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Gender and Leadership in Sport: Girl Team Captains

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Abstract

Employing personal narrative, observations, and overview of literature, the notions of gender and leadership are examined through captaining. Battling the gender norms in female team sports and leadership has been a non-topic for decades in physical education and recreational sports. This study intends to interrogate and highlight the obstacles and possibilities of leadership in female sports and to rectify the often antiquated and masculinist points of view on female sports.

Keywords: gender, leadership, sports, girl team captains, power, conflict resolution, shared leadership

Introduction

My sister, the first-born, is a perfectionist rule-follower. Classic. She paved the way for the rest of us to fall short: straight A's, perfect attendance, post-secondary scholarships, acceptance to med school, eventual emergency room physician. My three brothers and I could never live-up to the standard she set.

My sister and I were born 10 years apart, almost to the day. I had always thought we were nothing alike, but I eventually realized that I, too, am a perfectionist rule-follower. At mid-life, we found a common ground in fitness, and specifically in Crossfit, as we navigated a new-to-us sport - me, in my late 30s and she, in her late 40s. Crossfit seemed to offer the challenge and discipline that we both craved - the perfect balance of elements that came naturally with tasks that seemed near-impossible, a program to follow, a coach to lead us through it, and a community to support and encourage us. My sister and I joined different gyms, or boxes in the Crossfit world, and never

trained together, but it was a common ground that kept us connected and played some part in keeping us accountable and committed to the training.

At some point, my sister met a fitness coach who convinced her to train for physique competitions. As a category of Fitness and Figure competitions and derived from the larger sport of bodybuilding, the women's physique category was created for athletes who enjoy weight training, competition, and contest preparation. Competitors in the physique category are judged to a standard of a "toned, athletic physique showcasing femininity, muscle tone, and beauty/flow of physique" ("Fitness and figure competition," 2021, para. 11). While being assessed based on descriptive words such as ripped, shredded, striated, and vascular, competitors are scored down for excessive muscularity (they must have muscles but not too many big muscles") and required to display their attractiveness in a uniform of bikini, high heels, and jewelry, not to mention having to worry about their tan, makeup, and hair.

This I could not understand. This new interest we did not share. But as I watched my sister perform on competition day, with her hair extensions, spray tan and professional makeup, I realized this was just another example of perfectionist rule-following. However, the "rules" in this sport didn't make sense to me, and the more I thought about them, the more I realized that this sport seemed to highlight the contradiction women live within an athletic realm. To compete in Physique, women must commit to a brutal training regime that includes athletic strength and endurance coupled with crippling dieting to achieve a particular "look". While it is necessary to build strength to achieve this "look," physique competition appears to have very little -if anything- to do with actual athletic performance, and everything to do with putting the body on display to be judged on a particular aesthetic. Herein lies the gender norm contradiction in the sport of bodybuilding; the act of lifting heavy things and building muscle is inherently masculine, and yet

in competition, female (and arguably to some degree also male) bodybuilders are judged on a subjective scale of femininity which includes how “pretty” they are.

As a female athlete, my personal experiences with gender norm contradiction are similar. Sport exposes individuals to characteristics that are considered masculine individualism, competitiveness, aggressiveness, power, strength, and toughness (Steinfeldt et al., 2011; Wellard, 2002) while society continually bombards females with messages about what it means to be feminine. There have been many times throughout my athletic career that I have wrestled with societal and/or sport culture pressure to conform (or not) with conflicting gender norms, and particularly as a team captain where leadership qualities considered inherently male are also expected, yet relationship qualities are needed to interact positively and effectively with teammates, a trait that is considered inherently female (Glenn & Horn, 1993). Researchers have also shown that instrumental and expressive functions within leaders are not mutually exclusive, and that athlete leaders can simultaneously engage in task and social behaviours (Fransen et al., 2014; Rees & Segal, 1984; Todd & Kent, 2004; Voelker et al., 2011).

Throughout my career as an athlete and coach, I have experienced captains who have effectively balanced these gender norm expectations, but others who have failed terribly. These experiences led me to question how I might contribute to helping young female athletes navigate these circumstances, and to help develop their leadership skills in meaningful and socially conscious ways.

Part 1: Gender, Gender Roles, and Power

While the example of my sister in physique competition occurred later in life, female athletes experience these confusing gender norm contradictions throughout their lifetimes. Young female athletes must navigate a multitude of societal expectations that often compete. Among

these, gender roles and norms are highly influential and complex, particularly in an adolescent educational context where there is an additional element of identity formation.

While social norms can be conceptualized as a set of unwritten rules or standards that guide social behaviour, “gender norms provide even more specific guidance (and constraint) to men and women in regard to how they are supposed to act, think, and feel” (Steinfeldt, et al., 2011, p. 402). Further, gender does not simply imply a dichotomy of male/female sex, or even intersex. Rather, gender is a complex social system that “refers to the culturally defined roles, responsibilities, attributes, and entitlements associated with being (or being seen as) a woman or man in a given setting, along with the power relations between and among women and men” (Heise et al., 2019, p. 2440). Rather than comprising a set of essential characteristics determined by biological sex, gender roles are performed. These roles are socially constructed as gender “is (re)produced in and through individual embodiment (identity and presentation), social interaction and social structures (history and locality) and is shaped and constrained by a complex working of social relations imbued with power” (Oxford & McLachlan, 2018, p. 4). These social constructions are historical, shaped by macro forces such as religion and politics, and are simultaneously reproduced and changed over time.

Gender as a social system distributes power, resources, and status based on difference between men and women, or between what is deemed masculine versus feminine.

While men and women experience societal pressure to conform to norms that dictate appropriate standards of masculinity and femininity, research suggests that such conformity can have harmful effects, expressed through greater health risk behaviours such as binge drinking and disordered eating (for example, Steinfeldt et. al., 2011). Additionally, research has indicated that female athletes, while reporting feelings of bodily competence and a sense of pride in their

powerful athletic physique, also reported feelings of bodily dissatisfaction in their efforts to portray a traditionally feminine appearance (Krane et al., 2004; Steinfeldt et al., 2011)

Sexism continues to be prevalent in sport due to behaviours, conditions and attitudes that foster gender role stereotypes in sport (Fink, 2016). Not only does this lead to prejudice and discrimination, usually against women, but boys/men learn early to never “act like a girl,” particularly in sport (Fink, 2016). Additionally, individuals who challenge dichotomous norms suffer societal misconceptions such as female athletes being labeled as gay or too masculine, regardless of their sexual orientation (Wartel, 2021).

Gender in physical education and athletics

Physical activity, and sport, expose participants to attributes that are typically considered masculine, such as individualism, competitiveness, aggressiveness, power, strength, and toughness (Steinfeldt et al., 2011; Wellard, 2002). These values and aspects of masculinity are reinforced and rewarded within an athletic context. Participation in sport may lead to internalization of these attributes, regardless of athlete gender, therefore female athletes receive gender role messages in sport that may conflict directly with societal norms of femininity (Steinfeldt et al., 2011).

At the very core, the term “female athlete” is oxymoronic in this discourse and challenges the dominant constructions of femininity and masculinity. Sport is considered a masculine activity and female participation undermines a feminine passive identity (Evans, 2006). Girls who choose to challenge this patriarchal ideal of sport must then continue to navigate what it means to be female in a masculine arena and to enact and re-enact conflicting gender roles and expectations throughout the process. For example, Evans (2006) described a 2001 Liverpool, UK study of adolescents aged 13-16 in which girls in a co-ed physical education class felt pressure to present themselves to boys as passively beautiful, but also felt pressure to present themselves as active and

competent at sport. To be successful in athletics, females need to develop characteristics associated with masculinity (for example strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, independence), but simultaneously “attempt to manage expectations of maintaining culturally desirable aspects of femininity (e.g., attractiveness, heterosexuality, relationships)” (Steinfeldt et al., 2011, p. 403). Researchers subsequently note that female athletes often struggle with the incompatibility of culturally defined standards of femininity and the notion of being athletic (Steinfeldt et al., 2011; Wartel, 2021).

Gender role conflict “resolution”

To consider resolution(s) within gender roles, I have noted three seminal constructs within my work which led to conflict and ways in which to approach it.

1. Femininity Deficit and Inhibited Intentionality

In general, research has shown that adolescent girls experience physical activity and physical education differently than boys. Clark et al. (2011) cited authors that describe physical education curricula as “sport based, competitive and male oriented and therefore experienced as exclusionary by many girls” (p. 194). Girls experience a complex relationship with physical activity requiring gender role negotiation that often leads to the notion of a “femininity deficit” and inhibited intentionality, both theories that suggest the perceived pressure to appear and act “feminine” leads girls to underestimate their ability and subsequently underperform (Azzarito et al., 2006; Clark et al., 2011; Cockburn and Clarke, 2002; Evans, 2006; Spencer et al., 2015).

Under these theories, the typically masculine ideologies inherent in sport and physical education cultures tend to “alienate and demotivate girls in sport and physical activity in general, and PE in particular” (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002, p. 651). In addition, while young girls clearly

understand that physical activity is related to health, gender norms may contribute to an interpretation of health as heavily dependent on body aesthetics (Clark et al., 2011; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Heise et al., 2019; Spencer et al., 2015). Body image concerns and pressure to appear and act feminine limit girls' ability and freedom to fully participate in physical activity and sport without inhibition (Heise et al., 2019; Slater & Tiggeman, 2011; Spencer et al., 2015). This is problematic in that it not only serves as a disadvantage for girls' participation in physical education at school, but "continues to deprive women in terms of life-long learning and physically active post-school life-styles" (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002, p. 651).

2. Sacrifice of a feminine identity

In a 2011 study examining the relationship between gender norms, sport participation, and perceptions of body image among female student-athletes and nonathletes, Steinfeldt and colleagues reported that female athletes did not perceive any "loss of femininity" through sport participation. Compared to female college students who did not play intercollegiate sports, results of the study indicate that female student-athletes conform to the same levels of feminine norms, but also conform to certain traditional masculine norms associated with sport participation, for example strength, assertiveness, and risk-taking behaviours (Steinfeldt et al., 2011).

Other studies suggest, however, that female athletes sacrifice or willingly deny elements of a traditionally feminine identity to effectively participate in sport (for example, Oxford & McLachlan, 2018). Female athletes are socialized to believe that, to experience success in sport, they must embody masculine traits such as strength, power, competitiveness, and extrovertedness and effectively deny feminine characteristics that traditionally have no place in sport such as docility, fragility, and introvertedness. Girls learn early that, to compete with the boys, they must essentially become one of them; they must appear strong, brave, tough. They must become the

“Tomboy.” In this case, girls are forced to choose between two worlds, to accept that they are “less feminine” than their non-athletic counterparts but at the same time not quite as masculine as the boys.

3. Overcompensation and hyperfemininity

In circumstances where feminine identity is not compromised, some female athletes seem to combat gender role tensions in sport with an overcompensation of femininity. Steinfeldt and colleagues showed that “women in sport do not perceive themselves as any less feminine than their peers, nor are they inherently forfeiting their femininity in some way by participating in sport” (Steinfeldt et al., 2011, p. 410). Furthermore, participants in this study revealed that they engaged in “compensatory behaviors (e.g., wearing makeup, ribbons, dresses)-both inside and outside of sporting contexts-to reinforce the notion that they are feminine” (Steinfeldt et al., 2011, p. 410). In these ways, female athletes maintain an image of femininity within their athletic (read: masculine) role.

Justen Hamilton (2020) proposes the notion of “overdoing gender” by women in martial arts and combat sports. They reveal that female athletes in these sports settings take measures to combat feelings of feminine insecurity by oversubscribing to gender norms outside of sport, particularly in their intimate relationships; because they possess characteristics that are traditionally interpreted as masculine within their martial arts and combat sports settings (e.g., increased muscle size, strength, and fighting ability), these women seek partnerships which place them into a hyperfeminine role (Hamilton, 2020).

Washington and Economides (2016) examine the “Postfeminist Ideal” in female CrossFit (CF) athletes. They describe:

Where CF capitalizes on and contributes to this moment where female physical strength and strong bodies are valorized and widely touted, it also reinscribes those bodies as sexual objects for both the heterosexual male gaze and the narcissistic gaze. Additionally, the contradictions continue as women are depicted as agents in their own empowerment while also being disciplined into docility. (Washington & Economides, 2016, p. 156)

CrossFit as a sport has the potential to challenge gender norms, but instead the authors found that it continues to be constrained by heteronormativity and hegemonic beauty ideals.

Gender Norms & Sport Leadership

With an understanding that sport is a gendered space, it can be argued further that leadership within sport is also nuanced with gender and power dynamics. Competitive sport serves as a social institution in which certain forms of masculinity are acceptable and celebrated (ie, heterosexual and physically dominant), thereby denigrating and suppressing all other forms of masculinity and effectively subordinating women (Burton & Leberman, 2017). In this way, “gender not only shapes identities, but also operates as an axis of power” (Burton & Leberman, 2017, p. 17).

Gender norms embedded in sport control leadership processes and who can occupy leadership positions. Masculinity is institutionalized in sport organizations whereby masculine behaviours are deemed necessary leadership qualities in sport and those who do not display these masculine leadership skills are questioned in their leadership ability (Burton & Leberman, 2017; Fink, 2016). Burton and Leberman (2017) reviewed demographic information of sport organizations in the United States and internationally and found that men occupied most of the management and other leadership positions. As an example, they relay that woman hold less than

25% of senior leadership positions in US professional sports leagues (including women's leagues), except in the Women's National Basketball Association where women hold 33% of general manager positions. Burton and Leberman (2017, p. 20) contend that "this skewed gender ratio serves to reinforce the notion of masculinity and masculine leadership as the norm in sport."

A major contributor to this unbalanced gender distribution is the culture of most sport organizations, meaning the group's shared and implicit values, beliefs, assumptions, and ways of interacting that contribute to the organization's social and psychological environment. Burton and Leberman (2017) assert that most sport organizations internationally, despite research that supports the benefits of diversity in the workplace, value similarity that marginalizes women as their organizational culture supports and perpetuates hegemonic masculinity.

Girl Captains

Sport leadership research has highlighted the gendered nature of captaincy, affording a privileged position to an individual expressing more "masculine" traits such as extrovertedness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and aptitude (Keats, 2013, 2014). Captains are most often the "best" player on the team, further acquiring status and power unattainable to other team members. How, then, do female captains navigate gender role expectations within team sport? How do they simultaneously balance feminine and masculine roles -- how do they consolidate the "popular girl" with the "talented athlete," the "chick" with the "jock"? How do these conflicting gender roles form their identities?

The pervasiveness of today's social media both narrows and widens the gender divide. Hypersexuality has infiltrated the fitness industry and the sporting realm where female athletes are depicted as simultaneously strong yet vulnerable, athletic yet seductive, rugged yet polished. Images of female athletes show the "markers of femininity such as tight clothing, perfectly styled

hair, and makeup contrast[ed] against traditional markers of masculinity such as well-defined muscles, weightlifting accoutrements, and strength” (Washington & Economides, 2016, p. 143). These incongruencies perhaps exist to reinforce a gender system that grants “less legitimacy to gender identities or expressions that do not conform to a strict dichotomy of acceptable behaviour for men and women” (Heise et al., 2019, p. 2441). Female athletes cannot aspire to the same level of success, power, and status as male athletes. This is continually reinforced for example through female athletes’ experiences with smaller professional sport salaries, considerably less media coverage, restricted access to resources, and preposterously inappropriate personal questions posed during interviews. Adolescent girls on the brink of sport drop-out cannot help but internalize this hegemonic oppressiveness in professional sport, effectively teaching them that there is no real future for them in this male-dominated sporting world; as far as they’re concerned, their efforts and achievements could never be good enough.

Conclusion, Part 1

Increased availability of organized sport opportunities for girls has bolstered participation since the introduction of Title IX in 1972 in the United States, and organizations such as Fast and Female are taking huge strides to decrease the drop-out rate of girls in sport. The deeply ingrained social norms and expectations in sport, however, continue to shape female sporting experiences.

In reflection, I am immensely proud of my sister for navigating the gender norm contradictions in sport, and for pushing her own boundaries of ability, confidence, and self-perception. In true older sister fashion, she led me to question the “what” and the “why” of our experiences, which in turn has informed my work as an educator and researcher. Further exploration of the gender norm contradictions experienced by young female athletes is needed,

particularly about those who excel into leadership positions such as captaincy. Gender stereotypes can be challenged at all levels of sport, effectively disrupting sexism experience by all participants.

Part 2: Narrative Annotated Bibliography of Literature on Shared Leadership in Sport

Introduction

I returned to my senior/fifth year with the University of Calgary women's volleyball team after another grueling summer of training and competing with the National Team in Winnipeg. That summer had changed me. I felt stronger mentally and physically. Things "clicked" in ways they never had before. I'd gained a confidence that allowed me to not only work harder and perform better individually, but to also share energy with teammates.

My coach must have also sensed this change in me, and at the end of pre-season training camp, I was nominated co-captain alongside a teammate who had held the solo captain title for the previous three years. While she had previous experience as a leader, I felt like a rookie again: inexperienced and looking for guidance in how to perform this new role. I wondered how this shared leadership experience would/should work. As the season progressed, she continued as principal leader in very visible ways (e.g., speaking up in the locker room, taking charge of organizing team functions, attending media interviews, liaising with the head coach), and I was left wondering what my leadership role meant, or if the title was simply "lip-service." I felt that nobody saw me as a captain, that her title overshadowed mine, even though it was meant to be shared. It was a longstanding goal of mine to captain a team, and now that I had the title, I didn't know what to do with it. With no leadership training, no clearly defined expectations, I felt inadequate and ineffective. Did all athletes feel this way in their first captain role? Or perhaps I

was simply not a “natural” leader. Should captains be groomed from early in their careers instead of having leadership thrust upon them at a later stage? As I reflect on these questions and my personal experiences with the current model of athlete leadership in team sport, I wonder if there is a better way?

It has been shown that effective leadership in team sport is a fundamental component of success (see, for example, Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughead, 2006; Eys, Loughead, & Hardy, 2007; Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Smoll & Smith, 1989; Todd & Kent, 2004; Yukelson, 1997). While early research focused mainly on the leadership role of the coach, there also exists formal and informal leadership opportunities among team members (Eys et al., 2007; Glenn & Horn, 1993; Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Rees & Segal, 1984; Weese & Nicholls, 1986; Yukelson, Weinberg, Richardson, & Jackson, 1983). Researchers have recently begun to examine effectiveness of various leadership structures, and compared leadership offered by coaches, captains and informal leaders, the latter of which will be examined later in this chapter.

Since leadership has been described as vital to team success, understanding such a phenomenon should be a chief concern of athletic administrators and researchers. However, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995, p.277) assert “there is a considerable gap between the importance assigned to athletic leadership and the efforts to understand it.” A comprehensive understanding of peer leadership in sport remains elusive. First, a clear and consistent definition of athletic leadership is non-existent (Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006). Second, early studies of athlete leadership do not distinguish between formal leaders such as team captains and informal leaders who emerge based on their interactions with teammates (Dupuis et al., 2006). Only recently have the merits of informal or emerging leaders become officially recognized in the literature (see, for example,

Fransen et al., 2014; Holmes et al., 2010; Holmes et al., 2008; Loughead et al., 2006). Third, formal peer leader (captain) research seeks to identify a specific form of leadership—identifiable traits, behaviours and responsibilities, which may be limiting (e.g., Glenn & Horn, 1993; Lee, Coburn, & Partridge, 1983; Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006; Todd & Kent, 2004). Finally, it seems that the existence of a formal leader (captain) has been, until recently, uncontested in the athletic realm and in athletic research; few have questioned the practice of naming *one* peer leader on a team of many contributing members.

Athlete leadership research presents a significant contribution to further understanding the processes of leadership in team sport. Since all team members are assumed to contribute to team function in one way or another, it would be beneficial to realize and promote both formal and informal leadership opportunities within the team. Understanding how to maximize leadership potential will allow coaches and team members to extend possibilities for team satisfaction, cohesion, and achievement.

Leadership in Sport

The athletic environment has been identified as a naturalistic setting for psychological research, particularly for behavioural assessment (e.g., Smoll & Smith, 1989; Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000). Researchers assert that observing, recording, and analysing leadership behaviours in a sports setting is advantageous to theoretical development (Smoll & Smith, 1989). Often, the most prominent leader in team sports is the coach. Coaches play a central role for implementation, management, and success of sports programs. Leadership dimensions include decision making processes, teaching, and learning activities used in practice situations, the type and frequency of feedback provided, motivational techniques, and relationship strategies (Horn,

2002). As formal leaders, coaches have powerful influence on the outcomes experienced by athletes; the approach they take, the behaviours they display, the goals they establish, and the attitudes and values they convey all impact whether the experience is positive or negative for the participants (Smoll & Smith, 1989). It is natural, therefore, to seek empirical evidence and development of a model to measure leadership in the sports setting.

Models of Sport Leadership

Chelladurai's (1978, 1984, 1993) Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) is most widely used in athletic leadership study. In this model, three states of leader behaviours (required, preferred, and actual) interact with situational and member characteristics to achieve member satisfaction and group performance. The central contention of the MML theory is that "the degree of congruence among the three states will influence the outcome variables of performance and member satisfaction" (Chelladurai, 2007, p. 118). In other words, the leader must be aware and balance the demands of the situation and the expectations of the athletes and alter his or her actual behaviour based on feedback from performance and member satisfaction. An attempt to adequately test the constructs of the MML, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) which includes 40 items within five dimensions of leader behaviour in sport: training and instruction, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support, and positive feedback/rewarding behaviour. Athletes' preferences for specific leader behaviours, athletes' perceptions of their coaches' leader behaviours, and coaches' perceptions of their own behaviour have been measured using three different versions of the LSS. In 1997, Zhang, Jensen, and Mann modified and revised the Leadership Scale for Sport, proposing two new dimensions (group maintenance behaviour; and situational consideration behaviour) to the existing five. Since the proposed group maintenance behaviour did not emerge as a distinct factor, the Revised Leadership

Scale for Sport contains 60 items to measure six dimensions of leadership. Additionally, the authors claim that the RLSS is an improvement of measurement characteristics in that the items are more sports specific, the scale is more culturally specific to the United States, and there is improved generalizability and application of the scale due to large and diverse participant samples.

Smoll and Smith (1989) proposed a model of coach leadership behaviours in sport (which is a revised version of the original Mediation Model of Leadership, developed in 1978 by R. E. Smith, Smoll, and Hunt) where relationships exist between situational, cognitive, behavioural, and individual differences of both coaches and players. In this mediational model, the researchers found that player perceptions of leader behaviours were perhaps more important than the behaviours themselves. “Our model suggests that both overt leader behaviors and athletes’ perceptions are important; leaders’ effectiveness resides in both the behaviors of the leader and the eyes of the beholder” (Smoll & Smith, 1989, p. 1544). The Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS) was developed as an observational method to accompany the mediational model and involves observing and recording 12 categories of leader behaviors (Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977 cited in Chelladurai, 2007).

Horn’s (2002) Model of Coaching Effectiveness attempts to bridge the literature between the MML and mediational leadership model. Drawing from several theories, including achievement goal theories, attribution theory, competence motivation theory, the expectancy-value model, self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory, and the sport commitment model, Horn’s (2002) model appears more complex than the mediational model and the multidimensional model. Essentially, Horn delineates sociocultural context, organizational climate, and coaches’ personal

characteristics as antecedents to the coaches' expectancies, values, beliefs, and goals, which in turn dictate the coaches' behaviour. This behaviour directly impacts athletes' performance and behaviour, creating a feedback loop for the coaches' expectancies and goals. Additionally, coaches' behaviour affects athletes' perceptions and interpretations, which then affect their self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and levels of motivation. Chelladurai (2007) critiques the dimensions of the model, asserting that certain elements are implicitly included in the multidimensional and mediational models and that the model's efficacy and utility have yet to be verified.

Athlete/Peer Leadership

Although leadership within sports teams has been identified as having important implications for team cohesion and success, the above models were developed in evaluation of coaching leadership behaviours. Until recently much of the sports leadership research has centred on the coach, and very few studies were done to examine leadership among athletes. Given the importance assigned to adult leadership, it would be advantageous to understand the early development of leadership behaviour. Adolescents display leadership characteristics and behaviour in a variety of settings including school, student council, academic clubs, athletic teams, and social settings, yet there is a need to explore dimensions that contribute to youth acquisition of these leadership positions. According to Todd and Kent (2004), drawing correlations between adolescent leadership tendencies and adult behaviours has been difficult due to a lack of longitudinal research in this area, but some studies have found positive associations between adolescent leadership and self-esteem, locus of control, parental examples in the home, and academic success. In their study of developmental and negative experiences in organized activities, Hansen and Larson (2007) found that adolescents who engaged in lead roles such as a starter on a sports team experienced greater

developmental benefits but also more frequent negative experiences during the activity. The authors suggest that a higher level of immersion and investment would facilitate greater responsibility and increased likelihood for learning, whereas stress and an increased pressure to perform could characterize negative experiences. It is hypothesized that these challenges may also be part of the developmental process and an additional stimulus for growth (Hansen & Larson, 2007).

Factors Affecting Leadership

Initial athletic peer leadership studies aimed at identifying traits and/or behaviours that distinguish leaders from non-leaders on sport teams. Tropp and Landers (1979) conducted one of the first studies to explore peer leadership in sport. Drawing on research indicating that players in central positions are more likely to become instrumental leaders, Tropp and Landers compared interaction frequency and leadership among female field hockey players. Along with measures such as leadership skill, experience, and attraction, the researchers found that the nature of the task (for example, highly specialized positions such as goalie), rather than the high interaction of a central position, is a more predictive measure for the emergence of athlete leadership on field hockey teams. Interestingly, Tropp and Landers note that coaches' selection of captain based on skill level and seniority does not necessarily correlate to peer ratings of leadership; goalies were rated highest in leadership by their peers and yet represented only 25% of team captain positions.

Also in 1979, Gill and Perry found that starter status (compared to non-starters), playing position and previous experience were leadership predictors in women's intercollegiate softball. Team members were asked to rank teammates according to leadership influence at the beginning, middle and end of the season. The results showed consistently that starting players with more experience and who played positions such as catcher and infield had greater leadership status. Like Tropp and

Landers (1979), Gill and Perry (1979, p. 89) note “the player who was consistently ranked highest on leadership over all three times was not the team captain.”

Rees (1983) examined leadership role differentiation theory as it applies to team sports. In a study of 23 intramural basketball teams, Rees challenged previous research that indicated that group leaders could not simultaneously play instrumental (task-oriented) and expressive (relationship-oriented) roles. Conversely, findings suggested that role integration exists among leaders; the most important leaders on these teams showed strong orientation towards goal attainment while contributing to group harmony. Others have also shown that instrumental and expressive functions within leaders are not mutually exclusive, and that athlete leaders can simultaneously engage in task and social behaviours (Fransen, et al., 2014; Rees & Segal, 1984; Todd & Kent, 2004; Voelker et al., 2011). Rees suggests that this was perhaps the case because of the nature of the task in team sport, where highly skilled individuals require effective integration into the group to achieve team success. Rees and Segal (1984) echo this assertion in their study of instrumental and expressive leadership in two college football teams where there also existed role integration among leaders. “It may be that in goal-directed groups, such as sports teams, expressive behavior is perceived as part of task leadership, since having members get along with each other is essential for the successful coordination of task activities and through this the realization of group goals...Failure to provide expressive leadership by instrumental team leaders may be perceived by group members as violating the group norm of ‘being a team player’” (Rees and Segal, 1984, p. 121). The authors also suggest this instrumental and expressive role combination is an indication of charismatic leadership.

Yukelson, Weinberg, Richardson, and Jackson (1983) found an interesting correlation between leadership and interpersonal attraction in their investigation of members of a university baseball team and a university soccer team. Drawing from the notion that individuals within a group interact in both interpersonal and task related situations, the authors found that both baseball and soccer team members who were nominated high on leadership status were also considered high on friendship status by their peers. Furthermore, individuals possessing this sociometric prestige were more senior players, had greater locus of control, and scored higher on coaches' ratings of performance (Yukelson et al., 1983). Athletes identified as leaders in this study were also found to be 'internals,' a term the authors use to describe individuals who are "self-directed, self-responsible and seek more work involvement," (Yukelson et al., 1983, p. 34) which is useful in group problem solving situations.

Glenn and Horn (1993) conducted a study to identify personal and psychological characteristics of female soccer players who emerge as leaders and found somewhat varying results between self-ratings, peer-ratings, and coach-ratings of leadership. While coaches rated leaders based primarily on actual skill competence, athletes who were high in perceived skill, femininity, and masculinity rated themselves higher as leaders than did athletes who scored lower on these measures, and peers viewed teammates with high levels of competitive trait anxiety, masculinity, skill, and perceived soccer competence as higher in leadership ability. Additional results indicated that central field position contributed to higher ratings of leadership by both the coach and self-determination. Furthermore, the authors' findings "emphasize the androgynous conception of an effective team leader (i.e., one who is assertive, confident, and aggressive but is also friendly, nurturant [*sic*], and empathetic)" (Glenn & Horn, 1993, p. 30). This is consistent with Rees' (1983) and Rees and

Segal's (1984) contention that both instrumental and expressive behaviours are important for team leaders.

Moran and Weiss (2006) based their study on Social Exchange Theory, identifying links between peer leadership and peer acceptance. As an extension of Glenn and Horn's (1993) work, Moran and Weiss's investigation of both male and female high school soccer players revealed similar findings; psychological (perceived competence, instrumentality, expressiveness), social (peer acceptance, friendship quality), and ability variables were identified in teammates rated as peer leaders. Additionally, coaches' ratings of peer leadership were based solely on athletes' ability, stressing the point made by Glenn and Horn (1993) that self-ratings, teammate-ratings, and coach-ratings are all necessary when examining peer leadership behaviour.

Todd and Kent (2004) explored high school student athletes' rankings of leadership characteristics to consider which might be more important in relation to others. Of particular interest was the notion of "ideal" peer leadership, rather than limiting participants to current teammates they perceived as leaders. The findings indicated that higher ranked leadership characteristics include work ethic in games as well as practice and respect for fellow teammates, measures associated with instrumental leadership roles. Of less importance were expressive roles such as providing help with personal problems. The authors caution that lower-ranked items are not unimportant but rather less important compared to higher-ranked items (Todd & Kent, 2004). It is interesting to note that while freshmen rated certain expressive leadership measures higher, the more experienced senior players consistently ranked the same measures relatively lower, supporting the

notion that leadership becomes increasingly task-oriented with experience and maturity (Todd & Kent, 2004).

Finally, in a qualitative investigation of leader development, Wright and Côté (2003) identified four components that contributed to the early leadership experiences of six male university athletes: high skill/ability, strong work ethic, advanced sport knowledge, and good rapport with others. Athletes acknowledged several similar experiences that influenced their development in these areas, such as exposure to competition with older peers, roles in play activities as well as organized sport, mature conversations with adults, and receiving feedback, support, and acknowledgement (Wright & Côté, 2003).

It is possible, based on the existing research, to distinguish a set of leadership identifiers in athletics. Leaders of sports teams generally occupy a highly specialized or central position, through which they can perform task functions because they are an experienced, skilled, starting and contributing member of the team. Although they are primarily concerned with goal achievement roles, effective peer leaders also maintain effective relationships with teammates to ensure team cohesion and goal achievement.

Formal Leaders (Captains)

Team captains are formally designated leaders within a sports team and can be voted into position by teammates or appointed by the coach. It has been noted that the captain can function as a liaison between the coach and the rest of the team (Dupuis et al., 2006), as well as serve many other practical purposes. Weese and Nicholls (1986, p. 270) indicate that a “coach wants a team captain to possess several talents, including: knowledge of the rules, ability to make decisions that will

maximize strategic advantage, skill in performance, and an ability to keep his cool in pressure situations. As well, he would like this captain to be influential with the other players, popular, respected and a solid motivator of good performances from his teammates.” Lee, Coburn, and Partridge (1983) suggest that in coach-dominated traditional American sports, the captain plays only a minor role whereas in sports such as soccer, rugby, cricket, and hockey, the captain takes on a more prominent leadership position. In these less rigidly structured sports, the captain becomes responsible for decision-making and player motivation during the game since there are few opportunities to interact with the coach during play.

In their interviews of six former Canadian university male ice hockey team captains, Dupuis, Bloom, and Loughead (2006) attempted to show the importance of athletes designated as formal leaders of their teams. Participants described their experiences, including the process by which they became captains (learning from the mentorship of other captains; their selection by coach appointment or teammates’ voting), the qualities that made them effective leaders (communicating honestly and respectfully; having a positive attitude; having a strong work ethic; controlling their emotions), and their task roles as captains (interacting with teammates, coaches and referees; managing team dynamics and dealing with team problems; representing the team during various functions). In describing the interactional role of a captain, Dupuis and associates (2006, p. 74) mention a hierarchy that exists between coach, captain, and other team members: “Due to their formal leadership status, team captains appeared to have a strategic hierarchical position that served as the communication bridge between coaches and players.” The authors speculate that effective athlete leaders acquire and hone their leadership abilities at a young age through early athletic involvement, skills learned from sources such as mentors, clinics and books, and athlete

leadership positions in youth sport. The notion of mentorship continued in the participants' roles as captains in the study, as most of them stressed the importance of leading by proper example, both on- and off-ice. The authors suggest that these exemplary behaviours also have immense impact on team culture (norms and atmosphere): "While the team captain (i.e., mentor) makes an effort to set the right example, young players (i.e., protégés) will follow their footsteps, and the team (i.e., organization) should perform better" (Dupuis et al., 2006, p. 75).

Voelker et al. (2011) attempted to gain a thorough understanding of sport captaincy by interviewing thirteen university freshmen who were captains during high school.

Most of these former captains (12 out of 13) reported having a positive captaincy experience, a few (3 out of 13) revealed having a stressful and emotional experience, and some (4 out of 13) indicated that their experience as captain, though positive, was insignificant. The researchers reported on the difficulties encountered by the captains, their perceived roles and duties, and their self-perceived effectiveness as leaders of the team. One of the most difficult aspects of the captaincy experience was increased responsibility and accountability, which was also reported as one of the best parts of being a captain. Other challenges included managing teammates, being pressured to meet expectations, staying neutral during conflict, and maintaining composure. The authors organized captain roles and duties into ten categories: organization; setting an example; motivating and encouraging; managing morale boosters; facilitating relationships; providing support and mentorship; providing feedback; being vocal; enforcing and confronting; and mentally preparing teammates. Most of the participants perceived themselves as effective captains because they helped teammates perform better and win, they interacted well with the team, and they were positive role models, among other reasons. Lastly, the study attempted to describe experiences that

helped captains prepare for their leadership role. Participants reported learning to lead by observing and interacting with others, previous sport-related and life experiences, natural personality traits and talents, and trial and error. Interestingly, the majority of participants (12 out of 13) did not receive training and preparation for their roles as captain from their coach. Even more alarming, more than one third of the participants “reported that their coaches behaved in ways that inhibited their leadership development (5/13), such as limiting their opportunities to lead (3/13), refusing to take captain suggestions (2/13), and using intimidation (2/13)” (Voelker et al., 2011, p. 59). The authors acknowledge that these findings contradict the importance of meaningful decision-making and real leadership influence in youth leadership development (van Linden & Fertman, 1998).

The descriptive findings of Voelker and associates (2011) regarding perceived unimportance of role and lack of coach-facilitated leadership development is very interesting when combined with previous research that has shown that coaches tend to focus on athlete’s skill and sport competence for captain selection (e.g., Glenn & Horn, 1993; Moran & Weiss, 2006). Voelker et al., 2011 question, “youth sports may often be too adult-dominated to allow youth to develop more complex leadership abilities” (2011, p. 62). Additionally, Glenn and Horn (1993) found that, based on self-ratings, peer-ratings, and coach-ratings, athletes and coaches differ in their perceptions of who the team leaders are and what characteristics are most important for team leaders to possess. They suggest that, while coaches conventionally appoint an athlete to serve as captain or have team elections to nominate a team leader, a formal leader does not ensure that the leadership provided by the elected or appointed athlete will be effective or fulfil the team leadership needs.

Informal Leaders (Non-Captains)

Carron and Hausenblas (1998) identify a distinction between formal and informal leadership, based on the roles individuals occupy within a group. Formal leaders are those designated by the organization or group, such as coaches and team captains. Informal leaders are players other than team captains whose roles develop due to interactions with other team members.

Weese and Nicholls (1986) describe an emergent leader as one who assumes the leadership role within a group, and they advise coaches to ensure that the formal leader and the emergent leader are the same person; “the most desirable situation for a team would ensure that the emergent leader is appointed captain or assistant captain” (Weese & Nicholls, 1986, p. 270).

Beyond the formal role of a captain however, some researchers have begun to place emphasis on the role of an informal leader in sport, emerging as a result of group member interactions (Eys, Loughead, & Hardy, 2007; Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006). Team members other than the formal leader (coach, team captain) may engage in leadership roles necessary to group function (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). Wheelan and Johnston (1996) examined the emergence of informal leaders in the business and industry setting, finding that the behaviours of informal leaders opposed the behaviours displayed by formal leaders in small task groups. The authors suggest that the function of peer leaders is often to counterbalance the influence of the formal leader.

Loughead and Hardy (2005) examined the leadership behaviours of both coaches and peer leaders to develop an understanding of the nature of peer leadership in sport. They found that leadership behaviours differ between coaches and athletes, and that athletes identify peer leaders as both team captains and fellow teammates. Using a modified version of the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), they found that, in most cases, both captains and non-captains served

as peer leaders; on average, athletes viewed one quarter of their teammates as a source of peer leadership. Furthermore, the authors indicate that peer leaders are an important source of leadership because they perform functions within the group that formal leaders fail to fulfil. This is an important realization that would contribute to increased effectiveness of teams through athlete leadership development. Loughhead and Hardy (2005) commented on the usefulness of leadership development in sports teams:

From a practical standpoint, the different functions served by coach and peer leaders provides some preliminary support for the suggestion that coaches should encourage the development of athlete leadership within their respective teams to achieve optimal group effectiveness. As noted by Carron and Hausenblas (1998) formal leaders of organizations (coaches in the present study) have two main responsibilities. The first is to ensure that the team is effective in reaching its goals and objectives. The second is to ensure that team members' needs are satisfied. Given that coaches may not be able to consistently meet the needs of the athletes, it is important for them to foster an environment where athletes are able to exhibit an additional form of leadership. In doing so, the needs of their athletes are more likely to be satisfied from these two sources of leadership and coaches are more likely to have teams that are more effective. (p. 311)

Eys, Loughhead, and Hardy (2007) investigated athlete satisfaction in team sports based on three types of leadership functions (task, social, and external). Results from 218 intercollegiate athletes from a variety of interactive team sports suggest that the relative number of perceived leaders, or the amount of athlete leadership, is related to athlete satisfaction within a team. Regardless of

whether there were many or few leaders, greater satisfaction was found in a balanced representation of task, social, and external leadership function. Given the observation of Loughhead and Hardy (2005) that various formal and informal leaders meet different group needs, these findings further support the significance of peer leadership in team sport. Furthermore, since studies have shown that athletes rated highest in leadership by their teammates are often not the captain (Gill & Perry, 1979; Tropp & Landers, 1979), team leadership is not the responsibility of the team captain alone, particularly if leadership is viewed as a social process of influence.

The role of the coach as leader of a team may be indisputable in most North American sports and represents a traditional vertical leadership model. However, it is possible to envision shared leadership among team members who engage in a collaborative team process (Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003). As is evident by various athletes' display of task, social and external leadership functions (Eys et al., 2007), key roles can be shared to ensure that each is carried out effectively. Further, researchers hypothesize that a shared leadership approach positively influences team commitment, satisfaction, strength, and cohesiveness, as well as behavioural responses such as increased effort and communication (Houghton et al., 2003). An emphasis on balanced leadership suggests that coaches should consider the development of leadership skills among multiple team members to better meet the needs of the group for team building and success (Eys et al., 2007).

Self-Leaders (No Captains)

Houghton, Neck and Manz (2003) describe self-leadership as “the heart of shared leadership,” which has interesting applications to sport. The authors define self-leadership as “a process through which people influence themselves to achieve the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform” (Houghton et al., 2003, p. 126). Rooted in theories of self-regulation

(comparison of self to a set standard), self-management (strategies to adjust any deviation from the standard), and self-control (implementation of strategies such as self-observation, goal setting, cueing, reinforcement, punishment, and rehearsal), self-leadership uses behavioural and cognitive processes to affect individual performance outcomes. In sport, this is apparent in any athlete who desires to improve personal performance. There is a standard of performance to which an athlete compares him or herself and then develops and implements strategies to improve skill and understanding that will enable him or her to replicate or better the standard. The standard is often a competitor or a more experienced athlete, or perhaps the ideal of the current best athlete in that sport. In team sport, self-regulation is compounded as athletes compare themselves not only to the competition (athletes on other teams), but also to fellow teammates, some with whom they are competing for a starting role. Awareness of self in comparison to others is important for personal goal setting; to be most effective, goals should be both challenging and specific (Locke & Latham, 1990). To improve performance outcomes and meet personal goals, athletes utilize self-leadership strategies such as self-correcting feedback, skill practice, intrinsic rewards, mental imagery, and positive self-talk (Houghton et al., 2003). The result of utilizing these self-leadership strategies is increased perceptions of self-efficacy; athletes who are proficient in these strategies believe they are more capable of performing, which leads to higher performance standards, greater effort, and persistence towards goal achievement (Houghton et al., 2003). These outcomes contribute positively to the team, particularly if each member employs similar strategies of self-leadership. Enhanced performance on a personal level will undoubtedly contribute to increased team success. Additionally, Houghton and colleagues contend, “team members must first learn to lead themselves before they can effectively influence and lead their fellow team members” (2003, p. 132).

Developing self-leaders towards shared leadership requires additional leadership management, termed SuperLeadership by Houghton, Neck, and Manz (2003). In sport, this leadership position would constitute the coach, the vertical leader of the group. The objective of the SuperLeader is to empower team members by fostering the development of personal responsibility, initiative, self-confidence, goal setting, and problem solving so that they may become self-leaders who have psychological ownership of their individual roles (Houghton et al., 2003). There are several strategies that the SuperLeader can use: “Specifically, a SuperLeader should model self-leadership behaviors and advocate the use of self-leadership strategies. The SuperLeader also avoids the use of punishment, viewing mistakes as learning opportunities. The SuperLeader listens more and talks less, while asking more questions and providing fewer answers. Rather than providing answers, the SuperLeader encourages individual and team problem solving and decision making. A SuperLeader strives to replace conformity and dependence among followers with initiative, creativity, independence, and interdependence” (Houghton et al., 2003, p. 133-134). In this way, the vertical leader acts as a facilitator in the shared leadership process by encouraging the development of self-leadership skills in followers and empowering them to use them (Houghton et al., 2003).

In this self-leadership/shared leadership model, it is possible to envision a team with no designated captain; however, is a captain-less team a realistic possibility in North American Sport culture?

During the 2012 National Football League (NFL) season, New York Jets coach Rex Ryan did not name a team captain. After a disastrous experience with receiver Santonio Holmes as captain,

Coach Ryan admitted that naming captains before the Jets' 2011 season was a huge mistake (Cimini, 2012). According to New York Post reporter Brian Costello, "Holmes seemed emboldened by having the "C" on his chest, referencing it several times while making remarks critical of some teammates. His implosion at the end of the season forced Ryan to reconsider the idea of captains" (Costello, 2012, para. 5). The objective of the 2012 no-captain strategy was to force players to step forward and take ownership, and to allow individuals to naturally emerge as leaders on a team struggling with team unity (Florio, 2012; Fox, 2012). While, in the media, Jets players were quoted attesting to the irrelevance of the "C" on the jersey and the importance of the interdependent harmony of the team, fans criticized both players and coach for their lack of leadership. In an NBC Sports ProFootballTalk online article (Florio, 2012, para. 4), Jets guard Brandon Moore speaks about leadership: "You guys in the media like to anoint leaders, but there's people here every day who are veterans, starters who are leading by example, helping a young guy, setting the tempo, leading by doing his job at a high level or limiting his [mental errors] or running to the next drill. That's leadership. If that's the case, a lot of guys are doing that." In this instance, Ryan can be viewed as the SuperLeader encouraging self-leadership among his players.

In her ESPN commentary, Ashley Fox (2012) alludes to the importance of self-leadership skills for NFL players under the 2011 NFL collective bargaining agreement where new practice parameters govern the frequency and intensity of pre-season training. With limited opportunities to teach and evaluate players, coaches are forced to entrust each player with increased responsibility to "work on his own, to study his playbook and make sure he knows what to do" (Fox, 2012, para. 10). Leaders within the team become invaluable because they can step up in

these situations when the coach is unable to do so. Fox claims, “The whole captaincy thing in the NFL is overrated. Players know who is, and who isn’t, a leader on their teams” (2012, para. 6).

While the University of Michigan men’s gymnastics team normally operates with a captain, they did not name one in 2006. Team chemistry was touted as one of their strongest attributes, due to a young, focused, and eager group. “The team works so well together that choosing a captain wasn’t even necessary” (Rosenweig, 2006, para. 10).

During their first nine seasons in the National Hockey League (NHL), the Minnesota Wild rotated the captaincy among several players monthly. Although players were named captain multiple times by coach Jacques Lemaire, it wasn’t until Todd Richards took over as head coach in 2009 that a permanent captain was named. Interestingly, while Mikko Koivu was widely accepted as a “natural born leader” and an obvious choice for the captain position, Richards further established a “leadership group” of three forwards and three defensemen to share and rotate alternate captain’s roles throughout the season (Andresen, 2009).

Like the Minnesota Wild’s appreciation of multiple leaders, head coach Tyrone Corbin delayed assigning a team captain when he took over the National Basketball Association’s (NBA) Utah Jazz in 2011. Both coach and players recognized the importance of each team member’s contribution to working collectively (Genessy, 2011). Coach Corbin was quoted: “The guys are kinda rallying around each other. It’s not one or two guys” (Genessy, 2011, para. 11). Corbin also refers to the process by which the team improves and becomes unified in their pursuit of success; leaders within the group need to be able to help the team move forward through challenges (Genessy, 2011). It wasn’t until the beginning of the 2012-2013 NBA season that coach Corbin

officially named a Jazz captain (the team was “captain-less” for 20 months), at which point he named three who would share the leadership role (Mo Williams, Al Jefferson, and Paul Millsap). Deseret News sports-writer Jody Genessy (2012, para. 6, 9-11) differentiated between the three captains: “The Voice. The Mentor. The Example... Williams, entering his 10th season in the NBA, is the most outspoken player and one who dishes out tough love and support alike while directing the team from his floor-general position. Jefferson, now in his third season in Utah, is the lovable leader who’s taken the young bigs under his wing and occasionally dispenses guidance. Millsap, the longest-tenured Jazzman going into year No. 7, is the classic soft-spoken do-as-I-do type who also picks his moments to speak up now and then.” Weeks before the announcement of captainship, Millsap was quoted regarding the outlook of the team, attesting that everyone on the Jazz worked together and took ownership to accomplish their common goals, regardless of who was designated as captain (Genessy, 2012).

Captain-less teams are extremely rare in North American professional sport, and teams that do compete without their captains usually do so because those players are missing from the line-up due to injury or other reasons (for example, Foltman, 2007; O’Keefe, 2008; Pietaro, 2013). In these examples, journalists often report on how the absence of the captain has negatively impacted the team, alluding to the significance of the leadership provided by the captain to the success of the team. Instead, these reports speak to the ineffectiveness of the leadership provided by the captain; according to Haslam, Reicher, and Platow (2011), effective leadership will inspire others to work towards a goal, even in the absence of the leader.

Alternatively, when captains are traded to other teams or retire from sport, it is possible for a coach to hold off deciding on a successor (for example, Diamos, 2006; Genessy, 2011; Lillard, 2004).

Utah Jazz captain Deron Williams was traded to New Jersey shortly after a head coaching change in February 2011, when Tyrone Corbin was promoted from assistant to head coach after the resignation of Jerry Sloan. In this case, the Jazz franchise was undergoing many personnel transformations and first-time head coach Corbin did not officially name a team captain for two more seasons.

Despite successful examples of captain-less teams who essentially rely on members to employ self-leadership and shared leadership skills, it is a rare occurrence at all levels of North American team sport. Most teams consistently rely on captaining as the peer leadership norm and, while characteristics, behaviours, roles, and responsibilities may vary according to level of competition, type of sport, or particular team, the notion of the team captain remains culturally embedded in sport.

Shared Leadership in Sport

Coaches, players, sports media, and earlier athlete leadership scholars seem to assume that the team captain is the principal team leader in all areas of team function. Previous studies acknowledge the existence of both formal (captain) and informal (non-captain) leaders within teams (for example, Eys et al., 2007; Glenn & Horn, 1993; Holmes et al., 2010; Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Loughead et al., 2006; Rees & Segal, 1984; Weese & Nicholls, 1986; Yukelson, Weinberg, Richardson, & Jackson, 1983), however little research has been done to investigate the importance assigned to each.

The Value of Informal Leaders

Very recently, athlete leadership scholars have begun to acknowledge the significance of informal leaders and to advocate for the development of shared leadership among athletes in teams. It has been argued that one leader (i.e., the captain) would unlikely have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively manage all leadership roles throughout a team's life cycle (Duguay et al., 2020b; Pearce & Manz, 2005). As stated by one intercollegiate coach, "I think the role of a captain has gotten so big that I don't think any one person can do it while being a full-time student. I think it has to be shared" (Duguay et al., 2020b, p. 9). Given that many team captains have reported receiving little to no leadership training, leaving them feeling unprepared to fulfill their leadership responsibilities (Voelker et al., 2011), it may be particularly beneficial to provide multiple, if not all, team members the opportunity to develop their leadership potential (Duguay et al., 2016).

Morgan, Fletcher, and Sarkar (2013) identified shared leadership roles as one of the characteristics of resilience in elite sport, illustrated by a core set of leaders present during challenging times. They quoted the following from an international-level professional football player:

You need a few types of leaders within the team, a captain type that is going to talk to everyone [and] help people if they've got problems or issues and then there's the leaders who lead by example by what they do on the pitch and training hard every day. [When the team encounters issues] one person can't change anything and it depends on the other players because my experience of resilient teams is that you have six or more players who could easily have done the captaincy job, but it is more important that when someone is picked to do it, the rest is ready to work with him. (Morgan et al., 2013, p. 552)

In other words, teams who are highly resilient (who respond positively to stressors) do not depend solely on the leadership of one player, but instead require the support of multiple athlete leaders in challenging times.

A 2015 study by the same authors further corroborated the importance of shared team leadership to highly resilient teams, as shown through a case study of a rugby union World Cup winning team (Morgan et al., 2015). Findings suggested that shared team leadership influenced team members to “positively adjust their efforts to achieve team tasks during challenging situations” (Morgan et al., 2015, p. 97), improved coordination and teamwork, and led team members to positively influence each other to perform for the greater benefit of the team, all of which contributed to enhanced team resilience.

Leo and associates (2019) presented additional evidence of team-related benefits of shared leadership responsibilities within and across leadership roles (task, social, and external), including decreases in conflict and increases in task cohesion, social cohesion, collective efficacy, intention to continue, and perceived team performance. In a study of male and female professional soccer players, they examined different leadership structures (defined by the number of athlete leaders in each leadership role) and found the most effective structure to be shared leadership (more than one athlete leader) both *within* and *across* leadership roles.

Fransen and colleagues (2014) conducted a study exploring the importance of the captain as formal leader of the team. They called on role differentiation theory whereby the established roles of task leader, social leader, and external leader can be performed by different individuals within the team,

and further added a fourth role of motivational leader, which they found to be clearly distinct from the original three. In a survey of 3,193 players and 1,258 coaches from nine different teams of various levels of sport in Belgium, they found that “almost half of the participants (44%) did not perceive their captain as the principal leader on any of the four roles” (Fransen et al., 2014, p. 1389). They also found that, while it is possible to perform several leadership roles simultaneously, few players did, and different players were perceived as the primary leader in each of the four leadership roles. Further, the team captain was perceived as being the primary leader in all four roles in only 1% of the teams in this study. This corroborates the argument that leadership is spread throughout the team, and that informal leadership positions have a major impact on overall team leadership.

Duguay, Hoffman, Guerrero, and Loughhead (2020a) performed a longitudinal case study of a youth male hockey team to examine whether leadership became more shared over time. Using social network analysis, they measured task and social leadership roles in terms of density (overall amount) and distribution among team members throughout the season. While the findings demonstrated that the amount of task athlete leadership increased significantly over the course of the season, it did not become more shared, whereas social leadership increased in both amount and degree to which social roles were shared among team members as the season progressed. The authors highlight the dynamic nature of athlete leadership, providing evidence that the amount and distribution can change significantly over time, and advocate for the development of shared leadership through systematically implementing athlete leadership programs.

An example of one such program is presented by Duguay, Loughhead, and Munroe-Chandler (2016) in which they developed, implemented, and evaluated a season-long leadership development program with female varsity athletes. The program consisted of four one-hour leadership workshops throughout the season in which participants completed inventories measuring leadership behaviours, cohesion, communication, athlete satisfaction, and peer motivational climate. All members of two teams (basketball and volleyball) participated in the program. The authors reported that the program had a positive impact on athletes' human capital (i.e., leadership behaviours), and social capital (i.e., cohesion, communication, athlete satisfaction, and peer motivational climate). On a particular note, however, is that "athletes supported the importance of including all team members in leadership development efforts regardless of leadership status" (Duguay et al., 2016, p. 164). Athletes reported learning ways to contribute to team leadership even if they did not hold a formal leadership position, and further highlighted the importance of understanding what to expect from the team's leadership, adding value to the inclusion of all team members in leadership development programs.

Development of Shared Athlete Leadership

"Shared athlete leadership is a team-level phenomenon where athletes engage in a collaborative leadership process" (Duguay et al., 2020b, p. 1).

Despite a growing body of evidence advocating the benefits of shared athlete leadership in sports teams, research on how shared leadership is developed among athletes is limited. To date, the available literature has come primarily from qualitative studies with coaches.

Bucci, Bloom, Loughead, and Caron (2012) conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews with six elite male ice hockey coaches of high-performance teenaged athletes to identify coaches' perceptions of the factors influencing athlete leadership. While much of the data described how coaches select and develop relationships with formal leaders (captains), participants also described how they worked with all athletes on their teams to develop leadership skills. Five out of the six interviewed coaches believed that athlete leadership went beyond captains and assistant captains, implying that leadership development for informal leaders is also important. One coach was quoted: "We ask all our players to bring their own leadership style to the team. For some players being vocal in the dressing room is not their preferred leadership style, but they lead in other ways, perhaps with their actions on the ice or how they interact with their teammates" (Bucci et al., 2012, p. 252). Examples of leadership development strategies used by these coaches included empowering players through responsibilities and giving them opportunities to make their own decisions; "I often choose a moment that is perfect for a specific player to demonstrate leadership...Eventually the players recognize situations where they can act as leaders" (Bucci et al., 2012, p. 252). In this way, coaches can demonstrate purposeful leadership development for all players within their teams.

Cotterill, Cheetham, and Fransen (2019) interviewed eight elite male rugby coaches to examine how they perceived the role of the team captain and reported that coaches discussed the use of athlete leadership groups to support the captain, share the leadership responsibilities, and provide greater leadership to the team. Cotterill and Cheetham (2017) noted that athletes echo the importance of leadership groups. They interviewed professional rugby captains regarding their captaincy experiences and found that leadership groups were a key component to effective captaincy, allowing captains to share the team leadership workload.

Duguay, Loughhead, Hoffman, and Caron (2020b) sought to gain insight into how intercollegiate coaches facilitate the development of shared athlete leadership in their teams. The authors conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with Canadian intercollegiate sport coaches and used reflexive thematic analysis to identify, interpret, and describe patterns in the data set that emerged. They generated four themes: the importance of athlete empowerment, the use of leadership groups and alternative leadership structures, creation of a positive team environment, and deliberate athlete leadership development. It was noted that coaches “often spoke passionately about empowering athletes, especially in reference to their coaching philosophies and leadership styles” (Duguay et al., 2020b, p. 8), leading the authors of this study to name this athlete-centred approach as foundational for the coaches’ facilitation of shared leadership development in their teams. With a desire to develop team members as “both athletes *and* people within *and* beyond sport” (Duguay et al., 2020b, p. 9, original emphasis), development of shared leadership seems to fit well with this athlete empowerment philosophy in that coach’s endeavour to provide leadership development opportunity to all athletes. Strategies discussed in this study include the use of leadership groups and alternative leadership structures within a positive team environment that often included “moving away from an environment where divisions between athlete tenures were demarcated by certain practices like hazing or having specific rookie-only responsibilities” (Duguay et al., 2020b, p. 16). Considering the variety of strategies described to extend athlete leadership beyond the typical practice of having a formal team captain (e.g., varied approaches to leadership groups, rotating captaincy, creating defined leadership roles, and “captainless” teams), the authors caution against a “one-size-fits-all” approach and advocate for the development of a shared leadership structure that is appropriate for each particular group context in order to

effectively meet the needs and objectives of the team. However, the importance of deliberate athlete leadership development was discussed and coaches in this study provided examples such as experiential learning opportunities related to leadership, supplementary material to facilitate group leadership discussions, support for developing specific leadership skills such as communication, and modeling shared leadership as a coaching staff.

Duguay and colleagues (2020b) conclude:

As evidenced in this study, coaches are facilitating the development of shared leadership in their teams but there is little support in terms of evidence-based programming that offers practical strategies (e.g., how to create leadership groups, ways to mitigate challenges associated with introducing a shared athlete leadership structure, and how to assess the leadership needs of a team as it relates to athlete leadership). (p. 17)

It is encouraging that coaches are employing strategies to increase the leadership effectiveness within their teams, and studies such as this one will serve to advance and encourage future research in this area.

Conclusion, Part 2: New Approaches to Captaining

Scholarship focused on defining and measuring leadership aims to predict who will emerge as leaders, however leadership development is essentially dynamic, unpredictable, and moulded by societal, cultural, historical, political, and contextual influences. While leadership development occurs in adolescence, research has not been able to identify major differences between youth leaders and non-leaders, or at least adolescents identified as such. Adolescents lead in many ways that are typically unrecognized: working a job, volunteering, or standing up for what they believe.

Attempts to predict and identify the strongest leaders early detract from opportunities to develop the leadership potential of *all* adolescents. In *Youth Leadership: A guide to understanding leadership development in adolescents*, van Linden and Fertman (1998) identify three stages of leadership development: awareness, interaction, and mastery. However, most youth do not see themselves as leaders, likely due to society's stereotypical view of what constitutes leadership. Individuals who do not fit this narrow interpretation of a leader are not aware of themselves as leaders. Even the three Utah Jazz leader descriptions of "The Voice. The Mentor. The Example" (Genessy 2012, para. 6) described previously are typical of specific leadership styles, but do not encompass the countless leadership approaches available to athletes. On a sports team, many types of leaders exist in many diverse situations.

Experienced and intuitive coaches may recognize the leadership potential that exists in many, if not all, members of their team. Leadership skill and behaviour may be as diverse as everyone occupying a role on the team. Some players may emerge naturally as leaders or may be recognized as captains or alternate captains. Others may lead in more subtle ways—never missing a practice, offering quiet encouragement to a struggling teammate, or alerting the coach to an unresolved conflict. Still others may feel limited in their abilities to lead or exert influence within the group, particularly if they are unaware of leadership roles beyond the typical. Coaches who identify leadership based primarily on the team hero limit their team's leadership benefits. On the other hand, coaches who recognize the scope of leadership among team members unlock a whole new team dynamic in which leaders are not defined by their physical contributions, but instead by their abilities to think, communicate, act on their knowledge and beliefs, and influence others in ethical

and socially responsible ways (van Linden & Fertman, 1998). These skills, behaviours, and attitudes can be learned and practiced; indeed, sports teams provide an ideal environment to do so.

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