over the course of four years, Dr. Penny Werthner and Dr. Pierre Trudel provided important feedback during my proposal defense to strengthen my understanding of social learning theory, which informed the final research. Dr. Cari Din provided feedback for Articles One, Three, and Four to ensure the descriptions of the AWiSL program were accurate; she also suggested modifications for the use of conceptual frameworks and general editing notes. Isabelle Cayer from the Coaching Association of Canada also provided feedback in terms of program accuracy for Articles Three & Four and general editing notes.

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Appendices

Appendix A

AWiSL List of Activities

Dates	Activities
September 2017	First Gender Equality Network Canada (GENC) meeting: Toronto, ON
October 2017	Kick-off meeting in person, setting the stage, presentation from women on leadership and low participation in sport (girls and women), planning and time commitments, established pods
November 2017 – January 2018	Individual meetings (once per month) and pods once per month—project plans were due on January 31 2018
February 2018	Webinar 1: Check-in with CoP to share one thing they are excited about and one thing they are anxious about—mention of more whole CoP interactions was brought up on the call. We tasked the project leaders to propose something—some people didn’t know where to find the meeting link and others could not hear or access to participate
March 2018	CoP Webinar: A Look in the Leadership Mirror Leadership webinar with Cari Din
April 2018	In person practical session on effective presentations, elevator pitch and practicing presenting their projects with feedback
April 2018	Second GENC meeting: Halifax, NS
May 2018 – May 2019	Program mentors continued one-on-one meetings and “pod” meetings with project leaders
June 2018	CoP Webinar: Leadership #2—Conflict Gears with Cari Din
July 2018	CoP Webinar: Leadership #3—Conflict Gears Part 2 with Cari Din

August 2018	CoP Webinar: Truth vs. Harmony—Shawnee Harle. Opt-in leadership development course
September 2018	CoP Webinar: Kathy Hare—Grant Writing 101
October 2018	In-person meeting: Inclusion theme (leadership), Evaluation framework, Planning for next steps, re-establish CoP engagement
October 2018	Third GENC meeting: Vancouver, BC
February 2019	Knowledge transfer opportunity at the Canada Games in Red Deer, Alberta
April 2019	Fourth GENC meeting and poster presentation: Saskatoon, SK
April 2019	CoP Webinar: Introduction to the program evaluation
May 2019	In person practical session on program evaluations, Knowledge transfer opportunity at the Alberta Sport Leadership Conference in Edmonton, Alberta
October 2019	In-person meeting Calgary, AB
November 2019	Fifth GENC meeting: Montreal, QC
January 2020	Sport 4 Life Conference
April 2020	CoP online meeting - Judy Riege
May 2020	Report on the program findings

Appendix B

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program: Final Evaluation

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program: Final Evaluation Report



uOttawa

University of Ottawa
June 2020
Erin Kraft, PhD(c) & Diane M. Culver, PhD



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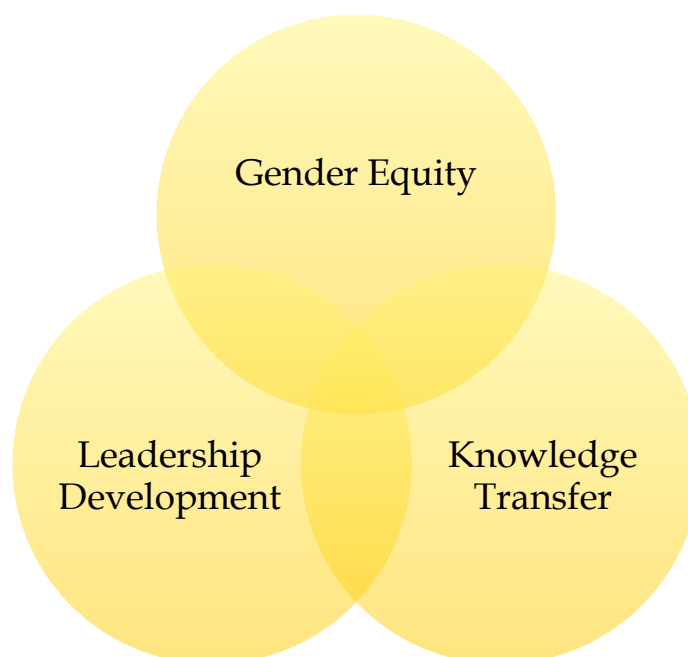
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Background

The Government of Canada (GC) has committed to delegating strategic investments across the Canadian sport system. One such investment is to fund projects that provide opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport; these roles include athletes, coaches, and leaders (Canadian Heritage, 2019a). Moreover, the GC's *Working Group on Gender Equity and Sport* recently recommended that initiatives be implemented to increase the number of women coaches (Canadian Heritage, 2019b). Thus, initiatives are needed to support this recommendation and the GC in reaching their target of achieving gender equality in sport at every level by 2035.

Over the past few decades, Canada has played an important role in supporting women across sport systems through policy developments (Thibault, & Harvey, 2013). There have also been notable increases in female participation in some levels of sport, such as high performance. However, women in coaching and leadership roles remain underrepresented (Demers, Thibault, Brière, & Culver, 2019). To address these disparities in both research and on-the-ground initiatives, a social learning initiative was planned and implemented. The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) aimed to increase gender equity, leadership diversity, and transfer knowledge at all levels of sport in Alberta. The following section describes this collaborative initiative between the Coaching Association of Canada, Alberta Sport Connection, and the University of Ottawa.

Program Outcomes



Executive Summary

Upon receiving funding from a sector of the federal government, Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, to implement an initiative to support women and gender equity in sport, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) partnered with the Province of Alberta as a designated region to carry out this two-and-a-half-year project. Alberta was selected as the province for this initiative because they had the capacity to support the program; and it was thought the program would benefit their organizations and enhance the work they were already doing. The AWiSL had three main outcomes: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity, and knowledge transfer across the province. This would be achieved through a social learning initiative (to be discussed below) in collaboration with sport organizations across Alberta. Sport organizations were invited to apply online through the Province's Multi Sport Organization (Alberta Sport Connection; ASC) by submitting a project plan to increase gender equity and leadership diversity in their own sport organizations. Twelve sport leaders and their organizations were accepted to be a part of this initiative. The sport leaders all held an administrative position at a sport organization, with positions ranging from coaching development coordinator, to executive director. The types of organizations varied from regional sport organizations, to multisport organizations, to sport clubs. The successful applications/organizations and their projects are as listed in Table 1. In addition, to the sport leaders, this initiative included six mentors who were recruited to assist with the facilitation of the program and to support the sport leaders in achieving their project goals. These mentors were chosen for their backgrounds and leadership experiences across sport. One of the mentors, Isabelle Cayer from the CAC, was the project lead for the initiative. The six mentors are as listed in Table 2.

This group of 12 sport leaders and six mentors met approximately once a month (in-person or online) to participate in activities to support them in achieving their project goals and building their own leadership capacities. For a more in-depth description of the AWiSL activities, see Appendices A and B. It is also important to note that initially 15 sport leaders were accepted to be a part of the AWiSL but three had to end their participation early for various reasons including changes in work locations or positions.

The results of the final evaluation demonstrated increases in all three of the program outcomes and showed several different types of value created through this social learning initiative. Gender equity increases included: the number of girls participating in sport programs, the number of women registered to all-female sports teams, and the number of women-only professional development opportunities. Leadership diversity/development changes included: improved confidence, improved leadership skills, increased awareness of leadership capacity and influence, and increased leadership opportunities. In terms of knowledge transfer, developments have included: publications in academic and practical journals, presentations at conferences and other professional meetings, the development of a how-to model for social learning

initiatives, and increases in collaborations and relationships between sport organizations across the province. Finally, there were eight types of value created, which will be discussed throughout this evaluation. In addition to these increases/changes, the researchers also provide examples of challenges and barriers experienced by the sport leaders and mentors. The following section introduces the social learning concept that underpins the AWiSL initiative.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



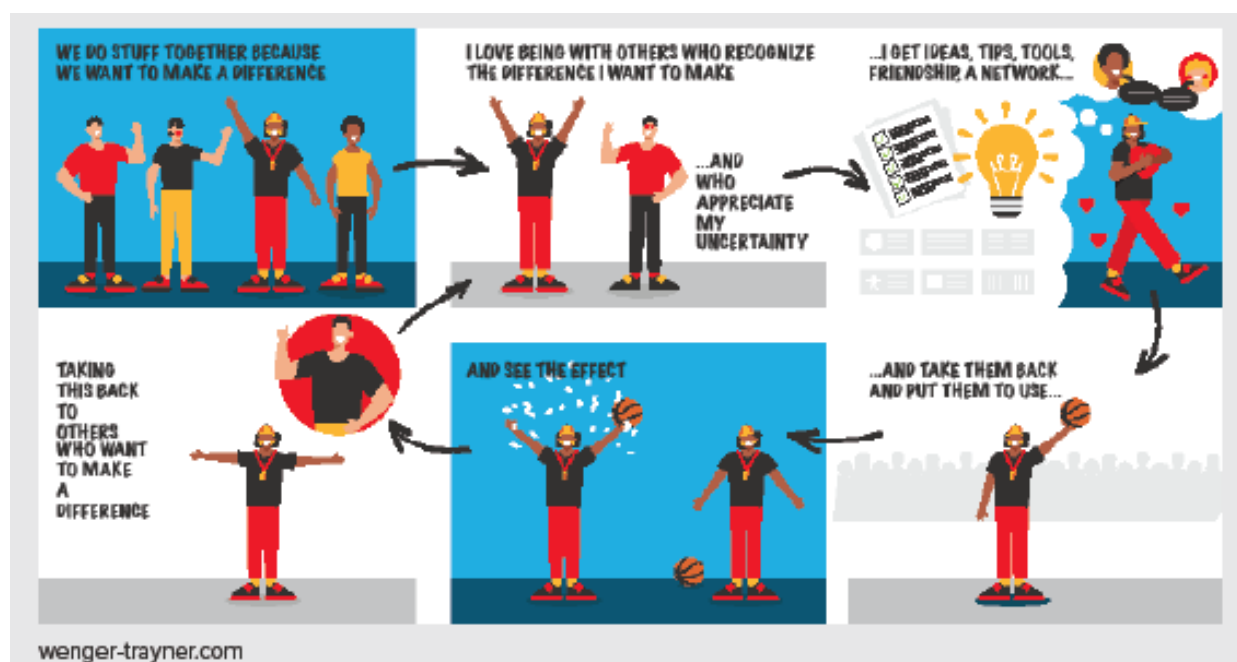
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Tables removed to maintain anonymity

Summary of Social Learning Theory

In 1991, Lave and Wenger published the book *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* in which learning was seen as being part of a social community with an apprenticeship model where newcomers are given the legitimacy to join a community and gradually develop their practice overtime to become full members of the community. Examples of such communities included midwives and tailors. The theorists considered this phase of social learning to be the first of their continuously evolving theory. In 1998, Wenger expounded on the second phase with his book titled *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. This second iteration centred in much more detail on the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP), which in the focus is on collaborative meaning making and negotiating knowledge as a collective group. CoPs are glued together by three main tenants: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire; and are populated by groups of people with a shared passion or set of problems.

The CoP concept has resonated across many fields including education (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Yang, 2009) and coaching (e.g., Bertram & Gilbert, 2011; Culver & Trudel, 2008; Stoszkowski & Collins, 2017). Considering the AWiSL was created with a group of collaborative individuals who shared a passion to change sport across the province, cultivating a CoP was a fitting initiative. For additional information regarding the underpinnings of this theory and implications in coaching and sport, see Appendix C. The figure below portrays the experience of a CoP member.

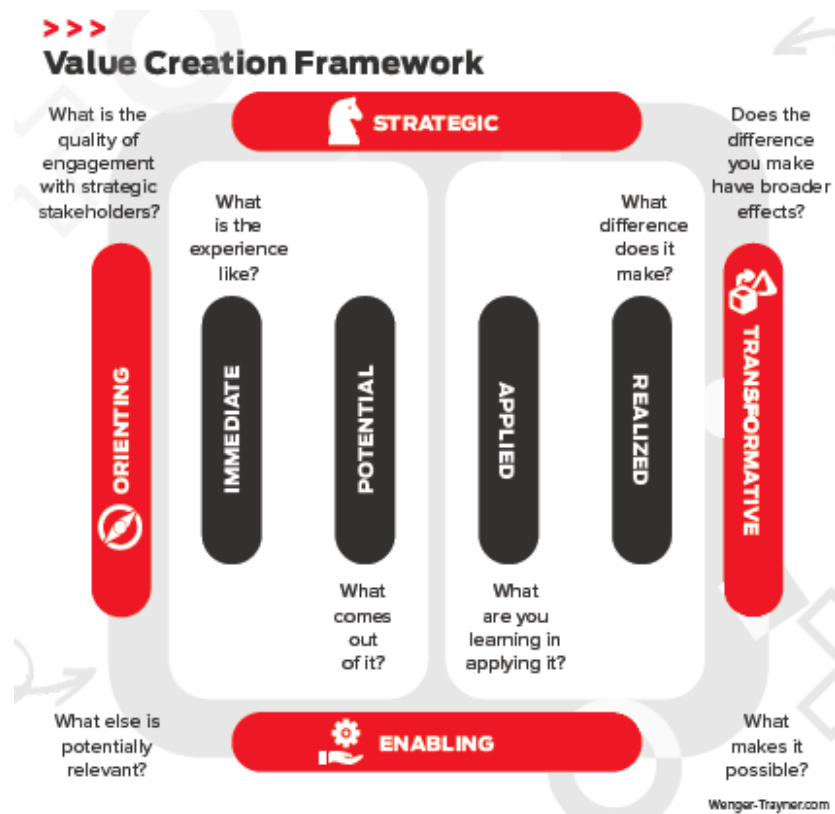


Evaluation and Methods

In 2018, the AWiSL project lead (Isabelle Cayer) collaborated with PhD candidate, Erin Kraft, and Associate Professor, Dr. Diane M. Culver from the University of Ottawa to develop a program evaluation of this initiative. The main results of this report are the findings of a longitudinal (1.5 years) evaluation with a focus on the three project outcomes: gender equity, leadership diversity, and knowledge transfer. Considering social learning theory is the area of expertise of these researchers, they also assessed the perceived value of the social learning intervention using Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat's (2011) *Value Creation Framework*.

The Value Creation Framework (VCF; see figure below) was developed as a tool to assess and promote the value created through participation in a CoP. More specifically, Wenger et al. (2011) created narrative templates, for researchers to collect community members' stories of their experiences in the CoP. The perceived value of the stories is then assessed through five value cycles: immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative value. Wenger and Colleagues (2011) suggested the use of this framework in an effort to identify value that may be challenging to capture during social learning:

As human experiences that evolve over time, communities and networks have stories - how they started, what has happened since, what participants are trying to achieve. It is in the context of these narratives that one can appreciate what learning is taking place (or not) and what value is created (or not) (p.15).



Thus, the researchers found it important to collect the sport leaders', mentors', and others' stories overtime to capture these narratives and create a picture of the value created through a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Wenger-Trayner, Wenger-Trayner, Cameron, Eryigit-Madzwamuse, and Hart (2017) revealed two additional cycles: strategic value and enabling value. These cycles consider the value of stakeholder involvement in CoPs. They account for strategic conversations with and supports from stakeholders, which often result in enabling value. Enabling value, in turn, can contribute value to the CoP in other cycles. For additional information regarding the VCF see Appendix D.

Data Collection

Upon receiving ethical approval from the University of Ottawa's Research and Ethics Board mid-2018, the researchers began developing a data collection plan (see Appendix E for a detailed plan of data collection points). The following data collection tools were utilized at various points over the 1.5-year period (for examples of data collection tools, see Appendix F):

- Interviews
- Observations
- Surveys
- Informal discussions
- Organizational data

At times data were collected face-to-face during in-person meetings, whereas other modes of data collection were conducted virtually (e.g., Zoom, and survey monkey). In terms of the participants in this evaluation, data were collected from the following:

- 12 sport leaders
- 6 mentors
- Participants from the sport leader's projects
- Individuals from the sport leader's organizations

All the participants completed and signed a consent form prior to their engagement in this evaluation and were made aware that they could choose to end their participation at any time without consequence.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed iteratively throughout data collection using Braun, Clarke and Weate's (2016) process of thematic analysis. In total, the researchers had 728 pages of data (including interview transcriptions, observation data, surveys, etc.) that were

either transcribed verbatim or using NVivo transcription software. In addition, each sport leader completed a final evaluation form to provide the researchers with a high-level outline of their project goals and subsequent achievements (or challenges) to supplement the other forms of data. To access these project evaluations, see Appendix G. Following data collection, data were uploaded into NVivo analysis software to assist with the analytical process. This process consists of phases 1-2: familiarization and coding; phases 3-5: theme development, refinement, and naming; and phase 6: write up. The next section provides the results of the evaluation and addresses gender equity, leadership diversity, knowledge transfer, value created, and challenges/barriers.

Results





Leadership Diversity/ Development



Leadership Diversity/Development

The next section will present the following participant groups and discussion points.

Participant Group	Discussion Points
Sport Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for developing confidence - Improved leadership skills - Self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence - Increased leadership opportunities - Men supporting women in leadership development
Sport Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A selection of quotes from sport organization staff discussing the leadership development seen in the sport leaders
Mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning from others - Having a strong and adaptable project lead - Engaging in and embracing uncertainty

Sport Leaders

As mentioned above, there is an imbalance in the number of women securing leadership positions across sport and in some cases, women in these roles are declining (Acosta & Carpenter, 2019). Women may experience discriminatory treatment in accessing resources (Greenhaus, Parasurman, & Wormley, 1990), along with many other barriers (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), which may limit their entrée to leadership opportunities (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Moreover, men are often in “gatekeeper” positions in sport and are more inclined to give leadership opportunities to other men (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). A focus of the AWiSL was to support the sport leaders in their access to leadership development opportunities that may not otherwise have been available. The sport leaders spoke to specific leadership development themes including support for developing their confidence; improved leadership skills; self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence; increased leadership opportunities; and men supporting women in leadership development. To access a publication written specifically to discuss these themes, see Appendix H. The following section provides a selection of quotes from the sport leaders stories to demonstrate their leadership development through their participation in the AWiSL program.

Support for developing confidence

Sport Leader 1:

“I definitely would say I have more confidence now. I think we had a lot of opportunities to stand up in front of a group of people and talk about something that we were passionate about, in a lot of different formats. Lots of those were formally prepared, lots of them were informal. So, I have a lot more confidence maybe kind of speaking like my truth or what’s important to me. That’s another thing I think I really took away [from the CoP]... the thing about our presentations and our slides, and not having a lot of words, and how when you stand up there you should just be talking from your heart or talk about what’s important to you. And I think even outside of just presenting, I can take that to my every day when I’m in meetings, or when I’m in different groups just talking about what I know or what I believe in more confidently.”

Sport Leader 2:

“I definitely have prospered, the confidence I guess is the big one knowing that the social aspect for me, it’s confidence. And I’m quite an introvert, so to be put into that position where I have to socialize, and I have to do that, it’s been very beneficial in that sense. It’s forced me to get out of the shell a bit.”

Improved leadership skills

Sport Leader 3:

“I’ve definitely developed on the communication side; again just like always being reminded how important communication is and the way you communicate, and different people will respond in different ways. And communication, I know I’ve kind of always considered a strength of mine and relationship building, but at the same time I feel like I’ve developed more of a professionalism over the last two years. And knowing, like I used to get offended really easily and now I’ll sit back and listen and be like, ‘OK is this really something to be offended about? Or respond to? Or do I just kind of let this one go?’”

This same sport leader then had the opportunity to apply some of her new skills developed through the CoP in her practice. She continued:

“Yeah, we actually just recently, like just before our last meeting took place, my supervisor was let go and I was then assuming the role of the head of our [sport] department. So, there were a lot of pieces in there about communication, and leadership, and organization that I had to put into practice right away.”

Sport Leader 4:

“Just in everyday interactions with our team. I think the biggest thing is, it has made me more comfortable in my authentic leadership style, which is huge... because I am communicating better with the team, upwards and downwards like all the way around, three-sixty. Yeah, we are more effective as a team. And personally, yes because it makes me feel more confident and comfortable in who I am.”

Self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence

Sport Leader 5:

“Because I was a female leader heading [her project], I think my role inspired other women. I actually heard that from a lot from other women. I even heard it from mothers who I would see [participating in the sport] because we encourage parents to come because we need additional people to be at the end of the group; so we try to have a very inclusive program. And so, I noticed that a mom would say ‘You’re the one that inspired me to get into biking, like I haven’t ridden since I was young’. So, I think I never really thought of myself as a leader; I knew I was beginning a group, but I thought of it more as an organizer type of a leader. I didn’t know that I was a female leader that people looked up to.”

Sport Leader 6:

“Well I think one thing that I’ve learned from [the AWiSL mentors] for sure is really being self-aware and thinking about, you know, ‘Why am I feeling like this and why am I reacting like this? How do I want to react to this? How am I going to be the most effective kind of leader in this situation?’ So, I think those very specific practical tools.... ‘Why am I feeling like this?’ You know, ‘How can I adjust and head in a better direction?’ So yeah, I think just sort of practical

everyday kind of tools and thought processes to put into place. I think has made me more effective in my role.”

Increased leadership opportunities

Sport Leader 3:

“I mean being part of this Community of Practice, my first year in this role I was standing in front of our entire group of Athletic Directors, and board and executives, presenting on the importance of developing female coaches in all of our sport. And without this Community of Practice, I would not have been in a position to do that. I would have just been a body sitting around the table raising my hand to vote every once in a while.”

Sport Leader 7:

“So, my role evolved with the organization. You know at first... it was like, I kind of had a hand in it. And then [the CEO] was like, ‘You know what, I don’t think I can own this. I need you to own this with [BB] supporting’. So, I think for both [BB] and me, we were able to then dive into our academic backgrounds, our previous and current experiences of being in school and being able to talk to researchers. You know it was just something that wouldn’t have happened otherwise or at least not within this timeline.”

Men supporting women in leadership development

Sport Leader 8:

“I’m the head coach of the Ontario women’s team right now... We are actually running a bunch of women’s projects this week... There’s a bunch of women’s leadership projects going on....

And it’s amazing having moved across the country, sort of from the Alberta Sport Women and

Leadership Program, in the challenges that we're facing and trying to address with the projects out there; and listening to some of the challenges out here that our organization is hearing and trying to plan out the projects this week; they are so similar."

Sport Leader 9:

"We were able to push to the point where we now have these two women as certified learning facilitators and are now going to be able to go in and deliver a course which we've not been in a position to do before. So, for us it has helped push that agenda forward. By putting these two women in a role where they will now have influence over this generation, that's next. You know, for example, generations of coaches coming in by virtue of the fact that we have them certified and their going to go deliver that course; and it was all really through the support and the interest behind... it was from this program itself."

Sport Organizations

In addition to the sport leader's perceptions of their leadership development through being a part of the AWiSL, individuals from their sport organizations had specific quotes to mirror the changes seen in the sport leaders. Below is a selection of quotes from "others" who work with the sport leaders in their organizations.

Sport Organization 1:

"CC has excellent skills as a leader. She is able to encourage and promote both women and men in our organization. What I have noticed is the increase in CC's confidence both in dealing with leaders and participants, as well as dealing with organizational issues... I believe the AWiSL program has provided CC a range of skills to move forward with her own growth and the confidence to provide mentorship to members of our club."

Sport Organization 2:

"Throughout the duration of this program DD was provided the opportunity to hire new staff and add the supervision of employees to her portfolio. Since that time, DD has been leading staff as well as a group of 10-15 volunteers on a day to day basis. She has a better understanding of her influence within the Female game and the organization, and has used her acquired skills and knowledge to positively impact female [participants]."

Sport Organization 3:

"EE has improved her presentation and public skills. She has become an asset to [the organization] when it comes to partnership development...I'm guessing some of that can be attributed to the leadership skills that she learned through this program!...Seeing EE grow in terms of her confidence to deliver presentations has had a really positive impact on our organization and I think this is a key aspect of sport leadership. You need to be able to

communicate your ideas to others (and not just those that you know and are familiar with). We are really proud of EE and the work she has done through the AWiSL project! Thank you!”

Mentors

Another example of leadership development was seen in the mentors facilitating the AWiSL. Considering that facilitation is an essential role in the sustainment of CoPs (Culver, Kraft, & Duarte, 2020; Bertram et al., 2017), it was important that the project lead and mentors actively advance their leadership capabilities to support the AWiSL. The project lead and mentors (in this section referred to as ‘social learning leaders’ or ‘SLLs’ when referenced as a group) collaboratively took on facilitation roles throughout the 2.5-year program. For example, Isabelle facilitated many of the whole group development opportunities for the entire CoP, whereas large group activities were facilitated by one or other of the mentors. The mentors also led ‘pods’ where each mentor was grouped with approximately three sport leaders, so that they could support the sport leaders in achieving their projects goals in a small group or on-on-one setting.

To support the leadership growth of the SLLs, they initially participated in a training session with the Wenger-Trayners (the CoP theorists) to develop their social learning leadership capabilities. In addition, they met approximately once a month to engage in discussions, share ideas, and problem solve issues pertaining to their pods or the greater CoP. These constant interactions enabled them to grow and learn from each other while navigating their leadership roles. The SLLs spoke to specific social learning leadership themes including learning from others; having a strong and adaptable project lead; and engaging with and embracing uncertainty. To access a manuscript written specifically to discuss the SLLs development, see Appendix I. The following paragraph provides a selection of quotes from the SLLs stories to demonstrate their social learning leadership development through their facilitation of the AWiSL program.

Learning from others

Mentor 1:

“I will say that my greatest education has been in observing. The way everyone is trying to make this work for themselves; and observing really different perspectives and different ways of being, especially in relation to leadership and especially into how to navigate responsibility.”

Mentor 2:

“I think it [learning from the other SLLs] just reinforced how I wanted to engage with the [sport leaders] and more so was around troubleshooting... I mean [two of the mentors] are two

completely different leaders, like FF is really action energy, GG is reflective... makes you think.

You know I think at times, more GG makes me think about what I'm doing in my own life and in this project, and FF keeps you motivated if you're on the right track."

Having a strong and adaptable project lead

Mentor 1:

"Honestly, if somebody in the mentor team had said 'Hey Isabelle could you do this for us mentors.' She would have done it right... gee I can't understate how good it's been to have someone at the helm who is open to every idea; people say something and she'll go 'oh yeah let's look into that'... people have to realize that the one who is cutting the cheque has to have a very, very strong level of confidence and ability to listen to all the ideas, and she does."

Mentor 2:

"I think we had everything we needed. Isabelle was always available. There was always like creativity around whether we did webinars or sessions, the calls we had with the other leaders, you know were always productive; lots of great ideas there."

Engaging in and embracing uncertainty

Mentor 1:

"It takes much more patience, right? And comfort with a mess [facilitating]. I think it takes a lot of comfort with everyone moving in a different way, at a different speed than you do... You do have to let people come and go and it's not the same as a weekend course; but yeah, [the sport

leaders] have to discover through experience and their own learning, and I think most of us weren't socialized to lead that way."

She continued:

"It can be difficult to know what your impact is when you do this kind of leadership and so it's important to be comfortable paying attention to the subjective and serendipitous, that we can't measure with a number, because I think that's where the really meaningful stuff has happened for me."

Mentor 3:

"After you get the self-awareness, the self-acceptance is there. Just because I rock doesn't mean I'm going to get every horse to drink, right? And I'm okay with that, which is real growth. That's good for me because I'm a perfectionist... I don't think it's changed what I do. I think it's just helped me do it better because it's giving me a deeper understanding of... 'what do I need, what do I need from people around me in order to feel valued?' ... all I can do is bring myself to the table every day."

Gender Equity



Gender Equity

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
Sport Leader Projects	- Sport organization gender equity advances
Organizational Buy-In and Long-Term Investments	- Organizational commitments and investments for the sport leaders' projects
Participant Testimonies	- A selection of participants quotes discussing their experiences participating in the sport leaders' projects
Male Perspectives	- A selected male participant perspective discussing his experience with the sport leaders' project
Sport Leader Perspectives	- A selection of sport leaders quotes discussing their experiences developing and implementing their gender equity focused projects

Sport Leader Projects

In mid-2018 the CAC conducted a needs assessment (see Appendix J for results) with the sport leader's organizations. Only 36.4% of the organizations referenced women and girls in their strategic or annual plans; and 4.8% had written goals, targets, or requirements in policies or bylaws for women on the Board. Over the past 2.5 years these sport organizations have reached over 790 (based on the sport leader's final evaluations, see Appendix G) women, girls, and other marginalized populations through their projects. This has been achieved through program and policy development, mentorship programs, and research projects. Although it is challenging to provide exact numbers pertaining to impact of every project as many of the sport leader's projects are still ongoing, Table 3 below represents the projects implemented by the 12 sport leaders through the AWiSL and their preliminary results.

Table 3.

Sport Organization	Gender Equity Advances
Organization 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through an interview with 10 women, a sport leader studied parasport inclusion from the perspective of women experiencing disability. This resulted in the production of a paper (to be submitted for publication) to highlight the two primary study themes: (1) within (para)sport and (2) beyond (para)sport. These two themes broadly captured participants' perspectives across a continuum of inclusion to exclusion in sport.
Organization 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U14 girls were brought together across the province, for a mentorship weekend lead by women alumni of the organization. Over two years, the number of athletes increased from 40 to over 100. - Five mentor coaches facilitated group learning sessions for younger women coaches.
Organization 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women - The number of female participants have increased three programs - Increase in the number of women instructors or assistant instructors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A female facilitator has been trained for certification
Organization 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased the number of Indigenous youth participating in the organization's programming by over 100 participants.
Organization 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in female coaches for the following: women registered to female teams, and achieving higher level certifications - Introduction to coaching clinic developed for mothers with children playing the sport - Developed a female apprentice coach program
Organization 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase from one to four learning facilitators in the province – two of whom are women.
Organization 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in female coaches - Five mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women
Organization 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developed programming for New Canadian and Indigenous girls - Provided coach development workshops for women
Organization 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implemented a mentorship program for women coaches - Mentees continued coaching with their respective teams the following season
Organization 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five women-only clinics have been run for coaches and attended by 87 women - Now streaming girl's sport games
Organization 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implemented a training program to train and certify 10 women coach developers - Implemented four women-only referee training programs attended by 161 women
Organization 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organization is working with researchers to examine programme data and current curriculum to inform future curriculum development for events and programming for girls. They have developed key findings and recommendations to implement into their programming.

Organizational Buy-in and Long-term Investments

It is evident that over the past 2.5 years, the sport leader's projects have left an impact on the Alberta sport system. Another important piece that came through the data was the long-term commitments and investments seen by the sport leader's home organizations to support these projects beyond the scope of the AWiSL program. Initially, each sport leader was provided with a one-time installment of \$3000 to support the implementation of their projects. Since receiving this initial support, the sport organizations have committed to allocating resources to these projects to sustain them long-term. In some cases, this is a financial investment, while in other cases this investment is seen through policy changes and access to resources. What they do have in common, is the implication of the organizations seeing the value of the sport leader's projects and the importance of maintaining them long-term. Table 4. Provides examples of these commitments.

Table 4.

Organization	Long-Term Commitment
Organization 2	Speed Sisters is now supported by Alberta Alpines Legends Club (philanthropic group) to continue annually hosting the program
Organization 5	In 2019-2020 it was recommended that registered female hockey teams have a female coach. In 2020-2021 this will become a requirement
Organization 10	As of 2017 at least one female coach must be registered to all female teams
Organization 11	Female referee training program has now been embedded into the organization's regular programming

Participant Testimonies

In addition to seeing the actual changes that have occurred across Alberta sport (i.e., project implementation and organizational commitments), accounts were collected from individuals who participated in these projects to illustrate some of the less tangible impacts of this initiative. The following is a selection of quotes from participants who were impacted by the 12 sport leader's projects. To access a publication specifically written about one of the 12 projects, see Appendix K.

Organization 9

“With the help of the [program] and the [organization] coaching staff, I was able to gain such a vast array of knowledge and experiences far sooner than I would have ever thought I could. This program and the coaches gave me the confidence in my coaching ability and showed so much trust in me that I can't imagine a day when I'm done coaching anytime soon. I look forward to being back on the [organization] Coaching Staff for the upcoming 2019-2020 season!”

Organization 11

“I enjoyed the program as it gives us a freedom of speech zone without judgement. That we are able to empower women referees no matter age or skill. I would attend the event again!”

“It was a welcoming experience being with all females, felt comfortable to ask, even for common plays, to clarify calls. Really good day.”

Organization 11

“To me a big part of it is the connections that I’ve made with some of the other participants in the group. So just having different people to bounce different ideas off of when you’re maybe struggling with something. It’s given me other options to look to for help.”

And, from another participant:

“I think the program helped a lot... maybe it gave me more confidence to keep pushing through things that maybe normally I would have given up on.”

Organization 8

“I was that kid that didn’t want to [participate in the sport] because if it did it wrong or if I fell, then I was scared of the other kids making fun of me. But now, I’m a [sport] leader here... feels great, it just makes you feel happy.”

Male Perspectives

With the focus of the AWiSL centred on gender equity and leadership diversity, the role of male allies played an important part in the success of this initiative. As mentioned previously, men often hold “gatekeeper” positions in sport (Taylor & Hardin, 2016) and make important decisions when it comes to promoting gender equity in sport. The following section provides a quote from a male participant who played a facilitation role in one of the women-only development projects. His testimony illuminates some of the impacts this program has had in terms of raising awareness of gender inequities in sport.

Male Participant

“I learned during the first weekend that there’s not enough instances of sponsorship for women where there are individuals that have the capacity to open doors, that are prepared to open the doors and get out of the way. And so, I’m a believer in equality of opportunity and if we don’t create and ensure that there’s sufficient opportunities for women to get similar types of training, to get similar types of opportunities as men might get, and to get the, you know, the necessary supports to help them along that pathway, we don’t have any hope of having an increase in leaders who are women, in my opinion.”

Sport Leader Perspectives

This final section focuses on the sport leader's experiences participating in an initiative that supports the movement towards gender equity across the province. The sport leader's quotes show their newfound sense of empowerment to create the changes they wanted to see and the impacts that this initiative has on their organizations and daily jobs.

Sport Leader 6:

“You know, to feel like you're being part of something that's actually going to make things better for women and girls is it's a good feeling. So, it's nice coming to work, sort of giving me a little spark.”

Sport Leader 10:

“Well, I think it's just, getting the momentum and that we are putting emphasis on women in sport and leadership roles and once we get the momentum going then it will just keep growing. We're showing our membership that it's a priority.”

Sport Leader 5:

“So, I'm a [sport A] coach but an opportunity came up for me to coach a [sport B] group, they were short [sport B] coaches and just from the amount of leadership that I've gotten through the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership...one of the topics that we talked about was how men will often times volunteer to do something even though they don't have all of the knowledge because women typically don't until they have majority of the knowledge. And so, I was in that situation where I felt like, well ‘I really am no expert in [sport B], I'm not sure that I should be coaching’ but then I remembered that information that was provided and thought ‘Oh! I'm doing what all women do’ and so I totally went for it.”

Knowledge Transfer



Knowledge Transfer

Further to increasing gender equity and leadership diversity across the province, the third key outcome of this project was to enable and support knowledge transfer opportunities. The project lead was deliberate in facilitating these opportunities both within and beyond the AWiSL. Examples of this knowledge transfer included setting up presentations to disseminate knowledge from the AWiSL to the greater sport community, writing and publishing scholarly papers, developing a how-to model for other organizations wishing to implement a similar social learning initiative, and enabling the sport leaders and mentors to engage in knowledge transfer between each other to support the sport leaders in achieving their project goals and developing as leaders. The following section provides an overview of these knowledge transfer opportunity.

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
How-to Model	- Introduces a how-to model and accompanying step-by-step guide for developing and sustaining CoPs
Presentations and Posters	- A list of presentations and posters from this program
Publications	- A list of publications and manuscripts from this program
Examples of AWiSL Knowledge Transfer	- A selection of knowledge transfer examples from the sport leaders and mentors: - Learning from others - Gaining resources and supports from the community - The ripple effect

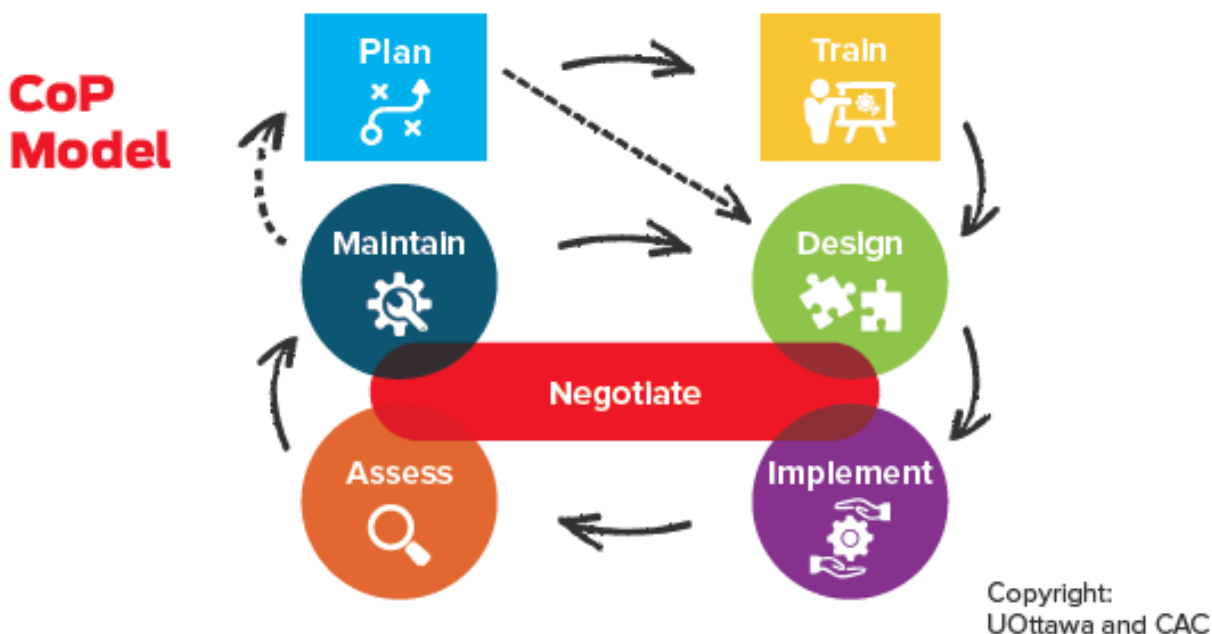
How-to Model

The following how-to model was a key development to achieve the goal of transferring knowledge across the sport systems. This model and accompanying step-by-step guide (see Appendix L) were designed with the intention of providing organizations with a model and framework for implementing a high-value, low-cost initiative to connect people with a shared passion for learning. The two researchers and project lead collaboratively created this evidence-based model through their experiences with the AWiSL CoP, and other experiences framing and facilitating CoPs across sport.



Communities of Practice

It is important to note that although these steps are in an order, CoPs are constantly changing and evolving, so these steps may overlap or may need to be revisited on more than one occasion. PLAN and TRAIN are preliminary steps, which occasionally may need to be revisited. The regular cycle of the CoP comprises DESIGN, IMPLEMENT, ASSESS, MAINTAIN, and then back to DESIGN.



Presentations and Posters

Table 5. provides a list of key presentations and posters presented to various audiences across the sport landscape. These knowledge transfer opportunities often had a practical lens to inspire coaches and other practitioners working directly on the ground-level in sport.

Table 5.

Presentation/Poster	Location
Canada Games 2019	Red Deer, Alberta
Alberta Sport Leadership Conference 2019	Edmonton, Alberta
GENC Meeting 2019 (Appendix N)	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
North American Coach Development Summit 2019	Colorado Springs, Colorado
CAC Partner's Congress 2019	Ottawa, Ontario
Global Coaching Conference 2020	Tokyo, Japan
Canadian Sport 4 Life Summit 2020	Gatineau, Quebec
North American Coach Development Summit 2020	Birmingham, Alabama (Postponed - COVID-19)

Publications

The following papers were written to address both academics and practitioners; each paper focuses on a different aspect of the AWiSL. For example, Culver and colleagues (2019) is largely descriptive in nature and provides readers with insights into the development of the AWiSL, in addition to lessons learned and challenges. Kraft & Culver (submitted) focuses on the action learning approach used by the SLLs to develop their social learning leadership capabilities. Each publication acts as a tool to mobilize the findings from our experiences with the AWiSL.

List of publications¹:

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., & Din, C. (in press). Examining a women-only training program for coach developers. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*. (**Appendix K**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., & Cayer, I. (2020). Nurturing social learning spaces to enhance women in sport leadership programs. *Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching*, 20(2), 1-9. (**Appendix D**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., & Duarte, T. (2020). Social learning in communities and networks as a strategy for on-going coach development. In Callary, B. & Gearity, B. *Coach Education and Development in Sport: Instructional Strategies* (pp. 115-128). New York, NY: Routledge. (**Appendix C**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (2019). The Alberta women in sport leadership project. A social learning intervention for gender equity, leadership development, and knowledge transfer. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 27(2), 110-117. (**Appendix A**)

Kraft, E. & Culver, D.M. (submitted). Using an action learning approach to support social learning leader's development. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. (**Appendix I**)

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (submitted). Navigating the labyrinth of leadership in sport: A community of practice of femininity. *Advancing Women in Leadership*. (**Appendix H**)

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. Increasing gender equity in sport organizations: A look at the impacts of a social learning initiative. Manuscript in preparation. *Journal of Sport for Development*. (**Appendix M**)

¹ These publications are copyrighted, therefore unauthorized sharing is not permitted. Please ask the authors of this report if you wish to use any parts of these papers.

Examples of AWiSL Knowledge Transfer

The final section provides examples of the sport leader's and mentor's experiences engaging in knowledge transfer within and beyond the AWiSL. Below is a graphic to show some of the types of knowledge transfer that have occurred.



For many of the sport leaders specifically, this was their first attempt at implementing a project to support gender equity in their sport organizations. Having access to others enabled them to learn from these others' experiences and expertise to inform their own project plans. Resources were shared between the community members and from presenters who were brought in to facilitate workshops with the community. The sport leaders spoke about some of the long-term effects of their projects and how they continue to transfer knowledge across the province (or nation). The following are a selection of sport leader quotes to show the impacts of having been a part of this social learning initiative where there was constant sharing and co-creation of knowledge. The themes introduced in this section include: learning from others, gaining resources and support from the community, and the ripple effect.

Learning from others

Sport Leader 12:

“Learning from [another sport], where they have a policy in place for coaches and female coaches on the bench for all their teams and just hearing even some of the obstacles they have, even though their coach pools are about 50/50. They still find some of the challenges where the female coaches aren’t actually the ones coaching and aren’t as involved, and they aren’t head coaches. So, just that piece of just going ‘Well, if we just put a policy in place that will solve all our problems’ and of course it doesn’t. So, it’s just seeing those different layers and being able to see some of those different things that if, you know, I was sitting there by myself coming up with this idea I might not have seen that as an obstacle or a barrier.”

Sport Leader 11:

“I think the network and just knowing there are other people who might have already done some of these things, could be helpful and just knowing that there are people who can be contacted is just really helpful.”

Sport Leader 10:

“I think even just being together in person at the different workshops that we participate in, different organizations will bring in a different perspective or have different questions.”

Gaining resources and supports from the community

Sport Leader 5:

“I think probably the information that I’ve gathered through all of the discussions and then not even just in the discussion. But it’s awesome to be able to read different books and you know look at different resources online as well. So like an example of the [sport] team that I’m coaching is there are those parts where we have a talk at the beginning of every session before we even talk about actual [sport]; we talk about behaviour on the court, and how we treat each other, and things like that. That all stems from information that I received about female athletes.”

Sport Leader 2:

“I think the fact that knowing there are other sports and other organizations that have had the same challenges, knowing that they have those, and this is a commonality that I can then push for things; knowing that I’m not pushing an agenda that’s solely for our sport or organization.”

Sport Leader 5:

“Definitely by being a female leader and then having some of the information and knowledge that I’ve gained through this program I’ve been able to use like the mentorship and sort of encouraging other females in sport; and so through that we’ve been able to develop our program and we have like 40% female participation.”

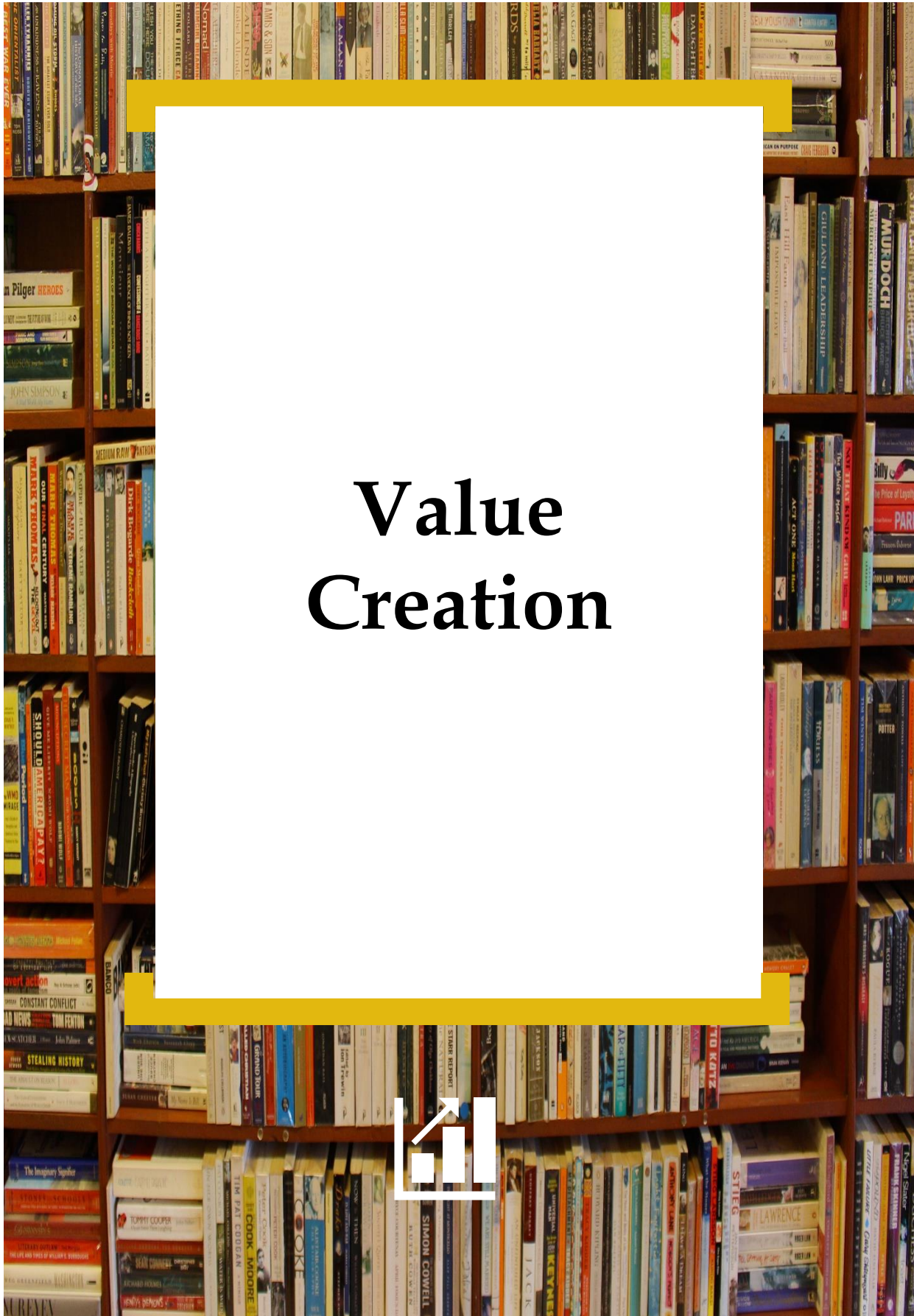
The ripple effect

Sport Leader 6:

“And another really cool thing has been our referee development officer has decided that next year he wants to do an all-female regional course. So, that’s an upgrade course for referees, existing referees, and he is pretty confident that there’s never been an all-female regional level course. So, that’s pretty cool. And he was at meetings on the weekend and talking about it with his provincial counterparts and they are very excited about it. So, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba want to send their female candidates to that course.”

Sport Leader 12:

“Oh yeah, I mean otherwise the other opportunities when organizations like the 15 of us get the opportunity to be in a room together are the Alberta sport conferences, which are held every two years. So, I think being able to be in a room with other sports organizations has created a lot of positive connections. [For example] if something pops up at [a sport organization... the [sport leader] just knows to call me...it also does create a community where you know [another sport leader] and I decide to go in and partner on a conference, and now we’re looking at adding other sports... I think that that in-face portion of it and the networking piece has been absolutely huge.”



Value Creation

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce and defines the eight cycles of value creation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediate value ○ Potential value ○ Applied value ○ Realized value ○ Transformative value ○ Strategic value ○ Enabling value ○ Orienting value
Value Creation Cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A selection of sport leader quotes to illustrate the right cycles
Value Creation Over Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A graphic demonstrating the types of value that have been created over time

Definitions

As mentioned above, a key outcome of this evaluation was to assess the perceived value created through the AWiSL CoP. The initial VCF (Wenger et al., 2011) included five value creation cycles: *immediate*, *potential*, *applied*, *realized*, and *transformative*. In their more recent publications (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger Trayner, in press), three additional cycles were introduced: *enabling*, *strategic*, and *orienting value*. These last three cycles are more concerned with “behind-the-scenes” value, for example, strategic conversations that are occurring within the sport organizations, or supports provided by the sport organization (e.g., funding, motivational support, resources) to enable the ongoing facilitation of the projects. Table 6. defines each of the value cycles. Following the table, we provide examples of value for each cycle, from the perspective of the sport leaders.

Table 6.

Value Creation Cycle	Definition
Immediate Value	The result of participating in an interaction or activity
Potential Value	Immediate interactions can create the potential for value to be realized at a later time. The value may in fact never be realized, but value lies in the potential of this knowledge
Applied Value	When knowledge capital from a CoP has been applied to a member’s practice to create change
Realized Value	Change in practice does not guarantee improvement; realized value is ascertained when a community member reflects on the effects of the applied knowledge
Transformative Value	This occurs when the previously used definitions and indicators of success have been redefined
Strategic Value	Conversations with relevant stakeholders and the quality of these conversations to ensure learning makes a difference
Enabling Value	Supportive acts that promote social learning within a community
Orienting Value	Having a stronger understanding of their position in the larger landscape of practice

Value Creation Cycles

Immediate Value

Sport Leader 11:

“I mean I just think anytime that you get a group of people together who have so much knowledge and experience, there’s always something that can be gained from that. And so, I think just having everybody together and learning from other people, I think that that was probably to the best part”

Potential Value

Sport Leader 4:

“The one meeting... the unconscious bias was very interesting because I find myself even just like every day, when you look at somebody and I’m like ‘okay what’s my bias, where am I filling in the story?’ And then the inclusivity which can be anything, it doesn’t have to just be the LGBTQ2I [community], it can be para-athletes, or yeah minorities.”

Applied Value

Sport Leader 5:

“When I was having those struggles and [a mentor] was sending me that information... she actually sent me a talk that Brené Brown had done, and it set me on like reading all the Brené Brown books. Then I started thinking like what other information is out there what other books or podcast can I look at that will help me grow as a leader in the community? And then I have shared some of that with other females in the community that have come up against the struggles or situation; to share that information with them.”

Realized Value

Sport Leader 12:

“[A sport leader] was talking about it one day at the Community of Practice, about how their registrations were declining for the conference and they were looking for new things and new ideas to do, and I just kind of mentioned ‘what about a multi-sport aspect where you’re not focusing so much just on sport but overall leadership skills and PD development’? And [it] kind of just grew from there. It was, it was really pretty exciting to run. Obviously, we always want attendance to be higher, but I think the participants that were there really appreciated the ability to share their stories in their own sport context but understanding that we’re all pretty much facing the same challenges across sport.”

Transformative Value

Sport Leader 6:

“I think I would have been a lot more sort of passive about things...maybe part of that is just being here for as long as I have, but kind of... just going through the motions and just doing my thing. I think I’m more apt to look a little more at ‘How can I do this differently? How can I do this better?’ You know? And I think that’s a direct result of this [CoP]. It’s just looking at things in a different way than I always did.”

Strategic Value

Sport Leader 12:

“You know there’s several people in our organization that I’ve had conversations with, in regard to trying to get more female leaders and coaches and officials in our sport. So, I think those strategic conversations have been a result of this project.”

Enabling Value

Sport Leader 5:

“The condition that [the sport organization] gave me is freedom to organize it how I wanted to. I think they were very trusting to let me do it.”

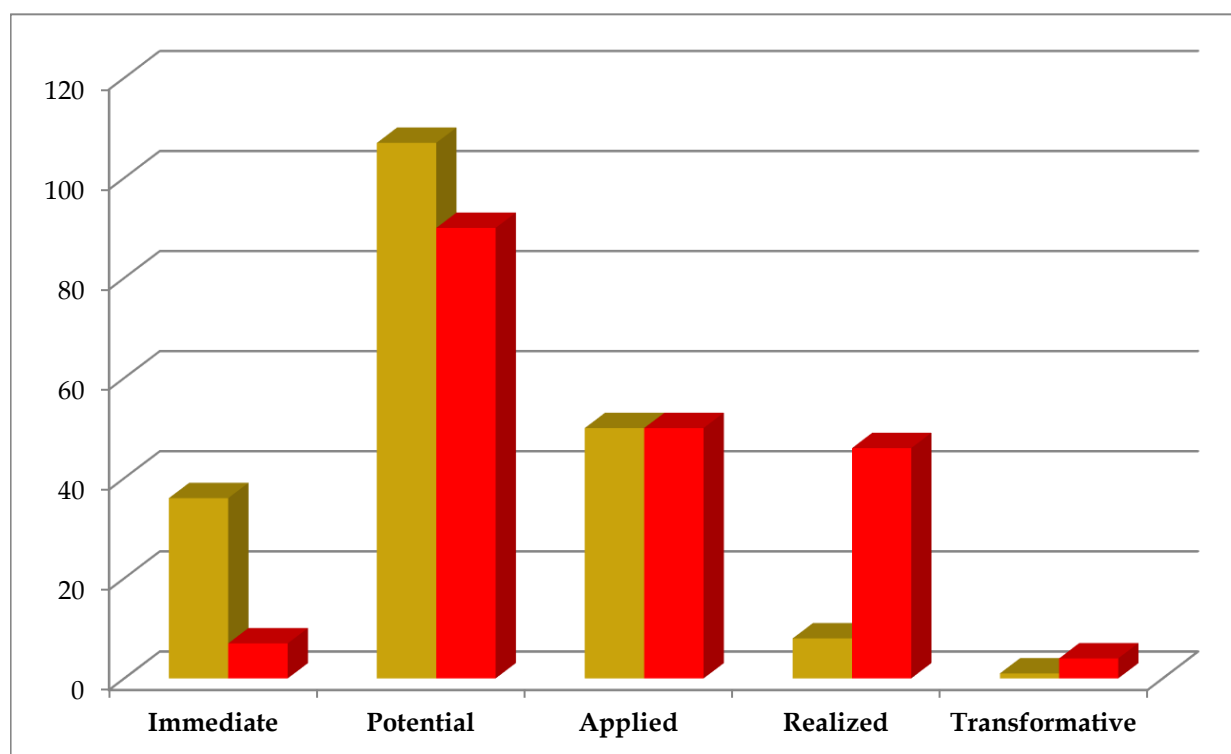
Orienting Value

Sport Leader 1:

“I think it’s also just given me...a better understanding of the Canadian sport context. So some of the values and the goals of the Coaching Association of Canada how that ties back to the Alberta Sport Connection. So... what impact our centre could potentially have on Alberta and how that would look across Canada.”

Value Creation Over Time

During the Fall 2018, the researchers collected interview data from the sport leaders. These interviews focused on capturing the sport leaders' perceived value of their participation in the CoP. In the Winter 2020, the sport leaders were interviewed a second time with the same purpose. The following graphic shows the instances of value cycles in 2018 (blue graphs) and 2020 (red graphs). In the first round of interviews, there are considerably more instances of *immediate* and *potential* value; in the second round of interviews, there are many more instances of *realized* and *transformative* value. These findings support previous research which has suggested that it takes time for value to move through the value cycles (Bertram et al., 2017). This is one of the benefits of longitudinal data collection, that we are able to see the different types of value that have occurred for the sport leaders, value that will likely continue to develop beyond the evaluation.



*Yellow graphs represent Fall 2018 data, red graphs represent Winter 2020 data

Challenges and Barriers



Challenges and Barriers

The next section will present the following participant groups and discussion points.

Participant Group	Discussion Points
Sport Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time - Technology - Prioritizing their projects - Resistance from organizations
Mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of accountability from the sport leaders

As with any new initiative, the sport leaders and mentors did experience challenges and barriers in the execution of, and participation in the AWiSL. The following section presents key challenges and barriers first specific to the sport leaders, and then those specific to the mentors. Some challenges for the mentors have been mentioned throughout this report (i.e., engaging in and embracing uncertainty) and will therefore not be repeated in this section. Collecting this information was not only useful to relay back to the project lead throughout the duration of the project, to adjust activities according to the CoPs needs, but also serves as important information for future iterations of similar interventions.

Sport Leaders

Time

Sport Leader 11:

“Definitely trying to wrap my head around the timeline to get everything off the ground and organized, because I’m a couple months behind here just with some of the shifts in my job; sort of put me a couple months behind where I want to be, so the planning piece would be a big one.”

Sport Leader 4:

“Yes, it is time. Not a lack of desire, it is time.”

Sport Leader 11:

“I feel like there are so many opportunities and there’s only so much time; and I mean I think I chatted with lots of people and got to know some people and I certainly don’t think I was lacking, but I mean it’s just such a room full of amazing people and there’s only so much time in the day, right.”

Technology

Sport Leader 13:

“The only barriers that I’ve experienced on any of these is just the technological barriers and because of that I feel that I haven’t been able to get as much from the community of practice. I know there is a lot that is discussed on...the Go-to-meetings all of those sorts of things that they do. Not being able to participate in those I think has been a barrier for me; and gaining more information and getting more information about what we’re doing.”

Prioritizing their projects

Sport Leader 2:

“You leave the meetings and you’re so gung-ho and you have these ideas that are totally going to happen, but then when you get back to your organization, then reality sinks in a bit and what you’re actually capable of is, it’s, [the] expectation is lower.”

Sport Leader 3:

“My biggest challenge is that the [organization] does not, it’s a priority... but not necessarily every institution is making it a priority.”

Resistance from organizations

Sport Leader 6:

“We had a block of time for women and [sport] for women’s committee to do something. And so, this was kind of my suggestion and what I heard was that there were some of our board members who felt like we need to shift from ‘this is a problem’ to just like ‘what are we doing about it?’ Like you know ‘Woe is me’, and that phrase was used! You know ‘woe is me’ it’s time to just focus on the positive things and why don’t we ask people what they’re doing in their associations instead. That was sort of the suggestion, so there’s acceptance and realization that these are real issues, right? And what can be done sort of on the daily to change things, but also that resistance to you.”

Sport Leader 5:

“There was a group of [sport members] that have like a...club, and so prior to me opening it, they were the only...club in [our city]. So, I’ve got a lot of resistance, a lot of criticism from that organization... For sure the resistance I felt was because they felt threatened because another group was opening and then I think particularly because I was a female.”

Sport Leader 3:

“I think the steps in the regulations and the policies that are in place at the [organization] level ... is a bit of a challenge.... There was kind of an administrative error moving the project forward from year one to year two and making the motions forward next year; me thinking that they were accepted, and then reflecting in the minutes that they were moved or something like that to spring meeting... And then just the fact that you have to go through all the steps to get three thousand dollars...but I’m really going to let the project not continue with funding over like three thousand dollars, right? Where I’m sure if we would have called a special meeting or something, they could have found three thousand dollars somewhere, right? That was the frustration for me.”

Mentors

Lack of accountability from sport leaders

Mentor 2:

“I’ve never worked with a group where people didn’t respond; and that for me has been a whole new sort of piece; and I’m still trying to sort of show up on their doorstep. Yes, I mean you got to talk to me, you got to communicate! That, it’s been frustrating”

Mentor 1:

“The biggest challenge is wondering why everybody doesn’t kind of show up.”

Mentor 3:

“I’m learning that [my] feeling valued is not the responsibility of the [sport leaders] ... feeling valued is up to me to be able to look in the mirror and be proud of the contributions that I’m making. So yes, it’s a matter of self-worth... most of us get our self-worth from what we think others think of us...That transfers into everything... So, there’s a feeling of, ‘What do I need to feel valued as a leader, everything that I do.’ And if I bring myself to the table in every context, that helps me sleep very well at night.”

Conclusion

Over a two-and-a-half-year period, the women and male allies of the AWiSL supported 12 sport leaders and six mentors in developing their leadership skills and capabilities, increasing gender equity and knowledge transfer across the province of Alberta and beyond. This evaluation captures the quotes and various forms of data collected over a 1.5-year period to highlight the many forms of value that have been created through this initiative. In addition to developing themselves, the sport leaders and mentors successfully implemented sport and physical activity focused projects that have reached over 790 women, girls, and individuals from marginalized populations. Along with the University of Ottawa research team, the AWiSL has contributed several scholarly publications to the fields of sport and leadership, and developed a how-to model to maintain the legacy of the AWiSL and inspire others to maintain the momentum this type of initiative for change.

Funding

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Author Biographies

Erin Kraft is a doctoral candidate in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. As a former swim coach with over 10 years of experience, Erin primarily coached children with developmental disabilities. She holds a master's in education where she examined coaches' experiences teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in aquatic programs. More recently, Erin's research interests have shifted and focus on developing social learning spaces, as an approach to facilitate learning opportunities in sport. Her doctoral research uses these social learning spaces to increase gender equity and leadership diversity across sport, and to expand the learning capabilities of Canadian Paraspport coaches.

Diane Culver is an Associate Professor in the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa. Her research interests include coach development and qualitative research. She is currently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to research Paraspport coaching, and women in sport organizations. In her teaching, research, and consulting she is particularly interested in social learning theory and building social learning capability in sport. Diane is also an alpine ski coach who has worked with all levels of skiers from youth to Olympic levels. She now coaches masters skiers and mentors youth coaches.

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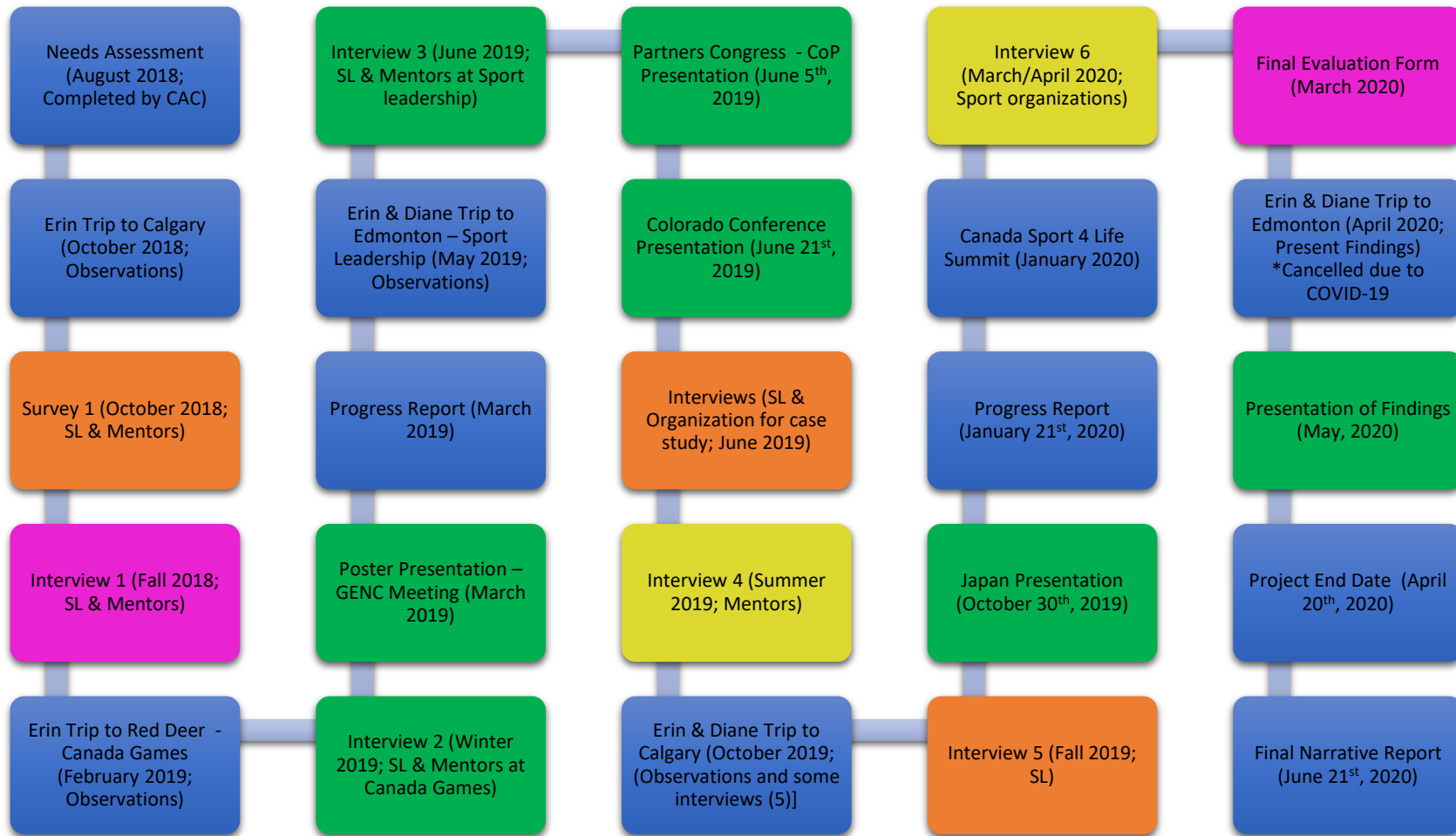
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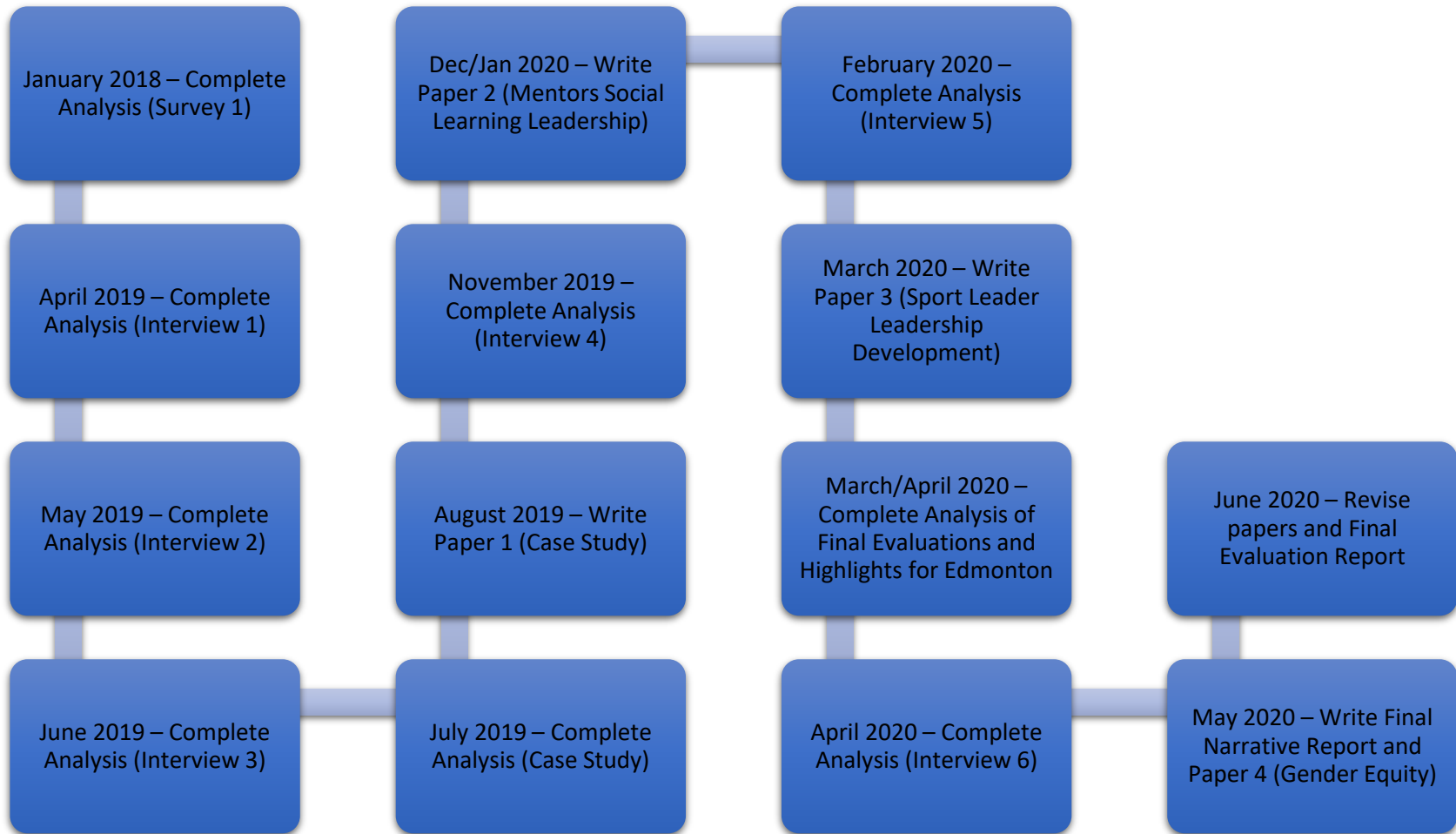
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AWiSL Data Collection and Presentation Timeline/Data Analysis Timeline





Appendix D

University of Ottawa's Ethics Approval Notice

11/09/2018

Université d'Ottawa Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche	University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity
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CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-08-18-911
Titre du projet / Project Title	Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program- Advancing Gender Equality in Alberta
Type de projet / Project Type	Recherche de professeur / Professor's research project
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	11/09/2018
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	10/09/2019

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Diane CULVER	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Erin KRAFT	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Co-chercheur / Co-investigator

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

Riana MARCOTTE

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For Daniel LAGAREC Président(e) du/ Chair of the Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

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Appendix E

Research Consent Form

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Consent for Sport Leaders and Mentors

Project Title: Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program- Advancing Gender Equality in Alberta

Principal Investigator: Dr. Diane M. Culver, Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

Co-Investigator: Erin Kraft, Researcher, PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa

The Coaching Association of Canada and Alberta Sport Connection are partnering with the University of Ottawa to conduct a program evaluation of the *Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL)*. The researchers from the University of Ottawa will examine the specific outcomes of this program (gender equity, leadership, and knowledge transfer/sharing), as well as monitor and assess the Community of Practice (CoP).

Your participation in this evaluation will support the aims of the *Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program* to: *support organizational representatives who will make a difference for women in their organizations and have a positive impact in the lives of girls and women in their communities.*

Participation: My participation in this two year evaluation (as specified in the initial application to the program) will consist of a number of activities including, but not exclusive to; surveys, interviews, and self-reports. My participation in these activities will take place over the two year period. Researchers will be attending some CoP activities, as such, I will be audio recorded and observational notes will be taken during these activities. The approximate time for each activity includes; interviews (45-90 minutes), and self-reports (30 minutes). These will take place at an agreed upon location which is convenient for both myself and the other participants in the evaluation, or online.

Assessment of risks: My participation in this evaluation entails very limited foreseeable risks. However, if I experience any discomfort, Diane M. Culver has assured me that she will make every effort to minimize this discomfort. I may decide to stop my participation at any time without consequence.

Faculté des sciences de la santé
École des sciences de l'activité physique

Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics

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 125 Université / University Ottawa ON K1N 6N5 Canada



Benefits: This evaluation aims to assess the CoP for specific project outcomes (i.e., awareness of gender equality, knowledge transfer, CoP effectiveness), and value gained through this participation. As a participant, I will be contributing to the project focus to *increase leadership diversity through policy, practices, increasing the pool of female coaches, athletes, volunteers, board members and/or officials.*

Privacy of participants: I have received assurance from Diane M. Culver, that the information I share during the activities (i.e., interviews) will remain confidential and only shared with other program evaluation collaborators, as well as with one of the program mentors (Isabelle Cayer). Participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality during activities, however, anonymity is not possible between participants. The content from these discussions will be used for the completion of this evaluation and other publications for dissemination. I understand that the information discussed during these meetings is to remain confidential.

Confidentiality and conservation of data: I have been assured that the written recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure manner in the researcher's office during the research. In five years, all material data will be shredded and electronic data will be erased.

Voluntary participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, the researchers will do their best to remove and destroy all data gathered from me until the time of my withdrawal. I understand that in the context of audio-recorded group activities, it may be difficult to isolate and remove all of my contributions.

Acceptance: I, _____ [*Name of participant*], agree to participate in the above evaluation conducted by Diane M. Culver and Erin Kraft, in the School of Human Kinetics, at the University of Ottawa.

I also AGREE that the data collected through my participation in this research, may be used in a doctoral candidate's dissertation.

Yes

No

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact Diane M. Culver.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Appendix F

Case Study Interview Guide – Sport Leader

- 1) Sport, how long you have been coaching, what levels, organizations
- 2) Describe your position (coach, official)
- 3) How did you start this program (CD/Official)
- 4) Define what your program is? Referee and CD/LF
- 5) Discuss your facilitation of the program?
- 6) How has your facilitation of this program impacted you (or not)?
Personally/professionally
- 7) Have you gained new perspectives or competences? Has your participation affected your level of inspiration, your confidence, or your sense of identity?
- 8) Has your confidence changed in relation to others [i.e., being in a room of men (sport is male dominated) or when speaking to someone in position of authority?]
- 9) Do you think there have been changes for the women in these programs as well?
- 10) Has your facilitation of this program translated into other aspects of your practice?
- 11) How has this changed what you do and how well you do it?
- 12) Has your facilitation of this provided you with any leadership development opportunities?
Please give specific examples
- 13) How about the women in the program?
- 14) Has your facilitation changed your ability to influence the context in which you operate?
How?
- 15) How has your participation in the CoP played into your development/implementation/facilitation of this program?
- 16) Has your participation in the CoP had any impact on you with relation to gender equity? (i.e., provided you with more knowledge about gender equity in sport, provided you with more opportunities to collaborate with women that may not have been possible otherwise?) and how?
- 17) Have you had the opportunity to share knowledge from your participation with others (i.e., in sport? In another capacity)?
- 18) Do you have on-going communication/interactions with the other women in this initiative both CoP or CD/LF/Officials? If so, has this had any impact on you?
- 19) Have you made new connections or developed new relationships? Have these made a difference for you beyond the social learning space?
- 20) Have there been any challenges you have experienced participating/facilitating in either program?
- 21) What are some of the key findings from the CD/LF and official training?
- 22) What are some key contributors or key people who have made these programs a success?
Why?
- 23) Could you please discuss this experience and any key takeaway?

Appendix G

Case Study Interview Guide – Coach Developer/Learning Facilitator

- 1) Sport, Age, how long you have been coaching, what levels, organizations
- 2) Describe your position (coach, official)
- 3) How did you hear about program/recruitment?
- 4) Define what the program is/was?
- 5) Discuss your participation in the program?
- 6) How has your participation in this program impacted you (or not)?
Personally/professionally/as a coach developer or learning facilitator?
- 7) Have you gained new perspectives or competences? Has your participation affected your level of inspiration, your confidence, or your sense of identity?
- 8) Has your confidence changed in relation to others [i.e., being in a room of men (sport is male dominated) or when speaking to someone in position of authority?]
- 9) Are you now practicing as a coach developer/learning facilitator?
- 10) Discuss any ways this program has (or not) provided you with any tools/information that have translated into your practice?
- 11) How has this changed what you do and how well you do it?
- 12) Has your participation in this program provided you with any leadership development opportunities? Please give specific examples
- 13) Has your participation changed your ability to influence the context in which you operate? How?
- 14) Has your participation in this program had any impact on you with relation to gender equity? (i.e., provided you with more knowledge about gender equity in sport, provided you with more opportunities to collaborate with women that may not have been possible otherwise?) and how?
- 15) Have you had the opportunity to share knowledge from your participation with others (i.e., in sport? In another capacity)?
- 16) Do you have on-going communication/interactions with the other women in this initiative? If so, has this had any impact on you?
- 17) Have you made new connections or developed new relationships? Have these made a difference for you beyond the social learning space?
- 18) Have there been any challenges you have experienced participating in this program?
- 19) Did you have the opportunity to participate in the Women in Sport Conference?
- 20) Could you please discuss this experience and any key takeaway? Have you had a chance to apply any of this new information/tools from this conference into your practice?

Appendix H

Case Study Interview Guide – Sport Organization Representative

- 1) Describe your current role in sport and previous position
- 2) How did you learn about the AWiSL
- 3) How was the project developed?
- 4) Define what your program is? Referee and CD/LF
- 5) Discuss your involvement in this program (facilitating presentations, events, etc.)
- 6) How has your facilitation of this program impacted you (or not)?
Personally/professionally
- 7) Have you gained new perspectives or skills?
- 8) What is your perception of the project? How is making difference or having an impact?
Has it been successful?
- 9) Has your participation in the development or execution of this project translated into other aspects of your practice?
- 10) Have you made new connections or developed new relationships?
- 11) Has your involvement in this project impacted your ability to influence others?
- 12) How has your involvement changed what you do and how well you do it?
- 13) What are some key contributors or key people who have made these project a success?
Why?
- 14) Please discuss how you see Carmen's role in this project?
- 15) How do you think her involvement in this project impacted her?
- 16) Have there been any challenges you have experienced during your involvement in this project?
- 17) Could you please discuss any key takeaway from this experience overall?

Appendix I

Mentor Interview Guide – Fall 2018

***This interview guide will direct the interviews with the mentors. These questions will be followed by the completion of the *Specific Instance Value Creation Story* and the *Overall Value Narrative* documents.**

1. At the beginning of this process what were your objectives for the participating in this community?
2. What potentially useful outcomes did you want the community to produce?
3. Do you believe that your participation in the community (in a leadership role) has led to changes in your coaching practice/organization? The sport leaders' coaching practices/organizations?
4. Under what conditions was the community able to help make these changes?
5. What role did you play in facilitating these changes?
6. What indicators suggested that the community was producing what you hoped it would?
7. What conditions could you have created to help the sport leaders apply what the community had produced into their
8. What do you think has made it difficult for the community members to apply the learning from the community into their practices/organizations? Were there risks to pay attention to?
9. Is there something the community could have done to create ideal conditions for knowledge transfer (sharing)? Could you have influenced these conditions?
10. What conditions overall would have made the community members' participation and engagement in the community ideal? The execution of community activities? Additional community members?
11. Was the community successful? If not what could have been done different? For members? For their organizations? For the field? For women and girls?
12. What conditions do you think needed to be in place to reach the desired project outcomes? Are there factors that have prevented the community from reaching these outcomes (i.e., increased gender equity, leadership development)?
13. By definition, transformative effects are difficult to plan. Where do you expect there was the greatest potential for surprising outcomes? Members' identities? The sport organizations' strategy to increase gender equity and leadership?
14. What were the conditions that could have made transformative effects more likely? How could you have facilitated/enabled those conditions? What risks was the community willing to take in order to innovate? What risks were you willing to take to inspire innovation?
15. How have you been connected to stakeholders? Should the community members have been part of these conversations with stakeholders? How did you facilitate/participate in these strategic conversations?
16. What conditions allowed these strategic conversations to take place?
17. What kind of support did you need ideally? What enabling factors could have been secured?
18. Under what conditions would this support have been most likely to become available?

Overall Value Narrative

Name:

Role or position (Sport Leader, Mentor):

Name: Diane Culver	How participation is changing me as a professional (e.g., skills, attitude, identity, self-confidence, how you feel, etc.)	How participation is affecting my social connections (e.g., number, quality, frequency, emotions, etc.)	How participation is helping my professional practice (e.g., ideas, insights, material, procedures, etc.)	How participation is changing my ability to influence my world as a professional (voice, contribution, status, recognition, etc.)
Reasons for participation (e.g., challenges, aspirations, professional development goals, meeting people, etc.) +/-				
Activities, outputs, events, networking (e.g., lesson material, discussion, visits, etc.) +/-				
Value to me (e.g., being a better professional, handling difficult situations, Improving organizational performance, etc.)				

+/-				
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Note: +/- Indicates that you can provide positive / negative experience

Strategic: How my participation is affecting the alignment in my organization (e.g., engaging with relevant stakeholders, quality/number of conversations)

How has the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program enabled change in my organization?

Enabling: How my participation is enabling change in my organization (e.g., funding, mentorship opportunities)

Specific Instance Value Creation Story

Name:

Date:

Typical cycles	Your story:
1. Activity: Describe a meaningful activity you participated in and your experience of it (e.g., a conversation, a working session, a project, etc.)	
2. Output: Describe a specific resource this activity produced for you (e.g., an idea or a document) and why you thought it might be useful.	
3. Application: Tell how you used this resource in your practice and what it enabled that would not have happened otherwise.	
4. Outcome: a. Personal: Explain how it affected your success (e.g., being a better professional, job satisfaction,)	

<p>b. Organizational: Has your participation contributed to the success of your organization (e.g., metrics they use)</p>	
<p>5. <u>New definition of success:</u> Sometimes, such a story changes your understanding of what success is. If it happened this time, then include this here.</p>	

Enabling: Describe a specific example of how the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program has enabled change in your organization.

Strategic: Describe a strategic conversation that enabled alignment in your organization (i.e., conversations with stakeholders)

Appendix J

Mentor Interview Guide – Summer 2019

Social learning model (CoP):

As a mentor, you are considered to be in a leadership position – more specifically that of a social learning leader. (Add preamble about social learning, or ask them what they think it is and then validate/revise with them.)

1. At the beginning of this project why did you decide to take on a leadership role?
2. What were your expectations of this role? Did you have any prior experience leading social learning?
3. Could you provide any specific leadership development opportunities that you participated in through this project? If any (i.e., Wenger-Trayner training)
4. To develop your leadership role, did you engage in any on-going conversations/interactions with the other mentors in this community? How that did impact your role, if at all? Did you learn anything from the other mentors that you applied to your own pod? Explain. (Same for anybody else that make have had an impact on your leadership)
5. How has your position and facilitation of the learning in your pod (and the larger group) impacted you (or not)? Personally/professionally?
6. Have you gained any new perspectives or competencies through your role? Has your role/experience affected your level of inspiration, your confidence, or your sense of identity? Any other areas of growth? Specific examples
7. Has your confidence changed in relation to others [i.e., being in a room of men (sport is male dominated)]?
8. Has your role translated into other aspects of your practice? If so, please describe?
9. How has your position as a social learning leader changed what you do and how well you do it?
10. What are some of the challenges you experienced in your leadership role? Facilitating social learning?
11. Is there any way you could have been supported differently to moderate some of these challenges?
12. In your opinion, has your pod been successful? How did you impact/facilitate that success? Have you been successful in your role?
13. Overall, are there any ways that you could have facilitated the social learning differently? Why? Why not?
14. Have you made any new connections or developed new relationships that have impacted your leadership role? Do you intend to maintain them after this project?
15. Has your leadership role enabled you to connect to stakeholders you may not have accessed otherwise?
16. What kind of support did you ideally need in your leadership role?
17. Any other comments pertaining to your leadership role in social learning?

** This interview was followed by a Specific Instance Value Creation Story and the Overall Value Narrative documents.*

Appendix K

Sport Leader Interview Guide – Fall 2018

***This interview guide will direct the interviews with the sport leaders. These questions will be followed by the completion of the *Specific Instance Value Creation Story* and the *Overall Value Narrative* documents.**

1. At the beginning of this process what were your objectives for participating in this community?
2. What potentially useful outcomes did you want the community to produce?
3. Do you believe that your participation in the community has led to changes in your coaching practice/organization?
4. Under what conditions was the community able to help make these changes?
5. What indicators suggested that the community was producing what you hoped it would?
6. Under what conditions was it possible for you to apply what the community had produced into your organization or coaching practice?
7. What has made it difficult to apply the learning from the community into your practice/organization? Were there risks to pay attention to?
8. Is there something the community could have done to create ideal conditions for knowledge transfer (sharing)?
9. What conditions overall would have made the community members' participation and engagement in the community ideal? The execution of community activities? Additional community members?
10. Was the community successful? If not what could have been done differently? For members? For their organizations? For the field? For women and girls?
11. What conditions do you think needed to be in place to reach the desired project outcomes? Are there factors that have prevented the community from reaching these outcomes (i.e., increased gender equity, leadership development)?
12. By definition, transformative effects are difficult to plan. Where do you expect there was the greatest potential for surprising outcomes? Members' identities? The sport organizations' strategy to increase gender equity and leadership?
13. How has the community been connected to stakeholders? Should the community have been part of conversations with stakeholders?
14. What conditions allowed these strategic conversations to take place?
15. What kind of support did you need ideally? What enabling factors could have been secured?
16. Under what conditions would this support have been most likely to become available?
17. Leadership development

Appendix L

Sport Leader Interview Guide – Fall 2019

***This interview guide will direct the interviews with the sport leaders. These questions will be followed by the completion of the *Specific Instance Value Creation Story* and the *Overall Value Narrative* documents.**

CoP

1. What were your goals entering this CoP?
2. What outcomes did you hope the community would produce? Would you say the community was successful in meeting your expectations? Could you provide some specific indicators?
3. Do you believe that your participation in the community has led to any changes in your professional practice/organization?
4. How has your participation in the CoP helped you make/facilitate these changes? Specific examples (i.e., activities/workshops)
5. What conditions made it possible for you to make these changes in your organization or practice? Did you have organizational supports? Necessary resources?
6. Did you experience any challenges applying your learning from the community into your practice/organization?
7. Is there something the community could have done to support you in transferring knowledge from the CoP to your organization (sharing)?
8. What conditions were important to promote engagement, participation, sharing in the CoP? How community activities were executed? Having the option to bring in another community member?
9. Did your participation in the CoP allow you to make any connections with stakeholders you may not have otherwise had access to?
10. Did you feel that you took every opportunity that you could from this project? Why? Why not? Did this change over time? What made you lean-in? Or not?

Pod/Project/LD

11. What were your goals for your project?
12. Would you say your pod or one-on-one meetings with your mentors assisted you with executing your project?
13. Did your organization play a role in enabling the execution of your project?
14. Did the project allow you to have conversations with others in your organization that you may not have had otherwise?
15. Did your project allow you to take on any additional leadership opportunities/role?
16. Did you engage in any memorable conversations/interactions with others from the CoP (mentors/sport leaders) which may have impacted your leadership development? (i.e., CoP activities, participation in leadership legacy course, conversations with mentor)
17. Have these leadership opportunities given you new competencies? A new sense of confidence? New identity?
18. Has this changed what you do (your role) and how well you do it, or how you do it?

19. What supports did your organization provide, if any? What supports did you need in an ideal circumstance?
20. Was your project successful? What are some indicators of that success?
21. What are some challenges/barriers you experienced with your project?
22. Do you have any plans to maintain the legacy of your project? Please describe. If so what supports could you need to do this?
23. Are there any connections/relationships you've made over the past few years (as a result of this project) that you intend to maintain?

Gender Equity

24. Was the community successful in moving gender equity forward (either in your organization, across Alberta sport, etc.?)
25. Could you provide specific examples/indicators of what these advances in gender equity looks like?
26. Where are you specifically seeing these changes?
27. Do you think this would have been possible without the CoP? (Or in what manner did the CoP contribute to these changes being implemented?)
28. Were there any specific activities/opportunities that you think played an important role in achieving these advances in gender equity?
29. Have you had a chance to look at the Same Game tools/documents?

Appendix M

Sport Organization Interview Guide – Spring 2020

1. Could you please describe your role in your sport organization?
2. What has your involvement been with the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership (AWiSL) program? Have you been involved with the sport leader's project?
3. What kinds of changes have you noticed in your sport organization since the sport leader joined the AWiSL?
4. What are some of the impacts of the project (in your sport organization) in terms of increasing gender equity and leadership diversity (if applicable)?
5. Do you have any observations about the sport leader's skills? What kinds of changes have you seen in the sport leader?
6. Have there been any changes in terms of their leadership development? If so, please describe.
7. Do you think the AWiSL group has played a role in the sport leader's leadership development? If yes, how so?
8. Do you have any additional comments about the project or the sport leader's development?
9. In what area of leadership do you think the sport leader needs to continue to develop?

Appendix N

Sport Leader Survey Guide – Fall 2018

1. My engagement with the AWiSL CoP plays an important role in the development and execution of my organisation's project (1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree)
2. My meetings with my pod have played an important role in the development and execution of my organisation's project (1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree)
3. The CoP activities have been appropriate for guiding the development of my organisation's project (1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree)
4. The frequency of the CoP meetings and pod meetings are appropriate for the timely development and execution of my organisation's project (1 Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree)
5. What are some ways the CoP could function differently to support the outcomes of your organisation's project?
6. How have your learning experiences in the CoP and pod meetings translated into your practice and organisation?
7. Do you have any recommendations for the mentors to support your learning needs?
8. Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix O
AWiSL Final Report Template

Sport leader name:	
Organization:	
Project title:	
Brief description of project:	
Goals of project:	
Overview of steps taken to achieve project goals: (e.g., include critical pathways and additional documentation)	
Steps taken to measure goals (please include tools for measurements): (e.g., include surveys questionnaires, interviews guides numbers from registration documents)	
High order description of results and specific examples to illustrate these results (consider gender equality, leadership development/diversity, knowledge transfer): (Description: increase of female coaches between 2018/2019, female coaches express new found confidence coaching in male dominated field) (Specific examples: pie charts showing 5% increase of female head coaches, interview	

<p>quotes – please include specific numbers and percentages where applicable and contextualize quotes) **When possible, please show comparisons to original data at the start of the project</p>	
<p>Have you achieved your goals? (please explain)</p>	
<p>What still needs to be done in this project? (please explain) What support do you need?</p>	
<p>Brief description of future legacy plans:</p>	
<p>Description of steps taken to implement legacy plans:</p>	
<p>Please identify any key individuals who played an important role in supporting the success of this project and provide examples of their supports (i.e., executive director in your organization provided your with additional funding to maintain the legacy of your project)</p>	

Appendix P
How-to Model for CoPs



>>>

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE



A how-to model for building social learning spaces

Communities of Practice

A how-to model for building social learning spaces

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a high-value, low-cost initiative to connect people with a passion for learning, developing, and growing together related to their practice.

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>>>

Who is this model for?

The following is a model which provides sport organizations with a step-by-step approach to plan, train, design, implement, assess, and maintain a Community of Practice focused on supporting long-term change. The model is research-based and informed by previous experiences with many CoPs. For further information about our experiences, please see the author biographies below.

This model is for any organization implementing an initiative to support collective learning. Whether that learning is centred on supporting professional development, advancing women's leadership capacities in sport, or developing the learning capabilities of parasport coaches, this model will suggest tips, questions to consider, and will guide you through the process.





What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?

The concept of CoPs was developed by Etienne Wenger-Trayner and explored in his 1998 text *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. In summary, CoPs are defined as groups of “people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 4). According to Wenger (1998), social interactions play an important role in our learning because we are all fundamentally social beings. By actively participating in interactions with others to solve a problem or explore a passion, we are meaningfully engaging with the world and creating new knowledge.



Why develop a Community of Practice?



CoPs can be low cost-high impact interventions supporting learning and change across a variety of contexts and professions. They have facilitated professional development, ongoing learning opportunities, and knowledge sharing in fields such as education¹, healthcare², and sport³.

1. Akerson, Cullen, & Hanson, 2009; Culver, Kraft, & Movall, 2019
2. Ranmuthugala, Plumb, Cunningham, Georgiou, Westbrook, & Braithwaite, 2011
3. Bertram, Culver, & Gilbert, 2017; Stoszowski & Collins, 2017



The Coaching Association of Canada's experience hosting a CoP

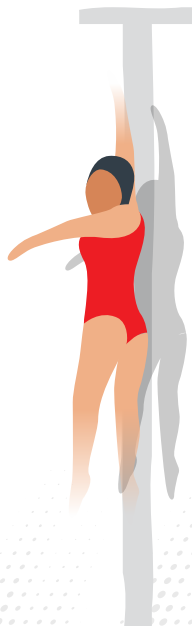
In 2017, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) received funding from the federal government (Women and Gender Equality; WAGE) to develop a program to increase gender equity and leadership diversity across sport organizations titled the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program. The program supported organizational representatives who had a passion and interest in advancing gender equity and developed projects to support girls and women's participation in sport and leadership development. The projects focused on increasing leadership diversity through policy, practices, increasing the pool of female coaches, coach developers, athletes, participants, volunteers, board members and officials.

Sport organizations in Alberta applied to participate in the program to advance gender equity by submitting proposals to increase the participation and leadership abilities of girls and women. The application required the organization to provide the gender data and a description of their project. Projects included:

- launching a mentorship program,
- approval of policies supporting female coaches for female teams,
- free coaching workshops for people identifying as female,
- female coach developers programs and female officials development, and,
- researching the impact of their female programs to determine impact and make improvements.

Fifteen sport leaders were accepted and participated in this project (throughout the project, three sport leaders discontinued their participation for various reasons). In addition to the sport leaders, the CoP consisted of one facilitator, five mentors, and two researchers.

The purpose of the CoP was to bring the CoP members together to participate in professional development opportunities (e.g., workshops on gender bias) to develop the leadership capacities of the entire community. Additionally, this CoP created a space where the sport leaders were supported in the execution of their projects.





Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program CoP



Specific roles within the CoP:

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Depending on the nature of an organizations' CoP, the community members may not come from specific groups. Below we describe the community members of the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact program.

FACILITATORS:

The individual(s) often responsible for initiating the CoP and facilitating the initiative. As is often the case, the overall focus of the CoP was often put forth by the facilitator, who then helped the CoP members negotiate the specific topics and activities.

SPORT LEADERS:

The sport leaders were individuals from various sport organizations who joined the CoP with specific project plans.

MENTORS:

Individuals who participated in the planning and delivering of content during CoP meetings. They also supported the sport leaders in achieving their project goals.

PODS

Each mentor was assigned to approximately three sport leaders to engage in small group and 1:1 interactions to further support the sport leaders in achieving their goals. If the mentor role is not being used, the CoP members may choose to divide into smaller groups for certain activities, or exclusively meet as a whole community.

It is important to note that many CoPs do not have mentors or pods, and can be implemented within one organization. In this case of the CAC program, this was an effective addition to the ongoing learning and development of the group, due to the added requirement of each community members completing a unique project.

Based on the experience of the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program participants, the CAC and research partners have developed a model to guide organizations in establishing their own Community of Practice. The model and considerations identified below are relevant to an organization or an individual that would like to host a CoP.





HOW TO SET-UP A CoP



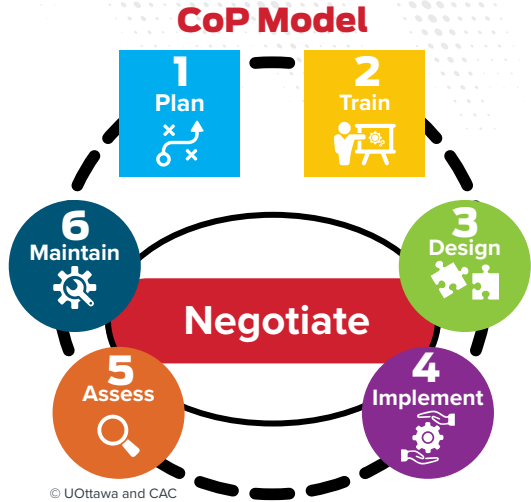
STEP BY STEP GUIDE AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING A CoP

CoPs promote constant negotiations and re-negotiation of activities depending on the needs of the community members. Uncertainty in CoPs is a positive experience because community members are co-creating knowledge to go where they have not gone before in terms of their practice.



Communities of Practice

It is important to note that although these steps are in an order, CoPs are constantly changing and evolving, so these steps may overlap or may need to be revisited on more than one occasion. PLAN and TRAIN are preliminary steps, which occasionally may need to be revisited. The regular cycle of the CoP comprises DESIGN, IMPLEMENT, ASSESS, MAINTAIN, and then back to DESIGN. Negotiation is an ongoing process.



What CoP members will do and experience

The cartoon below shows the CoP member experience and the cycle between the collective work within the CoP and the individuals' implementation of what they take away from the CoP and subsequently bring back to the CoP. The four core values (immediate, potential, applied, and realized) of the Value Creation Framework (VCF) depicted below are portrayed in boxes 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the cartoon.





Value Creation Framework

The Value Creation Framework (VCF) can be used to frame and assess learning value in CoPs and other social learning spaces. Framing encompasses planning, designing, and more in the sense that framing is an ongoing process rather than something that occurs before learning. In this way, CoP activities are always framed by the aspirations of the members and stakeholders. The questions on the VCF figure are related to the different value cycles and should be visited at the time the CoP is first conceived, and revisited as the CoP evolves.

“Value here refers to importance, worth, or usefulness rather than moral standards, even if the two are related” (Wenger-Trayner, et al., 2019, p. 323). Value can move across the different value cycles from immediate to realized and transformative, supported by enabling and strategic value. However, it does not always move through each cycle and at times will hit a dead end at which point the community members will have to circle back and reframe the approach.

What is the quality of engagement with strategic stakeholders?

STRATEGIC

Does the difference you make have broader effects?

ORIENTING

What is the experience like?

IMMEDIATE

POTENTIAL

What comes out of it?

What difference does it make?

APPLIED

REALIZED

What are you learning in applying it?

TRANSFORMATIVE

What else is potentially relevant?

ENABLING

What makes it possible?

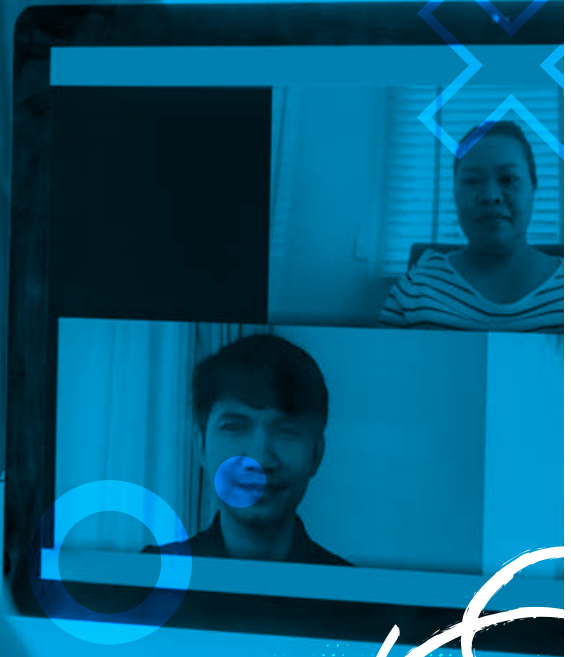
Wenger-Trayner.com

How to use the VCF

- » Before: Consider the aspirations of the various different stakeholders you are trying to involve in the CoP. The VCF questions guide your strategic conversations and the ‘Plan’ stage.
- » During: Consider the different value cycles when designing and implementing activities, and to maintain alignment in terms of community members’ and stakeholders’ goals and learning needs.
- » During and after: The VCF guides the data you will generate within the CoP, and collect from stakeholders for the assessment of value created.



PLAN



Plan with
CoP members,
topics, roles, and
overall goals



PLAN

Develop CoP focus and messaging for engaging community members

- » What will be the focus, topic, problem to solve, common passion or interest that will engage community members to participate in the CoP
- » **For example:** coaching innovations, developing effective communication skills, mentoring, increasing gender equity, develop leadership skills, enhance cultural competencies, deepen understanding of inclusion and diversity



Invite or select community members

- » Based on the focus of the CoP, who needs to be in the CoP
- » Membership is usually self-selected depending on the focus



Develop a call for participation

- » Who do you want in your CoP
- » Where will you advertise for this opportunity



Determine roles

- » Who will facilitate the CoP
- » Who will be designated to assist with logistics (e.g., booking meeting spaces, travel arrangements if necessary)
- » Determine if a mentor role is needed, or pods
- » If mentors or other CoP leaders are to be set in place, consider what leadership skills you are looking for



Determine appropriate platforms

- » Determine an appropriate platform(s) to stay connected e.g. D2L, Slack, WhatsApp, Adobe Connect, Facebook Group or Workplace, other



Financial planning

- » Are there funding opportunities or grants to assist with this project
- » Are there stakeholders who may want to invest in this initiative, if so, will this impact the target outcomes of the CoP
- » Will an organization be supporting the community member's participation
- » Decide who needs to approach potential funders





TRAIN



To train or
not to train



TRAIN

Develop a training plan



- » Will an outside party be contracted to train the facilitator(s)
- » Will other community members receive training



Distribute leadership roles

- » Determine mentor roles and distribute leadership (e.g., one mentor may be responsible for taking meeting minutes, mentors may each be responsible for developing a meeting agenda on a rotating basis).
- » These roles may also be distributed to the other community members



Continue learning through observations and discussions

- » Community members or mentors (if applicable) may also be encouraged to informally engage in conversations with each other outside of these meetings.
- » How often will the mentors meet to learn from each other (e.g., troubleshoot concerns)



Negotiation of leadership roles (facilitator, mentors, other members)

- » Will there only be one facilitator
- » Facilitator and other group member leadership roles should be negotiated with all CoP members
- » Will leadership roles be changed once a month on regular basis
- » Perhaps mentors or other leaders can lead activities in their area of expertise? Or based on the needs of the CoP





NEGOTIATE



CoPs are in constant negotiation depending on the changing needs of the members



NEGOTIATE



Community member-driven

In the case of the CAC, the CoP meetings, workshops, and other content were all community member-driven, as there was a shared learning imperative – to advance gender equity and leadership diversity. As the needs of the community members changed over a two-year period, so did the CoP content. It is important to remember that CoPs are always in flux and roles/content are in constant negotiation.



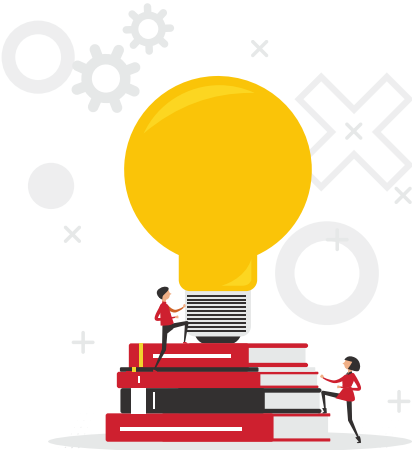
Find out what makes people “lean-in”

As mentioned above, collecting stories and checking in with the community members will help determine what is encouraging people to lean in and what needs to be changed to cultivate a meaningful social learning space.



Optional activities (leadership legacy)

Consider providing supplementary training and courses where community members are able to engage in activities in the service of achieving their goals (e.g., additional leadership development activities). By offering these optional opt-ins, CoP members have the chance to engage in other activities and make connections with others in the CoPs.



Negotiation of collective learning goals, activities, assessments, and techniques all involve constant negotiation in the CoP





DESIGN



Design the first CoP meeting and determining how it will flow moving forward



DESIGN

*In the CoP literature by Wenger-Trayner, the term frame is used to describe planning and designing.

We recommend an initial in-person meeting with the entire CoP to foster a trusting environment and to determine online meeting tools

- » Where will this meeting take place
- » Could it be paired with another event to minimize travel costs
- » Who will prepare the agenda and meeting content
- » What are the goals for this CoP (e.g., asking the community what they want out of this social learning initiative). What is the driving learning imperative?
- » How will you establish trust and a feeling of equity among the community members (ground rules)



Discuss expectations and accountability



Be clear with participation expectations for all community members

- » How often will the entire CoP meet - in-person or online?
- » Are the community members expected to come to every in-person or online meeting
- » Will members be asked to speak at every meeting
- » Will there be optional activities and workshops



Integrate deliberate opportunities for engagement and knowledge transfer (within the community)

- » Will the community members be asked to present the progress of their goals at every meeting
- » Updates may help the community members troubleshoot issues and share their ongoing experiences to support other goals



Distribute leadership roles (other community members)

- » Will some community members have the opportunity to take on additional leadership tasks
- » What tasks might they be
- » Visit the Wenger-Trayner.com website for a list of leadership roles specifically developed for CoPs

Integrate deliberate opportunities for engagement and knowledge transfer (outside of the community)

- » Could the community members present their projects/goals at conferences, summits, competitions or other events

This will allow the community members to spread the word about their projects/ goals and receive feedback from the wider sport community



Select an appropriate online meeting platform to support ongoing interactions

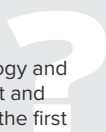
- » Technology will deeply enrich or alienate members
- » Engage members when selecting, introducing and supporting software platform(s)

It is vital that community members are supported in learning how to use selected platforms and understand online communication tools. This should be addressed either at the first meeting, if in person, or online prior to the first online meeting

- » It must be safe to learn technology and receive support on how to use it and what is needed, before leaving the first in-person meeting

Examples of online platforms that could be used:

- » Discussion boards may include Slack or Basecamp
- » Voice or video interactions may include Zoom, Adobe, Skype (paid and unpaid versions are available)





IMPLEMENT



Implement
ongoing CoP
activities





IMPLEMENT



Division of Pods and determining their purpose

We recommend getting to know everyone first to make an informed decision of who may work well together

- » How will the mentors and other community members be divided into pods - if pods are used
- » Will this division consider common interests or goals
- » How often will the pods meet
- » Will the mentors also meet with the other community members 1:1
- » What is the purpose of the pod meeting (e.g., open discussions, specific agendas)

Even if there is no specific agenda, the community members found regular meetings were important for maintaining engagement and accountability on their ends to keep moving forward with their projects/goals, despite facing obstacles and barriers.



Cultivate a feeling of equity

- » How will the facilitator and/or mentors maintain a feeling of equity and support among all CoP members

Create strategic alignment in the sport organizations

The community members' organizations may be an important support in the execution of their projects/goals, or a considerable barrier. Therefore, it is important that the (sport) organizations are buying in to the importance of the projects/goals and CoP.

- » How will you create this buy-in?



Continuous check-ins (what is keeping members engaged?)

It is important to keep a finger on the pulse of the CoP. One way of checking-in is by collecting stories (to be further discussed in the next section)

- » Are the workshops useful for the members
- » Are the pod meetings effective in supporting the needs of the CoP members

A simple check-out activity at the end of meetings may also inform future activities. For example, having each CoP member fill out a card with the questions:

- » What is one thing you took away from the meeting?
- » What would you like to see at our next meeting?





ASSESS

Assess the CoP
outcomes and
value of social
learning



ASSESS



Train community members to assess for outcomes

In our case, the community members participated in a workshop and were provided with tools to conduct their own small-scale assessments of their projects (e.g., how to use a logic model). This enabled the community members to provide their organizations and the CoP with the results of their projects. Assessment resources can often be found online, or an individual could be contracted to facilitate a session.



Value Creation to assess CoPs

It may be necessary to hire an external party to conduct an assessment of the CoP to determine the perceived value created through the social learning intervention (from the perspective of the CoP members) and the achievement of the target outcomes. In our case, data was largely collected through interviews with the CoP members where they discussed their stories and experiences participating in the CoP and carrying out their projects/goals. The theorists behind CoPs (Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner) and their colleagues have developed templates to collect stories and assess for value creation. For those interested in learning more about this assessment tool, we welcome you to visit their website (www.wenger-trayner.com) for tools and information.

- » In addition to interviews, other forms of data collection may include observations and the collection of the community members organizational data to monitor change (e.g., number of female head coaches from 2018-2019).





MAINTAIN

Maintain the
momentum
of a CoP
long-term



MAINTAIN



Develop a legacy plan



- » How will the CoP members continue to engage once the program ends (if the program has a specific funding period)



- » How will the CoP continue once the projects/goals are completed

Consider asking the community members about their future needs and redistribute leadership roles accordingly



Apply for grants/other long-term funding

One of the workshops in our Alberta CoP was centred on funding and grants. Although it is not necessary to have funding for any aspect of the social learning, it does help for instance for travel costs and to adequately assess outcomes.

In addition, some community members have secured internal funding from their organizations to maintain their projects/plans/goals beyond the original timeframe because of the impacts of their initiatives – another key reason to create buy-in with the organizations.



Establish partnerships

Some of the CoP members developed collaborative plans with their sport organizations to maintain their projects/goals (e.g., two sports have developed an annual conference for women in sport leadership)



Concluding remarks

We hope this step-by-step model provides you, your organizations or the people in your community, with a guide to develop a low cost-high impact social learning initiative that is relevant to your contexts. With the many methods out there today for people to connect (in-person/online), CoPs provide a flexible space to cultivate long-term change among groups of people who are passionate about developing their practices and continued growth. While the model is presented as a multi-organizational approach to learning and changing practices, this model can be easily used in any single organization.

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About the Authors

Erin Kraft is a doctoral candidate in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. As a former swim coach with over 10 years of experience, Erin primarily coached children with developmental disabilities. She holds a master's in education where she examined coaches' experiences teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in aquatic programs. More recently, Erin's research interests have shifted and focus on developing social learning spaces, as an approach to facilitate learning opportunities in sport. Her doctoral research uses these social learning spaces to increase gender equity and leadership diversity across sport, and to expand the learning capabilities of Canadian Parasport coaches.

Diane Culver is an Associate Professor in the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa. Her research interests include coach development and qualitative research. She is currently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to research Parasport coaching, and women in sport organizations. In her teaching, research, and consulting she is particularly interested in social learning theory and building social learning capability in sport. Diane is also an alpine ski coach who has worked with all levels of skiers from youth to Olympic levels. She now coaches masters skiers and mentors youth coaches.

Isabelle Cayer, a graduate of the University of Ottawa, is the project lead for the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program. She is the Director, Sport Safety at the Coaching Association of Canada and provides leadership and expertise in the areas of Safe Sport, Professional Coaching, and the Responsible Coaching Movement. She leads the development of programs and initiatives in Women in Coaching including mentorship and apprenticeships, research, policy work, and raises awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion within the sport community in Canada. An NCCP certified former figure skating coach, she currently contributes to coach development as a learning facilitator and Master Coach Developer for the Coaches Association of Ontario, and as a Women and Leadership Facilitator for Canadian Women and Sport.

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Jon Benjamin Photography

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About the Coaching Association of Canada

The Coaching Association of Canada unites stakeholders and partners in its commitment to raising the skills and stature of coaches, and ultimately expanding their reach and influence. Through its programs, the CAC empowers coaches with knowledge and skills, promotes ethics, fosters positive attitudes, builds competence, and increases the credibility and recognition of coaches. Learn more at www.coach.ca.

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- Melody Davidson, Hockey Canada
- Adam Sollitt, CAC
- Jackie Tittley, CAC

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- Jennifer Cliff, Alberta Alpine Ski Association
- Lori Brough, Wapiti Nordic Bike Club
- Laura Filipow, Spirit North
- Kendall Newell, Hockey Alberta
- Jasen Pratt, Karate Alberta
- Bronwen Harvey, Ringette Alberta
- Ella Mayer, InMotion Network
- Trina Radcliffe, Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference
- Lisa Grant, Alberta Lacrosse Association
- Carmen Charron, Alberta Soccer Association
- Chandra Crawford, Fast & Female

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uOttawa



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
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Appendix Q
Completed Specific Instance Value Creation Story

Name: Debbie
 Date: 2020

Typical cycles	Your story:
1. <u>Immediate:</u>	I attended CoP meetings regularly and met with other sport leaders in my province. They shared similar goals when it came to moving gender equity forward in sport.
2. <u>Potential:</u>	My organization hosts an annual Women in Sport conference. I learned that one of the other sport leaders from the CoP was looking for a women in leadership PD opportunity for coaches in her organization.
3. <u>Applied:</u>	This past year, we collaborated and brought together both sports for the conference. This provided a greater number of women, from multiple sports to connect and participate in leadership development opportunities.
4. <u>Realized:</u>	The collaborative conference was very well received by the participants and we intend to continue with this collaboration moving forward.
5. <u>Transformative:</u>	This experience and success of the conference gave me the confidence to push forward for more support from my organization when it comes to leadership development for women. In the past, I may not have had the same drive to advocate for these changes.

*This example has been edited to highlight each value creation cycle