

**Experiencing Learn-to-Curl Leagues: A Qualitative Case Study Analysis of Adult
Introductory Sport Programs**

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Understanding the new sport experiences of adults is key to addressing declining Canadian sport participation and physical activity levels. Specifically, well-organized and engaging introductory sport programs may increase the likelihood of adults enrolling in new sports. This exploratory study examined the experiences of new sport participants in two adult learn-to-curl leagues. Using a qualitative case study methodology, two cases (the Redwood Curling Club and Shaw Curling Clubs) were examined using twenty-four qualitative in-depth interviews, four photo elicitation interviews, participant observation, and reflexive journaling. Study participants included new curlers, instructors, organizers, and administrators. New curlers valued strengthening existing and forging new social connections, acquiring curling skills, and fostering a sense of belonging to their club. Issues of increasing program standardisation and different conceptualizations of change were important structural considerations. Also, the learn-to-curl leagues were not leveraging initiatives; but rather, were part of the clubs' wider membership recruitment strategies. Yet, important leveraging insights emerged from these learn-to-curl leagues, namely cultivating positive introductory sport experiences for adults. Adults flourish in introductory sport programs that foster positive and inclusive spaces where adults can cultivate and nurture relationships through social experiences, acquire and improve new skills, and adopt and strengthen a sense of belonging to their club. Overall, organizers of adult introductory sport programs can implement and improve existing programs by focusing on these essential components of introductory sport experiences for adults. Future research areas include studying introductory sport programs through a social capital lens, as well as further unpacking how competence and belonging shape the experiences of new sport participants.

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Chapter One – Exploring the Experience: Introducing the Study

Introduction

The experience of new sport participants is an important consideration. Yet, little is known about these experiences as adults enter a sport for the first time. Overall, physical activity levels among Canadians are decreasing and fewer people are engaging in sport. In 2014, only 53.7% of Canadians reported being physically active during their leisure time (down 1.5% from 2013 - Statistics Canada, 2015), with sport participation rates decreasing by 19% since 1992 (Canadian Heritage, 2013). Thus, a better understanding of the introductory experiences of current sport participants provides stakeholders with information to help enhance these experiences, while increasing sport participation among all Canadians. Moreover, limited scholarly research exists exploring experiential topics in sport (e.g., Blinde & Greendorfer, 1992; Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1993; Harada & Siperstein, 2009; Lochbaum & Roberts, 1993; Papaioannou, 1997; Sharpe, 2006). However, this is changing. Barrick, Mair, and Potwarka (in press) argue the importance of exploring the experiences of adults, specifically in introductory sport programs. For the purpose of this exploratory study, introductory sport programs refer to structured initiatives in which participants are exposed to a new sport and receive training from knowledgeable instructors.

I chose the sport of curling for my study because of its prominent position within Canadian culture and identity, its popularity as a national winter pastime, and its status as a Winter Olympic sport (Mair, 2007, 2009; Peezer, 2003; Weiting & Lamoureux, 2001). As of 2014, approximately 710,000 people or 2.3% of Canadians identified themselves as curlers (Potwarka, Wilson, & Barrick, 2014). It is estimated that approximately 1,200 curling clubs exist in Canada (Canada Games, 2011). Furthermore, Canada's historic and recent successes at the

World Curling Championships and the Winter Olympic Games have attracted substantial media attention (Mick, 2009). Despite this high profile, curling in Canada remains relatively understudied. Also, no research has been completed in Canada examining the experiences of new curlers as they first enter the sport. Meanwhile, sportsscotland (2004), the Scottish national athletic body, found that the 2002 Olympic and World Championship titles won by the Great Britain women's curling team only marginally influenced national curling participation rates. However, the study failed to examine the in-depth experiences of new curlers (sportsscotland, 2004). While sportsscotland identified the need for future research involving new curlers, this study addresses the larger research gap of understanding the introductory sport experiences of adults.

Learn-to-curl leagues are the primary introductory sport programs employed in Canadian curling clubs. While introductory curling programs go by many names, I selected the term "learn-to-curl league" to promote clarity. Curling Canada (then the Canadian Curling Association) piloted the first official learn-to-curl league at the Redwood Curling Club (a pseudonym used for this study) in 2005 (Curling Canada, 2015). Since then, learn-to-curl leagues have increasingly spread throughout Canada, primarily in urban communities. Moreover, learn-to-curl leagues involve new curlers receiving step-by-step instruction from knowledgeable (and mainly certified) instructors (Curling Canada, 2015). These leagues occur weekly and run for either eight, twelve, or twenty-six weeks. Also, new curlers participate in the leagues for one to three years depending on the program structure and are exposed to a range of curling elements such as skill development, post-game socializing, and bonspiels (curling tournaments – Curling Canada, 2015). Hence, learn-to-curl leagues provide a great opportunity to explore the introductory sport experiences of adults because of their structure and length.

Personally, my connection in the sport runs deep. I have been a curler for 17 years, played at a competitive level, as well as coached and instructed. I am passionate about growing the sport. This passion drew me to the University of Waterloo to engage in research on curling under the supervision of Dr. Heather Mair. Throughout this study, my personal perspective in the sport informed every aspect of my work. Moreover, a discussion of how this process unfolded (e.g., involving reflexive journaling) runs throughout this thesis. Thus, this document is more than a thesis; it is, in part, a reflection of my growing understanding of curling, and its potential future contributions to sport and society.

This study addresses this experiential research gap through a qualitative, exploratory case study undertaken with members of two adult introductory sport programs located in the same central Canadian urban community. Namely, two learn-to-curl leagues at separate curling clubs were examined. Data was gathered from relevant documents and interviews with new curlers and key informants familiar with the development and structure of these leagues more broadly (e.g., members of the national, provincial, and regional curling associations).

This thesis contains nine chapters. In Chapter One, the project is introduced and positioned as a significant topic of study. In Chapter Two, a comprehensive review of relevant literature is presented to identify research gaps in need of exploration. In Chapter Three, I outline the data collection and analysis processes. Namely, the qualitative case study methodology and constructivist grounded theory approach are discussed. Furthermore, I describe the research methods employed in the study, as well as the dissemination of findings, ethical implications, and researcher reflexivity. In Chapter Four, I introduce the two cases examined in the study: the learn-to-curl league at the Redwood Curling Club and the learn-to-curl league at the Shaw Curling Club (a pseudonym). In Chapters Five to Seven, I present my research findings as three thematic chapters: Experiencing the Leagues, Structuring the Leagues, and Leveraging the

Leagues. In Chapter Eight, major contributions to our understanding of introductory sport experience, organizational capacity, and leveraging literature, as presented by this research, are outlined. In Chapter Nine, I conclude the thesis with closing remarks including a reflection on the implications of the study, recommendations for practitioners, and areas for future research.

Significance

Trends in Canadian sport participation rates support studying the experiences of adults as they enter sports. In Canada, national sport participation rates have decreased from 9.6 million (45%) of Canadians in 1992 to 7.2 million (26%) in 2010 (Canadian Heritage, 2013).

Participation decreased across all demographic categories, especially among Canada's elderly population. This confirms the belief that as one ages, they participate less in sports (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Ifedi, 2008). Moreover, sport participation rates across all adult age cohorts (aged 20 to 55 and older) have continually declined since 1992 (Canadian Heritage, 2013; Ifedi, 2008). Furthermore and perhaps relatedly, Ifedi (2008) discovered that the number of people viewing amateur sports, both in person and on television has increased since 1995. Thus, sport participation rates among all Canadians are declining, while sport viewership rates are increasing (Ifedi, 2008; Kidd, 2013).

This study offers an opportunity to begin to address this declining sport participation in two ways. First, examining the introductory sport experiences of adults entering new sports provide insights into why individuals enroll and how they experience their initial sport encounters. Second, these insights may be applied to improving existing introductory sport programs and developing new ones to best meet the needs of adults entering a new sport. In this study, the league experiences of new curlers are assessed. Although these findings are curling specific, they provide information that can be transferred to other introductory sport contexts.

Moreover, the structural and leveraging considerations presented in this project enrich our understanding of introductory sport programs and can provide lessons for effectively organizing and leveraging such initiatives.

In this thesis, I sought a broader understanding of the introductory sport experience of adults. Through exploring two adult introductory sport programs (learn-to-curl leagues), the experiences were investigated from three perspectives: (1) the lived experiences of the league participants, (2) the program structure of the leagues, and (3) the relationship between the leagues and leveraging. These perspectives fostered a rich, multi-layered understanding of these leagues, with experiential considerations lying at their core. Furthermore, three research questions guided this project:

1. What are the lived experiences of the learn-to-curl league participants?
2. How are the learn-to-curl leagues structured?
3. What, if any, is the relationship between the learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging?

Chapter Two – Situating the Experience: Reviewing the Literature

Introduction

Various relevant literature informs our understanding of the introductory sport experiences of adults. In this chapter, I outline the most relevant areas of sport research informing this project. Namely, the following topics receive attention: (1) curling; (2) sport experience and adult sport participation; (3) organizational capacity; (4) sport mega-event legacy and leveraging; and (5) pertinent research methodologies and methods. Moreover, I address existing research contributions and specific knowledge gaps throughout the discussion. These knowledge gaps (e.g., the need for more qualitative studies of sport mega-events and their leveraging initiatives) inform the structure and aims of this research project.

Curling Literature

Curling-related literature, although limited, explores numerous topics at varying depths. These areas broadly include curling history, sport science studies, and social science explorations of curling. Next, these topics are outlined and relevant research gaps are identified.

Curling history.

The majority of curling research and writing includes historical, sport-specific texts. Many were written by curlers and journalists (e.g., Grassie, 2012; Howard & Weeks, 2007; Maxwell, 2002) with only two publications being authored by academics (Mott & Allardyce, 1989; Tate, 2011). Mott and Allardyce (1989) explored the history of the Manitoba Curling Association bonspiel, while Tate (2011) examined the history of 19th Century curling throughout urban America. Non-academic texts covered a range of topics including profiles on several historical and contemporary curling figures and teams (e.g., Howard & Weeks, 2007; Jones,

2000; Lefko, 2000). The history of major Canadian curling tournaments, such as the Manitoba Curling Association bonspiel (e.g., Grassie, 2012; Mott & Allardyce, 1989) and the Brier (the Canadian men's curling championship – e.g., Maxwell, 2002; Weeks, 1995), has also received attention. Additionally, Peezer (2003) and Russell (2003) explored the social history of curling in Canada.

Sport science studies of curling.

Research on curling involving sport science topics is less prevalent and includes both academic studies (e.g., Paquette, 2009; Reeser & Berg, 2004; Willoughby & Kostuk, 2004, 2005) and popular materials written by and for curlers (e.g., Howard, 2009; Martin & Martin, 2006; Scholz & Bernard, 2005). Paquette (2009) uncovered the benefits of Canadian curling coaches using psychological skills training with their teams. Meanwhile, Howard (2009), Martin and Martin (2006), as well as Scholz and Bernard (2005) provided recreational and competitive curlers with information on how to improve their mental toughness and curling ability. Moreover, Reeser and Berg (2004) examined self-reported injury patterns among American curlers, while Willoughby and Kostuk (2004, 2005) studied strategic decision-making in competitive curling matches.

Social science explorations of curling.

Social science research has become increasingly prevalent in curling. These academic studies typically employed qualitative research methodologies, and addressed various social science topics. For instance, Mair (2007) and Weiting and Lamoureux (2001) outlined the history, development, and future challenges for Canadian curling. Mair (2009) and Leipert, Plunkett, Meagher-Stewart, Scruby, Mair, & Wamsley (2011) unpacked the role that community

and identity formation played in Canadian curling clubs, with the latter article focusing on female experiences specifically. Fortune and Mair (2011) discussed their reflexive experiences while conducting ethnographic research in a rural curling club in Atlantic Canada. Brooks (2014) reported a separation arising between grassroots curling clubs and the professionalization of curling at the national level. These studies provided a broad understanding of curling's historical and social role in individual curling clubs and Canadian society.

Curling research gaps.

Curling literature addressed various topics including the history of curling, prominent curlers and events, and the role of curling clubs in fostering a sense of community among individuals and communities. Yet, this literature ignored the recruitment of new curlers. To foster future local, national, and international growth, attention needs to be paid to the experiences of these individuals. Understanding these experiences will enable curling club and sport administrators to better meet the needs of new participants.

As previously mentioned, Sportscotland's curling investigation links to my thesis. Their report concluded that while curling participation rates increased marginally from 2002 to 2003, media coverage of this team's successes only mildly influenced this increase (sportscotland, 2004). Rather, prospective new curlers having friends or family already curling, or interested in trying the sport, represented a greater indicator for Scottish citizens trying curling (sportscotland, 2004). Hence, social connections, and not elite curling successes, appear to be the prominent attraction for new curlers in Scotland.

This study builds on sportscotland's (2004) report through exploring learn-to-curl leagues operated by two Canadian curling clubs. Whereas sportscotland explored national curling

participation rate changes, mainly through quantitative surveys, I will present an in-depth analysis of the two leagues using an interpretivist, qualitative case study methodology.

Examining Sport Participation Literature

The experiences of sport participants and adult sport participation are two relevant research areas. Yet, limited studies address either topic. Applicable research is outlined in this section. Additionally, the lived experiences of adults in introductory sport programs are positioned as a research gap requiring examination.

Research investigating the experiences of sport participants primarily targeted children and youth (e.g., Kleiber & Roberts, 1981; Lochbaum & Roberts, 1993; Papaioannou, 1997; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986). These studies explored various psychological predictors and motivators of positive sport experiences including pro-social behaviour (Kleiber & Roberts, 1981), goal orientation (Lochbaum & Roberts, 1993), motivation and perceived physical competence (Papaioannou, 1997), as well as age, perceived sport ability and adult influences (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986). These quantitative, survey-based studies explored the sport experiences of school-aged sport participants in different contexts.

The experiences of adult sport participants also received attention. One prominent topic involved the experiences of female sport participants, namely American inter-collegiate athletes (Blinde, 1989; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1992; Blinde, Taub, & Han, 1993). Feminist theories were employed in all three studies to explore the pervasive forms of conflict (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1992), exploitation (Blinde, 1989), and empowerment (Blinde et al., 1993) that female inter-collegiate athletes experienced during their sport participation. These projects demonstrated a more critical, in-depth analysis of the experiences of sport participants.

Additional research addressed the experiences of adult sport participants. For instance, Harada and Siperstein (2009) examined the sport experiences of adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics. Specifically, they focused on the adults' sport involvement over their lifespan, as well as motives for participating in, and leaving Special Olympics (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Results found that the experiences of athletes with intellectual disabilities are similar to those without disabilities in how sport is a significant life experience, they participate in sport for fun and social interaction, and they leave sport because of changing interests and limited program availability (Harada & Siperstein, 2009). Meanwhile, Sharpe (2006) compared the quality of experience in one community sport organization (CSO) with its ability to fulfill its mission of providing recreational opportunities. Sharpe (2006) found that the quality of leisure experiences for the league's participants and volunteers (both youth and adults) was based on "the ability of the organization to secure, mobilize, and distribute capital" (p. 385).

Research also targets the motivations and influences of adult sport participants. Gill, Dowd, Williams, Beaudoin, and Martin (1996) studied the competitive orientation and participation motivation of participants in four different adult sport and exercise programs (running club, exercise classes, cardiac rehabilitation program, and senior games). Gender, sport, and individual differences were noted across the groups, illustrating diverse orientations and motives among adult sport participants (Gill et al., 1996). Further, Lim et al. (2011) examined the structural and individual factors influencing the sport experiences, patterns, and motives of adults in three different countries (the Netherlands, the United States of America, and the Republic of Korea). While individual motivational differences were uncovered, results also indicated that structural, system-level factors are critical to increasing adult sport participation (Lim et al., 2011). These studies demonstrated the diverse and growing body of knowledge surrounding adult

sport participation. My thesis contributes to this research area by illuminating the introductory sport experiences of adults in learn-to-curl leagues.

In this section, various studies exploring the experiences of youth and adult sport participants have been presented. This research mainly examined the motivations and predictors of sport experiences. In-depth explorations involving the lived experiences of adult sport participants are limited. Moreover, research targeting adults in novice sport contexts is scarce. An example of this work is Law and Hall's (2009) investigation of observational learning use and self-efficacy beliefs among adult sport novices. Namely, adults enrolled in beginner-level sport classes reported using observational learning differently according to the type of sport (e.g., independent or interactive sports) and the availability of appropriate instruction to acquire sport-specific skills. These characteristics impacted the participants' use of observational learning as well as their self-efficacy (Law & Hall, 2009). Yet, no studies exist examining the experiences of adults in introductory sport programs. Hence, research is required to fill this void.

Organizational Capacity Literature

Organizational capacity in the nonprofit and voluntary sector.

Organizational capacity refers to the ability of an organization to gather and deploy various assets and resources to fulfill its goals or mandate (Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014; Eisinger, 2002; Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013; Sharpe, 2006). Numerous conceptual frameworks of organizational capacity exist throughout the nonprofit and voluntary sector (Chaskin, 2001; Eisinger, 2002; Glickman & Servon, 1998; Hall et al., 2003). Misener & Doherty (2009) argued how these frameworks employ a range of capacity dimensions, from three to seven (e.g., Chaskin, 2001; Eisinger, 2002; Glickman & Servon, 1998; Hall et al., 2003).

Organizational dimensions include major categories of assets and resources (e.g., financial capacity and human resources capacity) that organizations can draw upon to achieve their missions and objectives (Hall et al., 2003). Hence, great diversity exists among these organizational frameworks.

Organizational capacity in community sport.

Community sport researchers primarily adopt organizational capacity frameworks from the nonprofit and voluntary sector. Namely, Hall et al.'s (2003) multi-dimensional organizational capacity framework is employed in various community sport organization (CSO – e.g., Misener & Doherty 2013; Sharpe, 2006) and community sport-club research (e.g., Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). CSOs are nonprofit, voluntary organizations that provide sport and physical activity participation opportunities for people of various ages in a community setting (Allison, 2001; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Community sport clubs “are a type of membership association largely run by member volunteers who organize and deliver opportunities for recreational and competitive sport participation” (Doherty et al., 2014, p. 124). Moreover, previous CSO research has focused on single capacity dimensions, namely human resources capacity (e.g., Cuskelly, 2004) and to a lesser extent, relationship and network capacity (e.g., Frisby, Thibault, & Kikulis, 2004; Thibault, Frisby, & Kikulis, 1999). Yet, community sport researchers are now exploring how multiple capacity dimensions influence CSOs and community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013; Sharpe, 2006).

For example, Misener and Doherty (2009) examined how multi-dimensional capacity dimensions influence the ability of one nonprofit community sport club to achieve its mandate, namely providing sport opportunities in the community. Misener and Doherty (2009, 2013) also demonstrated how CSOs and community sport clubs use inter-organizational relationships (IORs)

to acquire basic resources (e.g., human resources and access to infrastructure) to strengthen their organizational capacity and provide enhanced sport programs. IORs represent a primary method for CSOs and community sport clubs “to acquire needed resources, knowledge, and other social benefits” (Misener & Doherty, 2013, p. 135). Doherty et al. (2014) developed an organizational capacity framework specific to community sport clubs, building from Hall et al.’s (2003) broad framework. Study findings contributed insights to each of the capacity dimensions (human resources, finance, infrastructure, planning and development, as well as external relationships) to inform policy makers and practitioners of how best to meet the needs of community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014). Sharpe, in her study connecting the quality of experience to organizational capacity considerations in one grassroots recreational organization, found that the organization’s ability to “effectively fulfill its mission is shaped by organization capacity, or the ability of an organization to secure, mobilize, and distribute capital” (Sharpe, 2006, p. 397). Thus, these findings represent attempts by sport researchers to situate multi-dimensional organizational capacity concerns into various community sport contexts. Moreover, the extent to which organizational capacity influences the learn-to-curl leagues at both curling clubs is addressed in the discussion section of this thesis.

Hall et al.’s (2003) multi-dimensional conceptual model of organizational capacity.

Hall et al.’s (2003) conceptual model of organizational capacity was employed in this thesis following the data analysis to make sense of my study findings. This model was used in a study examining the organizational capacity of Canadian nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Moreover, this study is part of a larger project: the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO – Hall et al., 2003). Organizational capacity involves “assessments of the

ability of organizations to undertake their work and of the factors that serve to constrain or impair the ability of organizations to fulfill their missions” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 3). Organizational capacity is divided into three capacity dimensions: financial capacity, human-resources capacity, and structural capacity. Further, structural capacity is divided into relationship and network capacity, planning and development capacity, as well as infrastructure and process capacity (Hall et al., 2003). Organizational capacity is also influenced by various external considerations including: environment constraints and facilitators (e.g., legal and regulatory frameworks, public trust, and societal values); access to resources (e.g., financial and human resources); and historical factors (e.g., past behaviours, ethical violations, and perceived contributions – Hall et al., 2003). These external considerations shape the various capacity dimensions, thereby leading to specific outputs and outcomes. Hall et al., (2003) position outputs as specific products and goods produced by organizations, while outcomes involve the secondary benefits emerging from the outputs. See *Figure 1*. Hall et al.’s (2003) Conceptual model of organizational capacity for a visual representation of the model.

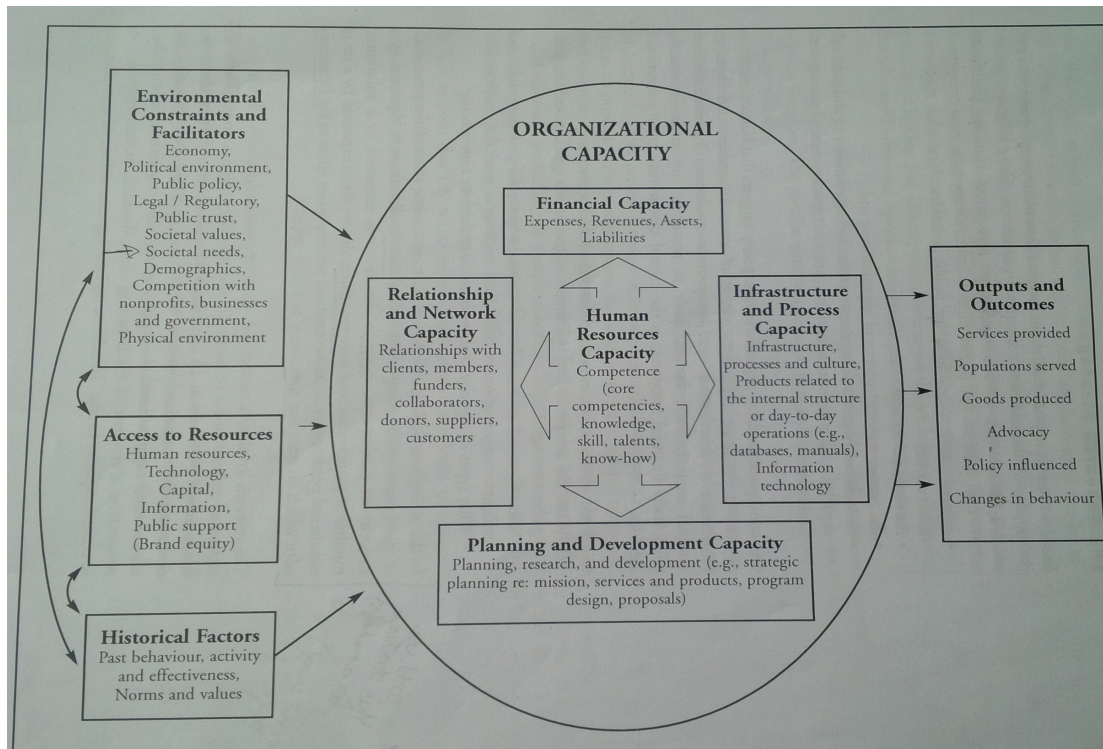


Figure 1. Hall et al.'s (2003) Conceptual Model of Organizational Capacity

Capital influences the various capacity dimensions. Namely, the capacity of an organization to create outputs and achieve its mission depends on the different forms of capital (e.g., human capital, financial capital, and social capital) it is able to deploy (Hall et al., 2003). Thus, human resources capacity involves an organization's ability to use human capital (e.g., paid staff and volunteers), and the competencies these individuals possess (Hall et al., 2003). Human resources capacity also impacts the development of other capacities (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). For instance, individuals with skills in finance are required to create and maintain financial capital (Hall et al., 2003). Financial capacity is the ability of an organization to develop and deploy financial capital (e.g., revenues, expenses, and assets) (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Hall et al. (2003) found that financial capacity issues were the greatest challenges faced by nonprofit and voluntary organizations, thereby influencing all other capacity areas.

Structural capacity involves “the ability to deploy the non-financial capital that remains when people from an organization have gone” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 5). Within structural capacity, relationship and network capacity involves drawing on relationships with various stakeholders (e.g., clients, members, government, and the media) (Hall et al., 2003). An organization’s ability to deploy or rely on infrastructure, processes, and culture represents their infrastructure and process capacity (Hall et al., 2003). Finally, planning and development capacity involves an organization’s ability to develop and draw on different organizational documents (e.g., strategic plans, policies, and proposals) (Hall et al., 2003). These various capacity dimensions foster a multi-dimensional analysis of organizational capacity in CSOs and community sport clubs. This framework was selected following my data analysis to shape my understanding of the relationship between organizational structures and experiences of learn-to-curl league participants. Furthermore, the term membership capacity is used throughout this thesis. Namely, league instructors and organizers, as well as curling administrators used this term as a descriptor for when the learn-to-curl leagues at both clubs no longer could sustain more members. While organizational capacity figures prominently, membership capacity is not a component of Hall et al.’s (2003) model. Organizational capacity is re-visited in the discussion of study findings later in this thesis.

Sport Mega-Event Leveraging and Legacy Literature

Extensive literature exists exploring sport mega-event leveraging and legacies. In this section, I address this literature, primarily Olympic leveraging and legacy research. The following topics will be examined: leveraging and legacy key concepts; sport and physical activity leveraging; juxtaposing legacy and leveraging; and evolving legacy research. Overall, sport and physical activity leveraging and legacies are garnering more attention from sport mega-

event organizers and researchers. Despite this increasing focus, research gaps exist (e.g., limited legacy and leveraging research at the community-sport level) and will be outlined below.

Leveraging and legacy literature overview.

Leveraging and legacy are two prominent considerations in sport mega-event research. Leveraging involves translating media attention (primarily television coverage) from elite sport events (e.g., the Olympics) to achieve various aims. Diverse forms of leveraging exist including business (e.g., O'Brien, 2006), economic (e.g., Chalip, 2004; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008), image (e.g., Grix, 2012), infrastructural (e.g., Carlsen & Taylor, 2003), and political (e.g., Cornelissen, 2004; Cornelissen & Swart, 2010). Moreover, social (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Kellet, Hede, & Chalip, 2008; Minnaert, 2012), sport participation (e.g., Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal, Toohey, & Frawley, 2012; Weed et al., 2009), and tourism leveraging (e.g., Solberg & Preuss, 2007) receive scholarly attention. Sport participation leveraging - translating media attention from elite sport events to increase sport and physical activity interest and participation - will be a focus of this study (Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012).

Legacies also inform our understanding of sport-mega events. According to Preuss (2007), sport mega-event legacies are “all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself” (p. 211). This definition embraces the diverse considerations within sport mega-event legacies and will be incorporated in the study. Furthermore, researchers have primarily explored the infrastructural, economic, environmental, and tourism legacies involving Olympic host cities and regions (e.g., Glover & Stewart, 2013; Gratton & Preuss, 2008; Hiller, 2000; Ritchie, 2000; Tian & Johnston, 2008; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2012). Following the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics, scholars began exploring whether hosting the Olympics led to changes in activity and

sport participation levels within host populations (Boardley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Leopkey & Parent, 2012; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal, 2003; Veal et al., 2012; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007). This shifting academic focus towards sport participation legacies resulted, in part, from efforts by the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games to increase Australian sport participation rates as part of their legacy agenda.

Legacy and leveraging key concepts.

Various key concepts inform our understanding of sport mega-event leveraging and legacies. These concepts will be addressed in the following section to inform the reader of recent developments in both areas of literature. The demonstration and trickle-down effects are two primary justifications used by event organizers and politicians to host sport mega-events (Boardley, 2013; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2015; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Weed et al., 2015). Broadly, these effects are thought to occur when people are motivated or inspired by viewing elite athletic competitions (in person or on television), and consequently, become more involved in sport or physical activities (Boardley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2015; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2015). Scholars have criticized these concepts, arguing that no empirical evidence exists to support the trickle-down or demonstration effects, despite continued claims by Olympic organizers as to their benefits (Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2015).

However, Potwarka and Leatherdale (2015) complicate this claim. Using nationally representative data from a Canadian Community Health Survey, Potwarka and Leatherdale (2015) reported that leisure-time physical activity rates among moderately active/active females in Richmond, British Columbia (host of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic long-track speed skating

competitions) increased in the period surrounding the Olympics. Consequently, the trickle-down effect may occur within communities located close to where Olympic events are staged and among certain population cohorts (Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2015). Overall, scholars argued that the trickle-down effect can be successful (or more successful) when combined with leveraging initiatives, such as large-scale infrastructure and program development by sport organizations and governments (Broadley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Toohey, 2008; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2015).

Leveraging and legacies are tied to sport mega-events. In the study, these events are defined based on Hiller's (2000) criteria for what constitutes a sport mega-event. Sport mega-events (e.g., the Olympics or Soccer World Cup) represent high profile spectacles that stimulate worldwide media and popular interest. They occur over a fixed duration, are short-term in nature, and occur only once in a specific locale (Hiller, 2000). These events stimulate the creation of a comprehensive vision in which economic outcomes predominate including tourism generation, job creation, and infrastructural improvements. Hiller's (2000) most important consideration involves the event leaving comprehensive legacies that alter both the host community and country's future direction.

The substitution (Bullough, 2012), switching (Weed et al., 2009), and discouragement (Hindson et al., 1994; Murphy & Bauman, 2007) effects shape our understanding of sport and physical activity leveraging and legacies. Substitution and switching effects occur when someone who already participates in a sport or physical activity exchanges their current pursuit for something different. Thus, it becomes difficult to measure the true impact of these sport and physical activity changes because of the corresponding duplication (Bullough, 2012; Weed et al., 2009). Although someone may try a new activity after viewing it during a sport mega-event, this

does not represent an increase to the national sport and physical activity participation rate. Rather, one sport or activity experiences an increase while another one decreases. Hence, the substitution and switching effects do not result in overall sport and physical activity participation increases (Bullough, 2012; Weed et al., 2009).

The discouragement effect occurs when spectators watch elite athletes compete during sport mega-events. Namely, these spectators recognize the gap in abilities between themselves and the elite athletes. Consequently, they are discouraged from increasing their physical activity levels (Bullough, 2012; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010). This concept is also termed the couch-potato effect (Potwarka & McCarville, 2010) and influences non-active individuals to maintain their sedentary lifestyles by deeming the elite athletes' performances as unattainable (Hindson et al., 1994; Murphy & Bauman, 2007). Thus, the substitution, switching, and discouragement effects complicate our understanding of the relationship between sport mega-events and sport and physical-activity participation leveraging and legacies. Furthermore, the role of the trickle-down effect is also problematized.

Sport participation leveraging research.

Sport participation leveraging has received increasing scholarly attention in Olympic and non-Olympic sport mega-events (Bauman, Murphy & Matsudo, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Frawley & Cush, 2011; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Hindson et al., 1994; Mackintosh, Darko, & May-Wilkins, 2015; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Shipway, 2007; Smith, 2014; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2015). Researchers argued for the need to better understand how sport and physical activity impacts can be leveraged surrounding sport mega-events (Bauman et al., 2013; Coalter, 2004; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Smith, 2014; Weed et al., 2009). More research is also required of

existing sport and physical-activity participation leveraging initiatives (Bauman et al., Girginov & Hills, 2008; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2015).

To date, two studies explored specific leveraging initiatives in the Olympics (Girginov & Hills, 2008; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007). Wang and Theodoraki (2007) studied the mass sport policy development program: *Quindao Olympic Action Plan – “Sport for All,”* in Quindao, China, host of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic sailing regatta. This action plan led to large-scale public investments through the construction of stadiums, community parks, outdoor fitness centres, and hundreds of walking paths, funded by “sport’s lotteries, corporate sponsors, and society’s support,” (Wang & Theodoraki, 2007, p. 129-130). The authors concluded that the number of Quindao residents engaged in regular physical activity rose from 45% in 2004 to 50% in 2006 following these large-scale investments (Wang & Theodoraki, 2007).

Girginov and Hills (2008) analyzed two specific leveraging initiatives involving the English Volleyball Association (EVA) and StreetGames, a grassroots sport development organization that supports youth sports in disadvantaged English communities. The authors determined that both programs did not align with the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games’ (LOCOG) physical activity target of 70% of British citizens engaging in 30 minutes of physical activity three to five times per week (Girginov & Hills, 2008). The EVA’s focus on recruiting and developing specific high-performance athletes did not align with the LOCOG’s inclusive physical activity policy (Girginov & Hills, 2008). Also, StreetGames’ approach to providing accessible sporting opportunities in disadvantaged communities did not conform to the aforementioned national physical activity policy as it failed to use existing facilities built for the 2012 London Summer Olympics (Girginov & Hills, 2008). These examples illustrated how leveraging programs employed by specific organizations may clash with the

wider aims of sport mega-event organizers. Hence, tensions arose between these different sport organizations.

Researchers also address leveraging initiatives in non-Olympic sport mega-events. For example, Frawley & Cush (2011) examined leveraging efforts surrounding the 2003 Rugby World Cup hosted in Australia. National rugby registration rates were analyzed from 2000 to 2008. In the resulting findings, the researchers found that youth registration rates increased by 68.23%, while adult rates increased by 10.5% (Frawley & Cush, 2011). During the 2003/2004 rugby season (coinciding with the Rugby World Cup), youth rugby registration numbers increased by 20% versus only 5.34% for adults (Frawley & Cush, 2011). Moreover, findings from interviews with Australian Rugby Union (ARU) senior managers demonstrated that these increased registration numbers, especially during the 2003/2004 season, were aided by the media attention surrounding the 2003 Rugby World Cup (Frawley & Cush, 2011). Veal et al. (2012) also found that youth sport participation increases were larger than their adult counterparts, leading to the conclusion that perhaps sport mega-events, such as the Olympics or Rugby World Cup, may inspire more young people to take up sports than older individuals.

Frawley and Cush (2011) also argued that the inspiration resulting from the Rugby World Cup alone could not explain the rugby participation rate increases. Instead, they concluded that the ARU's investment in rugby development programs, dating back to the late 1990s, played a more significant role in these increases (Frawley & Cush, 2011). Two key findings emerged from this article. First, the ARU's infrastructure and program development contributed to the increased rugby registration numbers throughout Australia from 2000 to 2008 (Frawley & Cush, 2011). Second, youths appeared to be more heavily influenced by these leveraging initiatives (Frawley & Cush, 2011; Veal et al., 2012). Hence, media coverage of the 2003 Rugby World Cup and ARU rugby development programs provided a clear example of non-Olympic sport mega-event

leveraging (Frawley & Cush, 2011). Furthermore, this example illustrates how leveraging can influence sport participation rates.

Whereas Wang and Theodoraki (2007) examined a leveraging initiative tied to mass sport policy development, Girginov and Hills (2008) addressed policy tensions between national sport organizations and a sport mega-event organizing committee. Frawley and Cush (2011) also found that leveraging can increase sport participation rates. Important macro-level contributions emerged from these studies. Furthermore, Mackintosh et al., (2015) argued that national-level leveraging initiatives are met with resistance at the community level in cases where locals do not perceive regional community involvement in national sport mega-events. Yet, explorations of leveraging efforts at the community sport level are limited. This research gap is addressed in the study of introductory sport programs at two community curling clubs. Namely, the leveraging efforts tied to these introductory sport programs are investigated. The subsequent rich data contributes to existing academic literature by presenting a thorough understanding of leveraging initiatives employed by two community sport clubs.

Juxtaposing legacy and leveraging research.

The impacts of sport mega-events are shaped by both legacy and leveraging initiatives. Yet, nuances exist between these two concepts. While legacies involve the intended and unintended consequences of an event, leveraging occurs by establishing strategic alliances between non-event stakeholders. These alliances facilitate tangible benefits for the host community (Chalip, 2014) or non-host communities. Chalip (2014) contended that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has adopted the legacy framework both to combat its various critics and maintain control over the entire event process. Control is maintained through delegating legacy efforts to the event host committee, rather than to non-event stakeholders as in

leveraging. However, Chalip (2014) identified problems inherent in the legacy framework including: (1) event organizers being ill-prepared to cope with added legacy management responsibilities on top of various event duties, and (2) event organizing committees typically being disbanded shortly after the event, making legacy programs unsustainable. Instead, Chalip (2014) argued for formulating and implementing leveraging directly into the portfolio of events using the expertise of various non-event stakeholders to maximize success. Hence, legacy and leveraging differ in how they are thought to foster lasting benefits tied to sport mega-events.

In my study, leveraging initiatives in the sport of curling are explored. These efforts draw new curlers into the sport through different programs hosted by both curling clubs. Moreover, the clubs in this study do not engage in legacy programs. Yet, the legacy concept shapes our understanding of how sport and physical activity participation impacts have been conceptualized over time. In the next sections, sport and physical activity participation legacies are outlined, as well as how these legacies have only recently gained the attention of researchers and event organizers. Hence, additional empirical research is required on this topic. My study aims to address this gap, in part, through examining the sport participation impacts of leveraging initiatives.

Sport and physical activity participation legacies.

Various studies have addressed the sport and physical activity participation legacies surrounding the Olympics (Bauman et al., 2013; Coalter, 2004; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2015; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010, Shipway, 2007; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2009). For example, Veal et al. (2012) explored the dearth of relevant empirical data in their study measuring sport participation legacies in Australia following the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics. Data from two surveys - the National Physical

Activity Survey (NPAS) and the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Population Survey Monitor - was used to assess relevant sport participation legacies (Veal et al., 2012). The NPAS was conducted in November in 1997, 1999, and 2000, but was terminated in 2001. The ABS survey set out to publish four quarterly reports annually, before ending in 2000/2001 with only the August and November 2000 reports completed (Veal et al., 2012). While no official 2000/2001 ABS report was published, a special draft paper on the immediate impact of the 2000 Olympics on grassroots sport participation was published in November 2001. The authors of this paper concluded that a steady decline in sport participation occurred between May 1999 and August 2000 (a month before the Sydney Olympics), “followed by an apparent increase in the November 2000 survey” (Veal et al., 2012, p. 169). However, the limited scope of this data restricts the ability to draw accurate conclusions (Veal et al., 2012). Furthermore, Veal et al. (2012) argued that longitudinal data was required to measure both the short-term and long-term sport participation trends in Australia. In comparison, the NPAS found that between 1997 and 2000, female participation rates increased, while male participation rates decreased, resulting in no change in Australia’s sport participation rate. Similarly, the short duration of the NPAS limited the authors’ ability to draw accurate conclusions through failing to capture Australian sport participation trends over a prolonged period of time (Veal et al., 2012).

Veal et al. emphasized that their conclusions regarding adult sport participation rate changes were only tentative “because of the change in design of [the] adult participation data collection instruments [the ABS and NPAS surveys] at a key time in the ‘before and after’ research process” (2012, p. 175). These Australian national survey instruments were insufficient for numerous reasons. First, Sydney Olympic organizers did not give sufficient consideration to an Australian sport participation legacy by failing to adequately plan and advocate for measuring or monitoring the achievement of the intended legacy (Veal et al., 2012). Moreover, both the

Australian Sports Commission and the New South Wales state government, through their membership in the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, the governmental committee overseeing these initiatives, helped terminate both surveys (Veal et al., 2012). The decision to withdraw support from both surveys involved numerous factors including: “privatizing the conduct of the survey to save costs and speed-up the analysis process, and implementing surveys on an annual basis to provide regular performance data for departments and agencies and sport government bodies” (Veal et al., 2012, p. 171). This illustrated that Australian sport and physical activity participation legacies were not a priority for the Sydney Olympic organizing committee and various government institutions.

Measuring the sport and physical activity participation legacies of sport mega-events is a limited research priority. Consequently, the relationship between sport mega-events and mass sport and physical activity participation legacies is unclear (Bauman, Murphy & Matsudo, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Shipway, 2007; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2009). However, the London Summer Olympics shifted this trend. In 2012, London created the most extensive legacy program of any previous Olympics (Bullough, 2012 Carmichael, Grix, & Palacios Marques, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Devine, 2013; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Hamlyn & Hudson, 2005; Shipway, 2007, Smith, 2014). Forging a lasting sport and physical activity participation legacy was at the top of London’s Olympic legacy agenda (Carmichael et al., 2013; Coalter, 2004; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Smith, 2014). In the subsequent section, I outline the research surrounding London’s legacy development. Namely, this discussion illustrates how sport and physical activity participation became prominent considerations within sport mega-event legacies.

2012 London Summer Olympic sport and physical activity participation legacies.

Sport and physical activity participation are central to the legacy planning surrounding the 2012 London Summer Olympic Games. The London Olympic Games had the most ambitious legacy program to date and were the first to focus explicitly on leveraging sport and physical activity participation legacies (Carmichael et al., 2013; Shipway, 2007; Smith, 2014). The city's legacy program involved conceptual studies exploring the potential for increasing sport and physical activity participation rates leading up to the Games (Bullough, 2012; Devine, 2013; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Hamlyn & Hudson, 2005; Shipway, 2007; Smith, 2014). Furthermore, researchers focused on data collection and measurement concerns through systematically reviewing prior literature. Specifically, they problematized the link between sport and physical activity participation and hosting sport mega-events (Mahtani et al., 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2012). Additionally, Murphy and Bauman (2007) and Weed et al. (2012) argued that physical activity trends have yet to be appropriately measured in relation to sport mega-events. Scholars also noted the difficulty in achieving population-wide physical activity changes (Bauman et al., 2013; Bullough, 2012). Shipway (2007) advocated for improving the access to sport and physical activity among the general population through hosting sport mega-events.

Overall, many researchers doubted that London would achieve its physical activity targets (70% of the general population exercising for 30 minutes daily, three to five times per week). This doubt arose from ineffective measurement tools, underfunding, and a misguided government and sport administration focus on elite sport development through the trickle-down effect (Bauman et al., 2013; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Shipway, 2007; Smith, 2004; Weed et al., 2009). Researchers suggested that more resources should be invested into leveraging and legacy

research to better evaluate the 2012 programs, as well as develop a series of sport and physical activity development best practices to increase leveraging (Carmichael et al., 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Smith, 2014).

The “festival effect” is one suggestion. This concept involves enhancing the link between London 2012 and various sport and physical activity participation legacies by targeting non-participants (Bauman et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2012). The festival effect involves de-emphasizing the sporting nature of London 2012 by framing the Olympics as a national festival based around recreational physical activity. These festivals transcend sport by being rooted in the local and cultural characteristics of communities (Bauman et al., 2013). Arguably, this inclusive environment helps facilitate a climate that encourages sedentary people to participate in sport and physical activity. This initiative would frame the Olympics as both a nationally significant event, as well as a locally and culturally relevant festival (Bauman et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2012). Historically, sport mega-events have motivated previously active athletes to engage in additional or different sports or physical activities (Bauman et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2012). In comparison, non-participants have, at best, only been stimulated to begin contemplating sport and physical activity participation (Weed et al., 2009). Consequently, the festival effect is designed to help translate London’s Olympic goal of increased sport and physical activity participation rates into reality.

Bauman et al. (2013) further critiqued London’s goal of achieving long-term national sport and physical activity participation legacies. They argued it takes years of integrated investment and coordinated policy to change the sport and physical activity patterns of people (Bauman et al., 2013). Thus, Bauman et al. proposed four strategies to help achieve sport and physical activity legacies including:

Influencing social norms toward increasing lifestyle activity; improving the built environment in order to create more opportunities to be active throughout the day; building national active transport networks; and increasing health literacy and messaging about medical and other health professions regarding the importance of regular physical activity to noncommunicable disease prevention (2013, p. 1).

Bauman et al. (2013) advocated for the implementation of these steps within future sport mega-events to begin achieving positive sport and physical activity legacies. Consequently, Bauman et al. (2013) re-affirmed that simply hosting sport mega-events will not lead to sustained, large-scale sport and physical activity legacies. Rather, such legacies emerge through long-term, multi-level sport and physical activity initiatives facilitated by various stakeholders.

Researchers argued that diverse stakeholders needed to be involved for London's sport and physical activity legacy to succeed (Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Shipway, 2007; Weed et al., 2009). For instance, Weed et al. argued the need for physical activity and health legacy plans to be integrated within the wider London 2012 legacy efforts by including "community and educational programmes, opportunities for coaching, and well-planned, accessible facilities which serve an existing need" (2009, p. 54). Griffiths and Armour (2013) and Shipway (2007) contend that effective legacies occur when programs are embedded into existing structures through collaboration between various educational, community sport, and government stakeholders.

Various sport and physical activity participation legacies from London 2012 (as well as the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games) are also measured empirically. For example, two specific legacy programs, Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) and Manchester Passport 2k, incorporated diverse stakeholders (Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007). PESSYP was implemented ahead of London 2012 to facilitate a national physical education and sport legacy (Griffiths & Armour, 2013). PESSYP was a coordinated effort involving schools, sport clubs, community groups, and local authorities that

“set out to create opportunities for five to 16-year olds to experience five hours of sporting activity per week: two hours of quality physical education, and three hours of sporting activity in the school and community” (Griffiths & Armour, 2013, p. 215). In particular, PESSYP focused on diverse groups of children, some who have historically been left out of organized sport (Griffiths & Armour, 2013).

Manchester Passport 2k emerged from the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games. This activity program represented a successfully coordinated effort between the 2002 Commonwealth Games organizing committee and surrounding local communities (Murphy & Bauman, 2007). Manchester Passport 2k targeted 11 to 15-year olds from disadvantaged communities across northwestern England. Program participants engaged in various sports and physical activities during a two-week summer program. Afterwards, year-round funding was provided to allow participants to continue with the sports program in their communities (Murphy & Bauman, 2007). By 2003, this program supported 5,390 youth in 16 communities (Murphy & Bauman, 2007). Thus, PESSYP and Manchester Passport 2k represented effective sport and physical activity legacies by influencing thousands of British youth to be more active (Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007). The work of PESSYP to increase the amount of time British youth participate in sport and physical activities, both inside and outside of school, continues to develop throughout Britain (Griffiths & Armour, 2013). Moreover, both initiatives demonstrate how legacies can be enhanced through collaboration between various community stakeholders and different sport mega-event organizing committees (Murphy & Bauman, 2007).

Pappous and Hayday (2015) investigated the impact that hosting the 2012 Olympics had on grassroots sport participation in two non-traditional English sports, fencing and judo. Results showed an increase in sport participation rates for both sports between 2007 and 2013. Interviews with various club and sport administrators uncovered that grassroots participation programs

impacted these increases far more than the inspirational effect of hosting the Olympics (Pappous & Hayday, 2015).

Sport and physical activity participation legacies are clearly linked to the 2012 London Summer Olympics. Moreover, extensive research has been conducted into the development of, as well as critiquing the supposed benefits of these legacies (Bauman et al., 2013; Shipway, 2007; Smith, 2014; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2015). To a lesser extent, the impacts of specific legacy initiatives (PESSYP and Manchester Passport 2k) have been examined through empirical studies (Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Pappous & Hayday, 2015). This sport and physical activity participation legacy research illustrates the increasing attention these topics receive from sport mega-event organizers and researchers.

Overall, legacy initiatives are receiving more scholarly attention and becoming better understood (Coalter, 2004; Smith, 2014). Namely, sport and physical activity participation legacies have grown in importance, especially within Olympic contexts. Sport and physical activity participation leveraging has also received greater research interest (Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Mackintosh et al., 2015; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Smith, 2014). These leveraging and legacy initiatives also relate to one another. Specifically, some researchers call for the successful implementation of sport and physical activity participation legacies through strategic leveraging efforts (Bauman et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2015). Hence, this discussion demonstrates the increased attention sport and physical activity legacy and leveraging programs receive. Yet, research gaps exist including a lack of understanding of leveraging efforts at the community sport level. This study adds to existing literature, in part, through providing empirical evidence from leveraging initiatives in two community curling clubs.

Concluding Remarks

These research areas relevant to this investigation include great breadth and depth. Through this literature review, I have analyzed past research regarding various curling, sport experience and participation, community sport organizational capacity, and sport mega-event legacy and leveraging. Various research gaps were identified including the need for more qualitative research of sport mega-event legacy and leveraging initiatives, organizational capacity literature addressing multiple capacity dimensions at the individual curling club level, and an in-depth understanding of how adults experience introductory sport programs. In an effort to help address these major gaps, a qualitative case study methodology was used to examine two adult introductory sport programs in the sport of curling. Namely, this study addresses the lived experiences of league participants, the organization of both leagues, and the extent to which the leagues may be considered leveraging initiatives. This study builds from Sharpe's (2006) qualitative case study inquiry of the experience in one grass-roots sport organization by employing various research methods. By using multiple research methods I uncover the rich, multi-layered experiences of participants who are involved with two learn-to-curl leagues in two central Canadian curling clubs. The contributions this study makes to existing research are outlined in the subsequent chapters. Next, I present how the study was conducted in Chapter Three – Understanding the Experience: Methodological and Methods Considerations.

Chapter Three – Understanding the Experience: Methodological and Methods Considerations

Introduction

A qualitative case study methodology and constructivist grounded theory approach provide the applicable tools to examine the introductory sport experiences of adults participating in learn-to-curl leagues. In this chapter, I outline how these tools contributed to an in-depth understanding of the research topic. Moreover, multiple research methods were used to collect data and are outlined below. I also detail my approach to data collection and analysis to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of how the research unfolded. Various ethical, reflexive, and dissemination considerations are also presented in this chapter in order to outline my thinking about this work and the implications thereof. Overall, the reader is provided with a clear understanding of how the subsequent thematic chapters were arrived at.

Purpose Statement

In this thesis, I sought a broader understanding of the introductory sport experiences of adults. Through exploring two adult introductory sport programs (learn-to-curl leagues), the experiences were investigated from three perspectives: (1) the lived experiences of the league participants, (2) the program structure of the leagues, and (3) the relationship between the leagues and leveraging. These perspectives fostered a rich, multi-layered understanding of these leagues, with experiential considerations lying at their core.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the learn-to-curl league participants?
2. How are the learn-to-curl leagues structured?

3. What, if any, is the relationship between the learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging?

Qualitative Case Study Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology. The use of multiple qualitative research methods within a case study methodology enables the researcher to collect rich, multi-layered insights into the lived experiences of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 2005; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative researchers focus on the participants' lived experiences by communicating their stories through diverse mediums (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As was noted in the review of the literature, qualitative, interpretivist approaches, while still a minority, are becoming increasingly prevalent in assessing sport experiences (Allender et al., 2006; Andrews et al., 2005). Also, sport researchers are increasingly employing qualitative case studies (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006), with Barrick et al. (in press) espousing their value in uncovering deep, multilayered sport insights. Moreover, as Silk et al. (2005) argued, qualitative researchers strive to capture the essences and contexts of people's experiences in sport, by "recogniz[ing] the fluid and intricate interactions between people and the socio-historical worlds in which they exist" (p. 5). This approach enabled me to unpack the multilayered experiences and contexts that influence the two cases in this thesis. An interpretivist, qualitative case study methodology allowed me to delve deeply into the research world (the learn-to-curl leagues) and to understand and navigate the various layers within (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009).

By focusing on the complexities and ambiguities within particular cases, qualitative case study researchers strive to look beyond cause-and-effect relationships, towards a more comprehensive understanding of the events and relationships people experience (Stake, 2005). Qualitative case study researchers also investigate "bounded systems" within real-life contexts to

enrich their understanding of specific experiences (Stake, 2005; Yin 2009). Furthermore, Yin (2009) described cross-case synthesis as an analytic technique to unearth rich insights through comparing two or more cases. Rather than directly comparing the leagues at both clubs, I investigated the leagues concurrently to capture a rich, thorough understanding of (1) the introductory sport experiences of league participants, (2) the organization of these leagues, and (3) their relationship to club-wide leveraging initiatives.

Another advantage of using a qualitative case study approach involves the researcher(s) studying an organizational or societal problem in its natural context (Yin, 2009). Qualitative case study researchers spend large amounts of time directly *in* the research world to immerse themselves in the surroundings and circumstances they are exploring. This immersion involves using multiple research methods to uncover diverse representations within the case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I spent many hours observing both on-ice league instruction and off-ice social activities. Moreover, I conducted interviews with league participants, instructors, and organizers, usually immediately before or after league times. Additionally, I paid particular attention throughout the research process (e.g., during observations, when conducting in-depth interviews, and while reflexive journaling after all league sessions and interviews) as to how participants constructed their experiences, and what factors shaped their time in the leagues (e.g., interpersonal relations between teammates and other league participants). This depth of analysis led me to begin uncovering multiple realities, complexities, and inconsistencies within the league experiences of study participants (Amis, 2005).

Defining “the case” represents the primary consideration in qualitative case study research (Stake, 2005). Moreover, Thomas (2011) made an important distinction between the subject and object in case study research. The subject in any project refers to the case itself, while the object represents the analytical frame or theme “through which the subject is viewed and which the

subject explicates” (Thomas, 2011, p. 511). Thus, both the subject and object must be identified to make the project a case “of” something (Thomas, 2011). In this case, the object involves the introductory sport experiences of adults, with the learn-to-curl leagues at the Redwood and Shaw clubs representing the subject.

The aforementioned sportsscotland study provided something of a methodological guide for my project. Sportsscotland (2004) employed qualitative and quantitative research methods in their exploration of Scotland’s curling population. However, this study predominantly relied on quantitative surveys to collect data from new Scottish curlers. Qualitative interviews represented a secondary technique used to uncover insights from the various curling administrators (sportsscotland, 2004). In comparison, my project employed various qualitative research methods to unpack the diverse realities and perspectives throughout both cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Introducing the Main Players

Multiple curling organizations and clubs were involved in this thesis. Each entity is briefly outlined below and re-visited in more detail when I introduce both cases. Curling Canada is the national curling administrative body that oversees national curling competitions, grassroots curling development, business development initiatives, and leveraging (Curling Canada, 2014). For this study, I focus on Curling Canada’s (then the Canadian Curling Association) role in developing the learn-to-curl leagues and the organization’s relationship with the other relevant stakeholders. The Pleasant Curling Association (PCA – a pseudonym) is a regional curling administrative organization overseeing approximately 45 curling clubs in central Canada. The PCA offers the following services to its member clubs: providing financial support, advertising and social media assistance, hosting workshops and seminars, and facilitating various PCA-sanctioned competitions. Also, the Redwood Curling Club and Shaw Curling Club’s are two

urban, Northampton-area (a pseudonym) curling clubs. The learn-to-curl leagues hosted by both clubs were the focus of this study.

Background Materials

Two important documents, published by Curling Canada (then known as the Curling Canada), inform this study. They are: *Getting Started for Adults: A comprehensive curling club program to build membership through superior customer service* and *Growing the sport of curling: Leveraging 2014* published in 2009 and 2014 respectively. A second edition of *Getting Started for Adults* was published in 2015. *Getting Started for Adults* provides a step-by-step guide for clubs to implement and operate a learn-to-curl league for adults (Curling Canada, 2015). *Leveraging 2014* outlines different ways clubs may translate increased media attention surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics into increased membership rates (Curling Canada, 2014). These publications provide context and illustrate the kinds of information Curling Canada downloads to its member clubs involving learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging. As will be outlined below, the *Getting Started for Adults* manual has a greater role in both clubs than the *Leveraging 2014* publication.

Getting Started for Adults.

The first *Getting Started for Adults* manual was developed in 2009 and revised in 2015. This document was modeled after the Redwood club's learn-to-curl league as Curling Canada designated this league as their pilot program in 2005. The *Getting Started for Adults* manual outlines the creation, operation, and maintenance of learn-to-curl leagues. Moreover, the document provides a program curriculum with weekly lesson plans that instructors and organizers use to teach basic curling skills. The publication also stresses providing superior

customer service through paid instructors and organizers (Curling Canada, 2015). This trend marks a departure from past reliance on volunteers. Further, the emphasis on business-centred language illustrates a shift within Curling Canada towards offering their programs within a corporate framework (see Curling Canada's Business of Curling program for another example). The *Getting Started for Adults* manual (Curling Canada, 2015) also outlines improved programming, instruction, and equipment as contributing to enhanced league experiences. As will be discussed later, the Redwood and Shaw clubs have incorporated this manual in different ways.

Leveraging 2014.

Curling Canada developed *Leveraging 2014* to assist clubs in better understanding and implementing leveraging initiatives surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. This publication outlines Curling Canada's long-range leveraging plan, rationalizes the need for clubs to leverage, and provides an organizing framework and a series of best practices (Curling Canada, 2014). Curling is also positioned as the ideal sport to leverage:

All the media hype surrounding the 2014 Winter Olympics, world, national and provincial/territorial events is a natural recruiting tool for our sport. We could do nothing in the way of marketing and still people would be knocking on our doors because of the wall to wall coverage we enjoy [mainly on television]. But that would be literally missing the boat on what is a great opportunity for our sport to take advantage of this increased public awareness (Curling Canada, 2014).

Thus, the media coverage of the Winter Olympics is Curling Canada's primary justification for leveraging. Additionally, provincial, territorial, and national curling events provide a leveraging opportunity for the sport as they are held annually as opposed to the Winter Olympics' quadrennial structure. These annual events garner media attention and are viewed by Curling Canada (2014) as another leveraging opportunity.

Leveraging 2014 provides a step-by-step framework to organize and implement such programming. This framework takes readers from striking a membership recruitment committee, to conducting a membership recruitment campaign, and finishing with follow-up interviews with prospective new members (Curling Canada, 2014). Readers are also provided with an action-planning template. This template contains 19 items including identifying the campaign's target market, to implementing external advertising and communication initiatives, to evaluating the campaign's success (Curling Canada, 2014). Thus, Curling Canada provides clubs with structures to achieve membership recruitment. Similar to *Getting Started for Adults*, the *Leveraging 2014* document states that program standardization is a primary goal for Curling Canada. The document also illustrates the importance Curling Canada places on leveraging, thereby enriching our understanding of its place within curling. Yet, study participants at both clubs (mainly league instructors and organizers) were unaware of its existence, thereby demonstrating its diminished role in learn-to-curl leagues.

Recruitment

Recruitment represented a significant process in the study. I progressed from contacting a gatekeeper at Curling Canada, to establishing a connection with an administrator from the PCA through a moment of serendipity (which I will discuss below), to then partnering with my two research sites (the Redwood and Shaw Curling Clubs), and subsequently, recruiting study participants for my qualitative interviews and PEIs. Next, I outline the steps by which I recruited participants, beginning with contacting my gatekeeper at Curling Canada.

Receiving guidance from Curling Canada.

Last summer, as I was writing my thesis proposal document, I contacted Scott, a prominent national-level curling administrator looking for recommendations of curling club's with established learn-to-curl leagues. As the Curling Canada gatekeeper, Scott identified specific curling clubs as potential research sites for my study. Specifically, Scott emphasized the Redwood Curling Club's learn-to-curl league as Curling Canada's pilot program dating back to 2005. Moreover, Scott provided me with contact information for then program coordinator, Liz (Scott, personal communication, July 25, 2014).

Redwood Curling Club.

After receiving ethics clearance from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics, I contacted Liz via email, requesting to partner with the Redwood's learn-to-curl league for my study, upon which she accepted my request. Liz' decision was subsequently approved by the club's board of directors.

Pleasant Curling Association (PCA).

As I was designing my study, I happened to be viewing the PCA's website one day when I came across an advertisement for the Adult Learn-to-Curl program. This program provided applicable member clubs with \$500 to implement a learn-to-curl league for the 2014/2015 season. As a condition of program participation, each club was required to send a representative (e.g., league organizer) to participate in the one-day Train-the-Trainer day (a one-day event teaching prospective organizers how to operate a learn-to-curl league). After viewing this advertisement, I contacted Mary, a PCA administrator, via email about my study. Consequently, Mary invited me to present my study proposal at the September meeting of the PCA board of directors. At this meeting, I presented my study, outlined my intentions to participate in the

Train-the-Trainer day, and recruit a second research site (learn-to-curl league). The board approved my request.

Moreover, I participated as an observer during this event, which was jointly hosted by the PCA and Curling Canada. League instructors and organizers from the Redwood club, because of its status as the learn-to-curl program pilot with Curling Canada, led the group through the core lesson plans in the *Getting Started for Adults* manual. These lessons, developed in partnership between the Redwood club and Curling Canada, involve teaching new curlers basic skills (e.g., balance, sliding straight, throwing the rocks). These newly trained organizers then took this information back to their home clubs where they introduced learn-to-curl leagues.

Shaw Curling Club.

At the PCA's Train-the-Trainer day, I was given the opportunity to introduce my study to all instructors in attendance and recruit potential clubs for my second research site. Many instructors from different clubs expressed interest in participating in my study. I took their names and contact information and contacted them via email a week later. After discussions with instructors from three different clubs, I selected the Shaw Curling Club as the second research site, even though the Shaw's league was not involved in the Train-the-Trainer session. The Shaw club was not eligible to attend the Train-the-Trainer day as it was geared to new learn-to-curl leagues and the Shaw's program dates back to 2008. An instructor from another club, who attended the Train-the-Trainer session, notified the organizer of the Shaw's learn-to-curl league about my study. The Shaw league organizer then contacted me, and ultimately, the Shaw club's board of directors approved participation in my study.

The Shaw club was chosen because of the league organizer's eagerness to participate and desire for feedback on his learn-to-curl program. Moreover, of the three interested clubs, the

Shaw program was the only full-season program in the Pleasant region, thereby meeting the participation criteria for my study. Clubs with full-season learn-to-curl leagues were targeted to capture the development and evolving experience of new curlers over a period of time, in this case, 26 weeks.

Qualitative in-depth interviews.

In the next two sections, I outline the qualitative in-depth interviews and PEIs that were conducted in the study as well as how participants were recruited. I conducted 24 semi-structured, qualitative in-depth interviews. I interviewed seven league participants, three instructors, six organizers, and eight curling administrators. The interviews were conducted between November 2014 and March 2015. Interviews ranged from 35 to 75 minutes, with the average being 58 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A semi-structured interview approach was adopted to ensure particular topics were addressed, while providing participants the freedom to discuss topics they deemed relevant and important (Bryman et al., 2009; Creswell, 2013). I also employed three separate interview guides targeting the different groups of study participants: new curlers, league instructors and organizers, and curling administrators. These guides included separate questions addressing the nuances of each group (e.g., questions about the league experience for new curlers and questions about the structure and organization of the league for instructors and organizers). See *Appendix A* for the Interview Guide for Learn-to-Curl League Participants, *Appendix B* for the Interview Guide for Curling Administrators, and *Appendix C* for the Interview Guide for Learn-to-Curl League Instructors and Organizers. Next, I outline how participants were recruited. To promote clarity, I divided this discussion into two groups: (1) league participants, instructors, and organizers and (2) curling administrators.

League participants, instructors, and organizers.

My first step was to approach league organizers from both clubs to gain permission to present my study and recruit study participants at the first night of the learn-to-curl leagues. At these introductory sessions, I outlined my study purpose, research methods and intended contributions to the sport (see *Appendix I: Verbal Script – Recruiting Study Participants - League Participants, Instructors, and Organizers*). Copies of the appropriate information letters were also distributed to all participants, instructors, and organizers (see *Appendix D* and *Appendix J: Letter of Information for Participants (Administrator Interviews)*). I stressed that participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Moreover, the leagues and my study were positioned as separate entities.

Those interested in participating in my study were invited to approach me through the leagues or contact me. At that introductory session, some participants provided me with their email address, while others contacted me at a later date. I then arranged interview dates, times, and locations that were agreeable to the people who had contacted me. All interviews were conducted at either the Redwood or Shaw clubs. Following the interviews, I offered participants a five-dollar gift card to the vendor of their choice as appreciation for their contribution to the study.

Curling administrators.

Curling administrators were interviewed based on their connection to the learn-to-curl leagues at the Redwood and Shaw clubs, or to learn-to-curl leagues in general. I sent an email to each curling administrator outlining my study, its purpose and intended contributions to the sport. Administrators were invited to participate either by in-person interviews or by telephone interviews at their convenience (see *Appendix K: Recruitment Email for Curling Administrators*).

The interviews were conducted in administrative offices of Curling Canada and the Ontario Curling Association and at various curling clubs throughout the Pleasant region. Administrators were offered a five-dollar gift card to the vendor of their choice as appreciation for their contributions to the study.

Photo elicitation interviews (PEIs).

In total, four new curlers participated in PEIs and all were from the Shaw club's league. As discussed in the review of the literature, photo elicitation, in general, involves the use of photographs in an interview (Harper, 2002). During these interviews, the person being interviewed takes on more agency as the conversation is anchored around images they took (Harper, 2002). Study participants (new curlers only) were given the option of either partaking in a PEI or qualitative interviews. A choice was provided to new curlers to maximize participant recruitment, in part, through appealing to diverse interests (e.g., taking photographs). New curlers were also exclusively targeted for the PEIs as this method facilitates depth of analysis in participants. Namely, new curlers decided what to photograph during their league experience, took the photographs, and subsequently reflected upon these photographs in the PEI. This period of prolonged reflection resulted in enriched insights from participants in the study and is confirmed in previous research employing photographic interview methods (Harper, 2002; Leipert et al., 2011; Wang; 2009). Moreover, this prolonged reflection fit with the study aim of examining the lived experiences of league participants; a complex topic requiring deep reflection.

The new curlers who chose to participate in the PEIs were invited to a one-hour information session in November 2014 before their learn-to-curl league. During the session, I outlined the purpose of the PEIs, discussed ethical considerations, and handed out the necessary paperwork. Originally, five participants volunteered for the PEIs. Later, one participant withdrew

citing family commitments. Participants were provided with the option of using their own personal camera or camera phone, or I would provide disposable cameras. All participants chose to use their personal cameras. Furthermore, participants were instructed to take photographs in response to the following question: What aspects of your league experience are most meaningful to you? This question connects to the over-arching research question from my study involving capturing the lived experiences of league participants. Participants were also given a notebook to record notes surrounding their rationale for taking individual photographs.

I also outlined guidelines concerning ethics during my introductory session. Specifically, I stressed: (1) anyone appearing in photographs must sign completed photo release forms and (2) these photographs cannot be used for the participants' personal use and must be destroyed immediately after being transferred electronically to me. Also, the following forms were explained and distributed: Letter of Information for Participants (Photo Elicitation Interviews – see *Appendix D*), Letter of Information for Person Having Her/His Photograph Taken (see *Appendix E*), Supplemental Letter – Photographing Participants Guidelines (see *Appendix F*), Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participant – see *Appendix G*), and Participant Feedback Letter (see *Appendix H*). These forms were modeled after those employed by Leipert et al., (2011) in their photovoice study of the experiences of women in rural Canadian curling clubs.

Participants were given two months to take their photographs. In January 2015, the four participants sent me their photographs via email to be developed. I then brought the photographs to each interview conducted between January and March 2015. These interviews ranged from 52 to 75 minutes and averaged 61 minutes in length. In the interviews, I began by asking participants to review their photographs and select the two or three that best captured their league experiences. These photographs provided the foundation for the remainder of the interview (see

Appendix A). Moreover, the participants were encouraged to refer to their photographs and notes from their notebooks throughout the interview. At the end of each interview, participants were given a copy of the Participant Feedback Letter (see *Appendix H*). Then, I presented each participant with the prints of their photographs as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the study.

Observations.

Participant observations were also used in this thesis. Throughout my time in both learn-to-curl leagues, the PCA's Train-the-Trainer day, and various bonspiels and social events, I logged approximately 75 hours of observation time. During this process, I paid particular attention to the interactions between league stakeholders, how individuals engaged in league activities, and how my own presence influenced the league experiences of participants (Bryman et al., 2009). After each league session, I recorded my observations as field notes in my research journal, capturing what I observed to inform and shape my iterative data collection and analysis processes (Bryman et al., 2009). An excerpt from a field note involving my observations of the Shaw's league is included below:

A typical session at the Shaw's Learn-to-Curl League – Monday, December 1st, 2014

After attending two sessions, I have a pretty clear idea of what a typical Shaw club's learn-to-curl league session looks like. To begin, the curlers trickle in to the lounge between 1 and 1:30pm. It seems like little social milieus are forming in which people gravitate to each other and engage in conversations, mostly catching up from the past week. Some individuals also engage in a warm-up while they chat. The league begins with the organizer sharing league announcements. These typically involve information about my study (to which I am very grateful) as well as details about upcoming bonspiels and Shaw club events. Next, everyone filters out on to the ice. A bit of a backlog occurs as they clean their shoes using the boot cleaner machine one-by-one. In the meantime, the instructors are out on the ice, making sure that enough rocks are sent down to the far end. Wilson also moves between instructors explaining the coaching plan for. ... During the game, one instructor or assistant will position themselves at the near end giving feedback to the throwers, helping the team's decipher what shot their skip is calling, as well as guide the players to where

they need to stand during and between shots. Throughout these mini games, the enthusiasm and energy are evident, with participant yelling and laughter filling the ice surface. At the end of the two hours, everyone heads up to the lounge, purchases a drink for him or herself, and sits down at a table. Once everyone is settled, Wilson and Fred conducted a presentation on a different topic each week. Today's topic was curling etiquette. These sessions typically last for roughly 10 and 15 minutes. After the presentation, the instructors and assistants join the new curlers at their tables and partake in socializing. People gradually filter out until only a handful of instructors are left, reminiscing about today's session, sharing some stories, and planning for next week. As the clock strikes 7pm (!!), I pack-up and leave the club with the others. Wilson turns out the lights and we collectively brace ourselves to meet the frigid December wind that awaits us.

Reflexive Journaling.

Reflexive journaling represents a process of self-analysis and opening of one's self to their fieldwork (Callaway, 1992). During this study, I engaged with reflexive journaling by reflecting on how my assumptions influenced and were influenced by all aspects of the research (Bryman et al., 2009). My reflections targeted what I saw during observations, what I heard during interviews, and how my perspective was continually adapting within the research context. Following every league session, I wrote in my research journal about how I felt about what I experienced during that session and how it shaped my perspective and understanding of the topic. Yet, I did not restrict myself to what I had just encountered. Rather, as my research journey unfolded, I found myself continually making links to previous experiences, many of which I had previously reflected upon in early entries. This iterative process enhanced my depth of analysis throughout the data collection and analysis processes through challenging myself to look at my research data more critically and unpack my evolving assumptions (e.g., when I heard about negative program experiences from participants). This discussion will be taken up in more detail later in this chapter.

Data Analysis and Representation

Overview of constructivist grounded theory methodology.

Within my qualitative case study project, I implemented constructivist grounded theory techniques during the data analysis and representation stages. Grounded theory provided a way of approaching the data, specifically the emergent data from the in-depth interviews. Broadly speaking, grounded theory methodology involves a systematic strategy for gathering and analyzing data for the purpose of generating theory (Daly, 2007). These themes, categories, and subsequent theories are generative, ever developing, and evolving. Furthermore, grounded theory research is marked by simultaneous data collection and analysis processes (Charmaz 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2011; Daly, 2007). Within this iterative landscape, I operated within analytical circles, progressing from data managing to representing and visualizing in a non-linear, ambiguous fashion (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, insights gleaned from earlier interviews, observations, and reflexive journal entries informed my subsequent data collection and analysis processes leading to the emergence of richer insights. This approach in my data collection and analysis process enabled me to continually refine my categories, themes, and insights.

For instance, I became aware of the Try Curling session (Shaw) and condensed learn-to-curl league (Redwood) as leveraging initiatives during interviews with league organizers and instructors early in the study. Before this, I was exploring the extent to which both full-year learn-to-curl leagues were considered leveraging initiatives. In subsequent interviews, my attention shifted to examining how both leveraging initiatives contributed to the full-year learn-to-curl leagues at both clubs. Moreover, I also learned the important role curling plays for those league participants who recently moved to Northampton. During my first interviews with new curlers, some individuals described the prominent role their learn-to-curl league participation played in expanding their social network in a new community. With this insight (among others), I

began to understand how establishing social connections goes beyond simply expanding ones social network. In the case of participants who were new to Northampton, league participation played a pivotal role in integrating them into the community. This idea shifted my thinking about the importance of social networking, leading me to more purposefully unpack the importance of social connections in subsequent interviews, and to reflect on what I was observing in the league and hearing during interviews collectively in my reflexive journaling. In both cases, continually refining my categories, themes, and insights led to unpacking rich findings that ended up figuring prominently in my thesis document. These findings will be examined below in my thematic chapters.

Constructivist grounded theory was employed because it places the researcher, along with the participants, at the centre of the research process. I placed my participants and myself at the centre of the research process by: (1) remaining involved in and familiar with all aspects of the learn-to-curl leagues throughout their duration, and (2) playing an active and deliberate role in organizing and assigning meaning to the data and generating higher order categories and theory (Charmaz, 2011; Daly, 2007). Moreover, constructivist grounded theory researchers engage in reflexivity throughout the research process (Daly, 2007). In the study, I engaged in critical reflection through reflexive journaling. This strategy enabled me to continually challenge my assumptions and position my ever-changing self within the observation and interview data. Consequently, I was able to make sense of the data as I progressed from the data collection to analysis and subsequent representation stages (Charmaz, 2011). I will return to reflexivity later in this chapter.

Theoretically, constructivist grounded theory researchers typically maintain relativist epistemological foundations and strive for interpretive understandings of the research at hand (Charmaz, 2011). Following these same epistemological beliefs, I approached the insights

uncovered throughout my project as tentative and inconclusive (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, I viewed the themes and theory emerging from this study as built and generative, connecting to the complex and ambiguous nature of constructivist grounded theory research (Creswell, 2007). Constructivist grounded theory and qualitative case study methodology facilitated the creation of a comprehensive picture of the adult introductory sport experiences (Charmaz, 2011). In the subsequent thematic and discussion chapters, I present this picture as a complex, multi-faceted entity.

Coding.

Coding plays a significant role in constructivist grounded theory research. In the study, I read over and began coding early interview transcripts to enrich my understanding of the research context and engage in an iterative data analysis process (Daly, 2007). To start, I employed line-by-line coding through analyzing each transcript in an attempt to shed my own preconceptions of the data (Charmaz, 2011). I used the Microsoft Word comments function to apply shorthand labels to each line of text. This marked the start of the analytic process in which I began asking critical questions about the meaning of the gathered data (Charmaz, 2006a, 2011). Once all transcripts were line-by-line coded, I re-read the transcripts using incident-by-incident to look at the data more conceptually and began uncovering emergent themes (Charmaz, 2011). Next, I employed focused coding through selecting the most common initial codes and testing them across the data (Charmaz, 2006a). This was completed through identifying the most prevalent codes and reviewing all transcripts to confirm whether in fact these codes are the most prevalent (Charmaz, 2006a). In practice, when a code was identified that resonated across multiple transcripts, it was recorded on a cue card. An example of a focused code is included in *Image 1*.
An Example of Focused Coding.

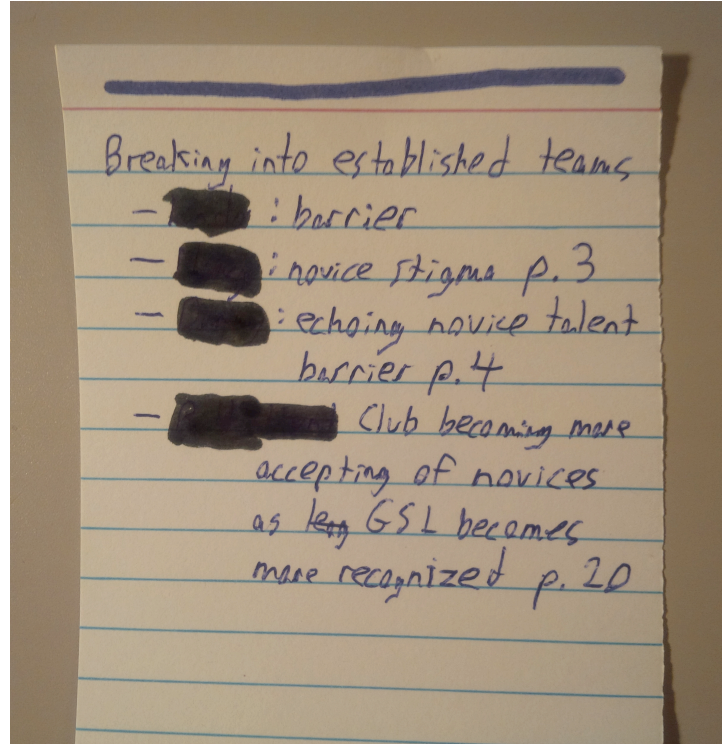


Image 1. An example of focused coding.

As I progressed through developing a range of focused codes, I then shifted my focus to axial coding. Axial coding involves reviewing the categories and sub-categories I had organized through the initial and focused coding processes and re-assembling this previously fractured data to give coherence through the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2006a; Creswell, 2007). For this process, I placed the cue cards containing the initial and focused codes on my basement floor. Next, I organized the cue cards into thematic areas to begin making sense of the data. After I completed the task once, all cue cards were collected. Two days later, I engaged in the same axial process being more familiar with the content. I performed axial coding twice to foster a deeper, more nuanced analysis of the codes a second time (Creswell, 2007; Daly, 2007). My second attempt at axial coding is presented in *Image 2. An Example of Axial Coding.*



Image 2. An example of axial coding.

Moreover, the focused codes were colour coded to facilitate the development of themes. *Image 3.* Organizing the focused codes, captures this categorization. These groups evolved into the final themes through an iterative process of coding, reflecting on those, and memoing, which will be discussed shortly (Charmaz, 2011; Daly, 2007).

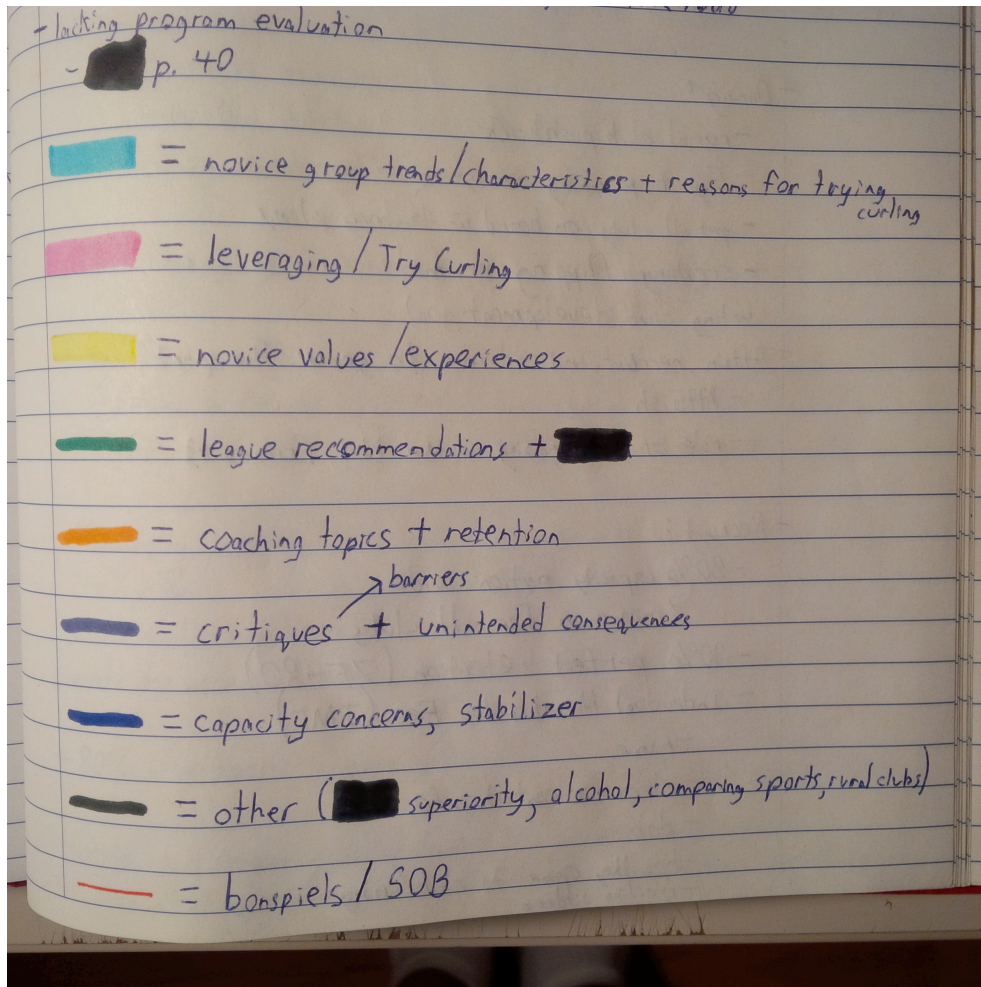


Image 3. Organizing the focused codes.

Based on the iterative nature of constructivist grounded theory, I continually found myself moving between these coding processes throughout the data analysis (Daly, 2007). For instance, new initial and focused codes were discovered and added throughout the axial coding process as I delved deeper into the intersections between the various transcripts, thereby enriching the subsequent depth of analysis. Moreover, Charmaz (2006a) argues: “Our codes arise from the languages, meanings, and perspectives through which we learn about the empirical world, including those of our participants as well as our own” (p. 47). I embraced this perspective through recognizing that my own interpretations of the codes are based on my worldview and background in the sport of curling. Hence, I was mindful of the value my personal perspective

played in refining the codes, memos (discussed next), and resulting themes, while also regularly revisiting the data to ensure my interpretations accurately represented the insights of study participants.

Memo writing.

Memo writing was utilized throughout the data analysis process. Writing a memo involves recording detailed notes from initial, focused, and axial codes creating a platform to explore ideas about the emerging categories as they develop (Charmaz, 2006b). I began writing memos early in the coding process as insights began developing. The level of depth, criticality, and focus increased as I progressed through the different coding procedures (Charmaz, 2006b, 2011). Memo writing also enabled me to continually ask analytic questions from my coding and enhance the depth of analysis in my subsequent thematic thesis chapters (Charmaz, 2011). An example of a memo I wrote is included below:

Problematizing Change/New Blood Rhetoric – Monday, May 4th, 2015

New curlers, instructors, and organizers alike discussed change from a series of different perspectives. These perspectives represent a dichotomy between how instructors and organizers interpret the change new curlers bring to their clubs, and how new curlers experience and wrestle with change.

For instance, instructors, organizers, and administrators discussed the “new blood” participants bring to their clubs. This includes new volunteers and new energy (Liz, Nigel, Dorothy). John also raises how participants bring a different mentality to the sport. For instance, John argues how participants are willing to spend money, whereas the older generations of curlers are typically frugal in their spending.

Yet, new curlers are bringing up other sorts of change, mainly surrounding the consumption of alcohol. Relevant topics include non drinkers, the need to de-emphasize the role consuming alcohol plays in curling socializing, and critiquing the prevalence of the bar (space-wise) in curling clubs. A range of participants including Iris and Grace are raising these ideas.

Does a tension exist and to what extent is it manifested within the learn-to-curl league experience? Is this an example of unintended consequences of change? Or, unintended according to whom? Would administrators welcome this change? What about the old guard?

In that memo, I outlined core ideas, highlighted study participants who spoke to the topic, and raised future questions for investigation. This subsequent examination led to the development of more nuanced themes addressing the essence of the introductory sport experience for adults. Furthermore, writing successive memos throughout the research process kept me actively involved in the analysis and increased the level of abstraction within my ideas as my analysis developed (Charmaz, 2006b). Through the creation, and re-creation of memos, major thematic areas emerged and are presented in the subsequent thematic chapters.

Ethical Implications

Ethical considerations are at the forefront of all social research (Bryman et al., 2009; Creswell, 2007). Due to the intensive, in-depth nature of this qualitative case study, ethical concerns figured prominently in every stage of this study. For instance, specific steps were taken in the field to ensure I was meeting the highest ethical standards. As previously mentioned, I introduced my study and myself to the group (participants, instructors, and organizers) on the first night of both leagues to ensure everyone had a basic understanding of why I would be present at the leagues. I distributed relevant information letters (see *Appendix D* and *J*), as well as stressed that participation in my study was voluntary. When I attended the leagues, I placed copies of the relevant information letters on the backboards behind each sheet of ice and on tables in the curling lounges in case participants had any questions. I also fielded any questions about the study during my time at both leagues.

Ensuring the confidentiality of all study participants was also a primary concern. When I was in the field, I made sure my audio recorder, research journal, and all paperwork were kept in my bag on my person. Moreover, throughout the transcription, data analysis, and writing processes I saved all documents containing personal identifiers on my secure N drive account

through the University of Waterloo's web system. Pseudonyms were also assigned to all study participants, both curling clubs and any other personal identifiers (e.g., geographic identifiers, friends, and fellow club members) to protect the identities of all involved. A document containing all pseudonyms and actual names was compiled and is also located on my N drive account.

Additional ethical concerns exist with the PEIs. Namely, PEI participants photographed various new curlers, instructors, and organizers from the Shaw's league. In order to take photographs including other league participants, instructors, and organizers, PEI participants were instructed to: (1) receive written consent from all individuals appearing in photographs (see *Appendix G*), (2) delete all PEI photographs from their personal cameras or camera phones after sending them to me via email, and (3) not upload PEI photographs to social media or other web platforms. This information was outlined in *Appendix F: Supplemental Letter – Photographing Participants Guidelines*. Furthermore, only images from participants who selected the option of having their image displayed publicly (see *Appendix G*) were included in past conference presentations, this thesis, and in future academic and non-academic presentation and publications. All PEI photographs are stored on my N drive account and all PEI journals (along with all study paperwork) are amassed in my key-locked desk at the University of Waterloo. Finally, all electronic and paper files will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

Ensuring Credibility

As with all qualitative research, credibility and trustworthiness are important factors (Bryman et al., 2009; Creswell, 2013; Veal, 2011). Throughout the data collection and analysis stages, multiple research methods were employed to uncover different data sources (e.g., interview insights, photographs, participant observations). These data sources ensured that my findings were rich, robust, and well developed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Member checking was

also employed to enhance the credibility of my study. After completing individual transcripts, I sent a copy to the applicable study participant by email. In the email, participants were instructed to review the document, make any necessary clarifications and corrections, and send the edited version back to me. Four participants did send me minor corrections (e.g., clarifying dates and names), thereby strengthening the accuracy of the transcripts. This process was completed to ensure I was representing the insights from all participants accurately and fairly (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

I also strove to ensure credibility throughout the study and construction of this thesis document. Namely, I detailed the main steps taken in completing the study earlier in this chapter and included copies of all relevant documentation (e.g., the various interview guides) in the appendices. This transparency enables the reader to clearly understand the development of the study. Moreover, these details provide future researchers with a guide to conduct similar research in other sport and physical activity contexts.

Disseminating Findings

A personal goal of this project has been to widely disseminate my findings across both academic and non-academic audiences. This process has already started as I have presented preliminary findings at three different academic conferences including the 2015 North American Society for Sport Management conference, the 2015 University of Waterloo Graduate Association of Recreation and Leisure Studies Symposium, and the 2015 Brock University Department of Sport Management Student Research Colloquium. I also conducted a presentation at the 2015 Canada Sport for Life conference, which is geared to practitioners. Each presentation enabled me to refine specific areas of my study (e.g., researcher reflexivity, leveraging, and the experiences of the participants) and receive invaluable feedback to strengthen the project. I will

also be presenting at the upcoming Spot4 research conference in Britain in September and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's annual conference in October. I look forward to presenting insights from my completed study to these sport researchers and practitioners, as well as continuing to spread and further develop our understandings of the introductory sport experiences for adults. I will also publish these insights in relevant academic journals. Two possible publications include *Sport in Society* and the *Journal of Sport Management*.

I also intend to disseminate my study findings through various curling sources. After completing my thesis, I will share recommendations from my study with all league stakeholders from both clubs. Moreover, I will design a pamphlet capturing major study findings, salient quotations, and key PEI photographs. Copies of the pamphlet will be sent to all study participants (new curlers, instructors, organizers, administrators) as both a token of my appreciation for their participation and to show them the findings. I will also send the pamphlet to administrators at Curling Canada as well as all regional, provincial, and territorial curling administrative organizations. Additionally, I will consider sending the pamphlet to administrators from other sport organizations, as well as municipal, provincial, and national practitioners, policy makers, and politicians. However, I first need to determine how best to reach these various non-curling sources. Jean Mills (Coordinator of Web Content Services for Curling Canada), the OCA, and the PCA will also be contacted about potentially publishing stories featuring my research on their respective websites. Moving forward, I plan to continually seek out further academic and non-academic sources for disseminating my study findings.

Personal Perspective and Reflexive Journaling

Researcher reflexivity is an important consideration in leisure research (e.g., Berbary, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Dupuis, 1999; Johnson, 2009) and sport research (e.g., Bridel, 2013; Fleming

& Fullagar, 2007; Fortune & Mair, 2011). In this section, I use Callaway's (1992) definition of reflexivity:

Often condemned as apolitical, reflexivity, on the contrary, can be seen as opening the way to a more radical consciousness of self in facing the political dimensions of fieldwork and constructing knowledge. Other factors intersecting with gender-such as nationality, race, ethnicity, class, and age – also affect the anthropologist's field interactions and textual strategies. Reflexivity becomes a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness (p. 33).

Thus, self-analysis and political awareness are the core pillars of reflexivity.

Personally, I possess a strong connection to the sport of curling. As a competitive curler, coach, instructor, fan, and now researcher, my perspective offers great opportunities to contribute to the creation of knowledge. Yet, as was learned throughout this project, repeatedly engaging in reflexive practices and being mindful of my positionality within the research context are significant considerations. I engaged in reflexivity through recording reflexive notes in my research journal. I made sure to write entries after all league sessions, interviews, and related events to maintain a critical, reflective lens throughout. Topics included unpacking what I had observed and experienced, reflecting on how my personal assumptions shape my thoughts, and actions, as well as thinking critically about the study context and league experiences.

Similar to Callaway, Bridel (2013) positions the self at the centre of his research. This involves moving beyond a “confessional mode” of reflexivity (Denison & Markula, 2003; Sparkes, 2002) towards valuing personal experiences and sharing these perspectives with study participants, thereby fostering a substantial reflexive critique (Bridel, 2013). I also adopted this approach by embracing my own diverse experiences in curling. At the beginning of the study, I made the conscious decision to share personal information about myself to aid in the facilitation of meaningful relationships with league stakeholders. However, this intention proved to be more complex than I originally considered. The following reflexive entry captures this tension:

My place in the leagues? - November 5th, 2015

An occurrence that came up at both leagues this week involves my role in them. During the Shaw's league, the organizer asked me if I would be willing to provide tips to the new curlers if I observed something or was asked. During the Redwood's league, on two separate occasions, I was asked to demonstrate sliding rocks down the ice. In both instances, I hesitated – a sign that I am wrestling with my researcher and curler/instructor roles still. I did agree to all requests. However, I am mindful of how I looked in these situations and what ideas participants were formulating about me. I wonder how the participants will view me if they see I am a competent curler vs. solely a researcher? I don't believe this is as simple as being bad or good. Rather, I see my concerns involving the light in which the participants view me. Consequently, this may influence the type of conversations we have during subsequent interviews and league times. Overall, I view participating, when asked by instructors or participants, as a necessity considering their agreement to include me in their leagues. Furthermore, I view participating as a necessity to facilitating the strong partnership and community building I strive for. I look forward to continuing to develop my comfort juggling my multiple perspectives – especially regarding my assisting the leagues. I have to remember to keep my researcher role as the priority.

In this example, my hesitation to demonstrate the curling delivery illustrates how I was mindful of the way others, namely new curlers, viewed me. Hence, it proved more difficult than simply being open with participants. My existence as a researcher in both leagues caused me to analyze every action I took and consequently kept aspects of my curling self hidden from study participants. Furthermore, the above reflexive entry provides an example of my continuous questioning of my place and role in the leagues. These thoughts stayed with me throughout the research process and demonstrated the challenge of continually wrestling with my researcher and curling selves.

This tension became exacerbated after my men's competitive curling team qualified for the provincial championships in January 2015. The following reflexive entry outlines what occurred the following week at the Redwood's league:

An uncomfortable circumstance – Tuesday, January 6th, 2015

Well that was an interesting night. Before last night, I really hadn't advertised my status as a competitive curler. I certainly did not hide the fact that I was a curler. However, I wasn't emphasizing my competitive curling background. And fast forward to tonight. I was wondering if anyone would mention something. I mean, its not every week my team does

better than Glenn Howard's team, let alone win an event his team is in! I knew some of the instructors would have been following along with the playdown results. I just wasn't expecting what happened.

As I walked in the door, I was greeted by Patrick [an instructor], as well as Tony and Roy [two league participants]. Immediately, Patrick congratulated me on qualifying for the Tankard [men's provincial curling championships]. He went on to emphasize just how big of a deal this was to both Tony and Roy. I really had no idea how to respond to their accolades other than to say "Thank you".

Fast forward to the post-league socializing. I selected a different table than the previous week [as per usual] and proceeded to settle in. Upon sitting down, I was peppered by Tony and Roy and the other new curlers at the table with accolades and questions: "When does [the Tankard] start?" "Will it be on TV?" "Can you let us know when your games are on TV?" To say the least, I was quite uncomfortable. My approach up until then had been to sit back observe the conversation and participate naturally without trying to dominate the conversation. Well there goes that approach! Upon reflection, I think I was uncomfortable because I was the centre of attention. I wasn't able to observe the group because they were observing me! Where do I go from here? Will this change how people view me? How will this affect my upcoming interviews? Guess I'll just have to wait and see...

From these interactions, I realized that I had deviated from the original aim of disclosing my personal curling background. Moving forward, I noted being more comfortable making references to my curling experiences in personal conversations and during interviews. Similar to Bridel (2013), I found this process led to feelings of greater comfort with study participants and the co-construction of meaningful insights addressing the essence of the introductory sport experience for adults. This entry again demonstrates the tension I experienced from trying to balance my researcher and curling backgrounds. Moreover, the two entries collectively illustrate how this balance was ever changing, in part, as I became more comfortable in the research settings, and as a researcher generally.

My curling values also figured prominently throughout the study. Namely, I truly believe curling is a great way for all people to get active and participate in sport generally. Hence, deep down I want learn-to-curl leagues to succeed and become stronger because these programs are a great tool for adults to try and become involved in the sport. However, this belief was not lost on me throughout the study. In my reflexive journaling, I continually reflected on how this particular

belief shaped my perspective of the research. This process became especially important when I encountered negative experiences from league participants during the interviews. The following reflexive entry captured one such instance, particularly my visceral reaction to what I heard:

Reflecting on a particular hard interview – Sunday, March 8th, 2015

Wow! That interview was hard. I couldn't help feeling a combination of surprise, anger, remorse, and embarrassment after hearing what Iris was subjected to. Her genuine complaint was met with both indifference from league and club officials, and condemning reactions from some of her fellow club members. Yet, Iris is on to something here. Alcohol is explicitly linked to the Shaw club's culture. To curb this trend, systemic changes are required. Also, folks like Iris need supports from their league and club to enable them to raise these legitimate concerns free from ridicule. This club can do better.

I attempted to wrestle with my personal reaction in this reflexive entry. This was something I had to keep in mind throughout the study as someone deeply embedded within the sport who also maintains a positive viewpoint of the benefit of learn-to-curl leagues and curling in general. Upon reflection, this process was not easy. Yet, I believe it enabled me to uncover significant study findings, as well as enrich my personal perspective of curling.

These entries represent a few, albeit prominent, examples of the topics I addressed throughout my reflexive journaling. This process was key to wrestling with my various selves, challenging and addressing my assumptions and ideas, as well as making sense of the research data. As someone deeply embedded in curling, reflexive journaling enabled me to begin moving below the surface towards a more abstract, conceptual way of looking at the data. This shift contributed to the organization of rich, multi-layered themes uncovering the introductory sport experience of adults.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined how a qualitative case study methodology and constructivist grounded theory approach facilitated the collection and analysis of research data. Ethical

considerations, disseminating the findings, and my own researcher reflexivity were also addressed to illustrate the diverse considerations informing the study. These different considerations, collectively, led to the development of important insights about how adults experience introductory sport programs. Next, the two cases (the Redwood and Shaw Curling Club's learn-to-curl leagues) are outlined in detail, followed by the presentation of the three thematic chapters.

Chapter Four – Locating the Experience: Introducing the Cases

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe both cases and introduce some important sport-specific considerations (e.g., bonspiels and the Northampton Sport and Social Club), influencing the experiences of league participants. This information provides readers with the necessary context to understand the subsequent results, discussion, and conclusion chapters. Also, some of this background information has been gleaned from interview data.

Curling clubs typically follow a league organizational structure. Namely, clubs have a series of weekday, weeknight, and weekend leagues. These leagues run each week and are usually organized by age (e.g., juniors, adults, and seniors), gender (e.g., men's, women's, and mixed), and ability (e.g., social and competitive). Learn-to-curl leagues are instructional, introductory programs for individuals who are new to the sport. Upon graduating from this league, new curlers join other club leagues (usually social leagues) to continue their curling careers. In the subsequent chapters, all leagues, with the exception of the learn-to-curl leagues, will be referred to as “club leagues.” The two central Canadian curling clubs assessed in this project are located in the same urban community.

Redwood Curling Club

The Redwood Curling Club is a downtown, five-sheet curling club with approximately 700 members. Their membership includes mainly university and college students, professionals, and seniors. Many members live within walking distance to the club. Also, the cost of full-year membership fee ranges from \$400 to \$700. The club employs approximately eight full and part-time staff including a club manager, icemaker, as well as kitchen and bar staff. The Redwood

club also houses various rental leagues. Numerous club stakeholders describe the Redwood club as a financially thriving and successful entity, which is approaching membership capacity.

However, the Redwood club was not always successful. During the early and mid 2000s, the Redwood club lacked financial stability and needed more members. Various club stakeholders say people left the club because of poor management and sub-par ice conditions. For instance, the Tuesday night women's league had been losing members for years. In 2005, the league shrunk from two sessions (6:30 and 8:30pm) to one (6:30pm). Consequently, a highly desirable weeknight timeslot became available leading, in part, to the development and implementation of the learn-to-curl league to fill this void. The league began in 2005 as a partnership between the Redwood club and Curling Canada (the national curling governing body). Curling Canada (known at that time as the Canadian Curling Association) funded the league's first season as a pilot project. From this pilot project Curling Canada published a manual titled, *Getting Started for Adults: A comprehensive curling club program to build membership through superior customer service* in 2009. This manual provides clubs with step-by-step instructions of how to start and run a learn-to-curl league. Moreover, its weekly lesson plans outline the recommended content to be covered each week (Curling Canada, 2015). The Redwood's league still follows these lesson plans.

After the 2005 season, the Redwood club took over management of the league. Since then, the league has operated as a 26-week program on Tuesday nights with approximately 50 participants per year. Participants receive step-by-step instruction from certified instructors. These new curlers progress from learning how to slide on the ice to playing games with other participants by the end of their first season. League instructors are paid \$15 an hour. As is made clear in the findings chapter, some organizers believe paying instructors strengthens their commitment and professionalizes the league.

The league is organized into two levels: first year and second year. In the first half of the first year, participants acquire basic curling skills. These skills include sliding on the ice, throwing a rock down the ice, and learning curling strategy. From January to April, they play games against other first-year participants. New curlers receive support from two instructors per sheet as they learn the basics of the sport. Beginning in January, one instructor is provided per sheet, as participants tend to be more independent when playing games.

The second year program is organized into a novice league. In this league, new curlers create teams with other second-year participants. The teams then play against one another in a round robin competition. Throughout the league, participants continue to receive support from league instructors. One instructor per sheet is provided during the second year. The league runs for the entire season with the winning team representing the league in the club championship. This event brings together the winning teams from each league (e.g., men's, women's, and mixed) in a club-wide competition. Once participants finish their second year, they are encouraged to join other club leagues. However, participants may return to the learn-to-curl league for a third season if they are unable to find space in another league. These individuals play with second-year participants in the novice league.

Shaw Curling Club

The Shaw Curling Club is an urban, four-sheet curling club with approximately 350 members. Their membership consists mainly of professionals, older adults and seniors. Most members drive to the club. Also, the cost of full-year membership fee ranges from \$300 to \$550. The club employs about six full and part-time staff including a club manager, icemaker, and bar staff. The club also has various rental leagues. League instructors and organizers say there is a continued need to recruit more members to improve the club's financial position. This need was

exacerbated in the fall of 2014 when the clubhouse sustained damage resulting from a neighbouring construction project. The repair costs have placed the club in a financially precarious position.

The Shaw club ran its first learn-to-curl league in 2008. The league was developed to increase the number of new curlers and help ease their transition into the club. In the early years, between 20 and 30 participants registered. This year, the league reached a capacity of 40 registrants. The league runs on Sunday afternoons from October to April with participants receiving step-by-step training from certified instructors. Each week, new curlers spend the first hour learning and practicing drills. The second hour is devoted to playing games against other league participants. Instructors also provide coaching during the games. After each session, league organizers conduct short presentations in the lounge covering topics such as etiquette, strategy, and team dynamics. Participants are encouraged to attend these presentations and socialize afterwards with other new curlers and instructors. One instructor and an assistant are assigned to each group. All instructors are certified and are responsible for teaching new skills. Assistants are not certified and their role is to support the instructors. All league instructors and assistants are volunteers and they are drawn from the Shaw club's self-professed large pool of volunteers.

New curlers can only participate in Shaw's league for one season. Afterwards, they must join other club leagues if they want to continue curling. To assist in this transition, league organizers start placing interested participants in the various draw leagues. This process begins within the first six weeks for those participants deemed ready by league organizers. Draw leagues are social in nature and run for six-week periods, as opposed to the other full-season leagues. Curlers with varying experience levels play in the draw leagues, thereby providing new curlers with opportunities to expand their curling experiences beyond the learn-to-curl league.

The Shaw's learn-to-curl league loosely follows the *Getting Started for Adults* manual. In past years, one organizer oversaw the entire league. However, beginning in the summer of 2014, a steering committee was developed to re-structure the league. This committee consists of two league organizers, two experienced instructors, and league graduates from previous years. Specifically, the instructors were tasked with incorporating relevant elements from the *Getting Started for Adults* manual into the league's structure. As is made clear in the findings section of this thesis, this process marks the increasing standardization of the Shaw's league.

Training the learn-to-curl league instructors

Instructors receive various types of training. First, instructors from both leagues must possess coaching certification from the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). The NCCP provides standardized coach training to individuals across all sports. In curling, two coaching streams exist: community sport and competition. The community sport stream targets introductory and recreational participants, whereas the competition stream is geared towards competitive athletes (Coaching Association of Canada, 2015). Instructors from both leagues are required to have their community sport (specifically club coach) certification. At Shaw's league, assistants do not need this certification.

Last fall, an alternative training program was introduced for league instructors. Namely, the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) hosted the first annual Train-the-Trainer day in September of 2014. League instructors were brought together from clubs throughout Northampton and area. They were taught how to run a learn-to-curl league following the *Getting Started for Adults* manual. Moreover, Redwood Curling Club league instructors facilitated this event. These individuals were chosen based on Curling Canada's designation of the Redwood's learn-to-curl league as the national pilot starting in 2005. This close relationship continues

between Redwood's league and Curling Canada. Hence, the Redwood league's instructors presented nationally sanctioned material. Various organizers and curling administrators deem this Train-the-Trainer instruction as more applicable to league instructors than the community sport certification. Prior to the start of the learn-to-curl season, instructors also receive program-specific training within their respective clubs. The need to facilitate uniform participant experiences is one item stressed in this additional training. Thus, instructors receive multiple training opportunities including their certification and specific learn-to-curl program training.

The role of leveraging in club programming

Curling Canada addresses the issue of leveraging in its policy document: *Growing the sport of curling: Leveraging 2014*. This document provides curling stakeholders with a comprehensive guide to understanding and implementing leveraging initiatives in their clubs. Moreover, this publication outlines Curling Canada's long-range leveraging plan, rationalizes the need for clubs to leverage, as well as provides an organizing framework and a series of best practices (Curling Canada, 2014). As previously discussed, curling is also positioned as the ideal sport to leverage:

All the media hype surrounding the 2014 Winter Olympics, world, national and provincial/territorial events is a natural recruiting tool for [curling]. We could do nothing in the way of marketing and still people would be knocking on our doors because of the wall to wall coverage we enjoy [mainly on television]. But that would be literally missing the boat on what is a great opportunity for our sport to take advantage of this increased public awareness (Curling Canada, 2014).

Media coverage of the Winter Olympics is Curling Canada's primary justification for leveraging.

Other opportunities for leveraging involve the annual provincial, territorial, and national competitive curling events such as the Brier. These events draw considerable public attention

through television and other media forms. Consequently, these diverse events are considered by Curling Canada to offer stakeholders many opportunities to leverage curling

Leveraging 2014 also provides a step-by-step framework to organize and implement relevant programming. The document includes descriptions of striking a membership recruitment committee, conducting a membership recruitment campaign, and following up with prospective new members (Curling Canada, 2014). The document also provides an action-planning template, which contains 19 items including identifying the target market of a recruitment campaign, starting external advertising and communications, and holding a final committee meeting to evaluate the event (Curling Canada, 2014). Thus, Curling Canada provides clubs with structures to achieve membership recruitment drives. Similar to *Getting Started for Adults*, *Leveraging 2014* stresses that program standardization is a primary goal for Curling Canada. Moreover, this document illustrates the importance Curling Canada places on leveraging.

Both clubs leverage differently. The Redwood Curling Club employed leveraging initiatives in 2006 and 2010, coinciding with the Torino and Vancouver Winter Olympics respectively. Namely, condensed eight-week learn-to-curl programs were implemented to meet the public's heightened interest in curling surrounding both Olympics. This interest was the result, in part, of extensive television coverage of curling during the Olympics. However, the Redwood club abandoned its leveraging initiatives in 2010 because both the learn-to-curl league and club were approaching membership capacity.

Meanwhile, the Shaw Curling Club leverages annually. For the past four seasons, the Shaw club has hosted a Try Curling event in March. This two-hour session is held on Saturdays. During this event, learn-to-curl league instructors introduce participants to the basics of the sport. New curlers learn how to slide on the ice, throw a rock down the ice, and sweep during this on-ice session. Afterwards, participants get together for refreshments and socialize. New curlers are

then invited to join the club's learn-to-curl league, which starts the following fall. The spring Try Curling session is considered a leveraging initiative because it is purposefully held following televised elite curling events such as the Winter Olympics, the Brier (Canadian men's curling championship), and the Scotties (Canadian women's curling championships). Also, Try Curling event advertisements reference television coverage of elite curling championships by using phrases like, "You've watched curling on TV, now come try the real thing."

Northampton Sport and Social Club (NSSC)

Some participants describe starting curling first through the Northampton Sport and Social Club (NSSC). This organization offers adults various introductory sport opportunities. In curling, adults may enroll in either novice or intermediate leagues. These leagues operate at various Northampton-area clubs. Although participants do not receive instruction, they are able to try curling in a social environment. Numerous study participants began curling in the NSSC's novice league and then progressed to the learn-to-curl programs to be trained by knowledgeable instructors.

Bonspiels

Participants also compete in bonspiels. A bonspiel is a curling tournament where curlers play in teams against opponents from their club or other clubs. These events tend to mix competition and socializing. In this study, participants mainly took part in novice and club-wide bonspiels. Novice bonspiels involve new curlers competing alongside and against individuals with similar experience levels. Club-wide bonspiels offer participants the opportunity to play against curlers with varying levels of experience and ability. These bonspiels tend to be social in

nature. Many participants reported bonspiels being a highlight of their curling experience, while others described looking forward to playing in their first bonspiel.

Conclusion

In this section, I introduced the two cases of interest in the study, as well as relevant curling-specific content. Namely, I presented a description of both cases, outlined the leveraging initiatives employed by the two clubs, and discussed the role the NSSC and bonspiels play in the league experiences of new curlers. This information provides the reader with the necessary context to understand subsequent thematic chapters. These thematic chapters are explored next.

Outlining the Thematic Chapters

In this section of the thesis, I present findings from the data analysis phase of the study. These findings are divided into three thematic chapters: experiencing the leagues, structuring the leagues, and leveraging the leagues. These chapters provide three distinct perspectives, which expand our understanding of learn-to-curl leagues as adult introductory sport programs. Yet, as is argued throughout, experiential considerations figure prominently in all three chapters. The experiencing the leagues theme focuses on unpacking the league experiences of participants (first year, second year, and recent league graduates). Next, the discussion is expanded beyond the league experiences to consider how the different and evolving league structures influence the experiences of participants. Finally, the leveraging the leagues theme conveys how leveraging initiatives are conceptualized, implemented, and evolve over time in both leagues. Each theme also contains various sub-themes. These thematic chapters deepen our understanding of both leagues by uncovering the nuances and intersections between the themes. This expanded understanding draws attention to the origin, value, and evolution of these specific adult introductory sport programs.

Findings

Chapter Five - Experiencing the Leagues

The lived experiences of learn-to-curl league participants are central to our understanding of adult introductory sport programs. These experiences illustrate why new curlers enroll in learn-to-curl leagues, as well as what it is like when they participate. By far, new curlers position social experiences as the prominent consideration when trying and continuing the sport. Participants are drawn to curling because of its reputation as a social sport, with curling being considered a vehicle to meet people. Specifically, new curlers enroll in these leagues for various reasons. These include: following recommendations from existing social contacts, joining with friends or family members, and expanding social networks. Moreover, participants report becoming competent and belonging to one's club as important considerations in their league experiences. Hence, this chapter is divided into three sub-themes: bridging and extending social connections, considering one's sense of belonging to a group, and acquiring and improving curling skills. Through these sub-themes, I develop a nuanced understanding of the lived experience for learn-to-curl league participants.

Bridging and expanding social connections

Social connections impact the lived experiences of new curlers in diverse ways. Participants strengthen existing social connections and foster new relationships throughout their league involvement. For instance, friends and family members influence adults to start curling to varying degrees. Thus, social connections are a primary consideration in the league experiences of participants. This sub-theme will examine how curlers interact and value different social

connections. Specifically, I will address: a) why new curlers enter the sport and b) the ways in which socializing lies at the core of the lived experiences for league participants.

Opening the door to curling participation – the importance of social connections.

Family members encourage many participants to begin curling. For Trish, her father's curling involvement is the primary rationale for trying curling: "I came in to it because my dad is a big curler. He's curled [at the Redwood club] for many, many years ... and I figured, 'You know what, he's done it for a long time. I may as well join and see if I like it.'"

Trish also credits her father with exposing her to the Redwood's learn-to-curl league specifically:

...If I didn't have someone like my dad who would mention, "Oh, there's a [learn-to-curl league]," I would be like, "Oh, I'm not even going to bother trying now," cause ... most sports you feel like, "Oh, you know." To start like playing football or something ... You've never had the experience. Right, so to know that there's a program out there. Like, "Oh, you know. Okay!" I'm more inclined to want to come out and play and try it...

For Susan, her sister and brother-in-law influenced her curling introduction in different ways: "...I guess my brother-in-law really ... was the catalyst ... And truthfully, I knew he curled and then it wasn't until my sister actually did it and said, 'Susan, I think you might actually really like this.' She was really, I guess who I took, you know..." This example illustrates how family members have differing levels of influence over individuals.

Susan also recounts her sister's positive curling recommendation: "And she really raved about what a great time it was. ... She said, 'You know, it's great. Like, you meet a lot of people it's about going out and having a good time and then having a drink afterwards. I think you'd really like it.'"

For Tony, his family's curling connection represents a subtle, yet effective influence towards trying the sport: "...soon after I met my wife and then her father curled in the Maritimes, or in the Prairies, so we had something to talk about..."

Couples are also attracted to learn-to-curl leagues as an activity they can do together. Take Sean and his partner: "Well I think we both, Jane and I, we just recently moved back to Northampton and ... So we wanted to have something to do in the winter. Wanted to have something to do that we could do together ... We had a list of criteria. We wanted something less competitive, a little more social. And curling was just a good fit for all those reasons."

Bob echoes Sean's sentiments: "Curling has a little bit of everything that [Bob and his partner] were looking for." However, Bob values different components of the league than his partner: "I liked the competition aspects as well. I know Bonnie likes the social aspect of it." Hence, curling offers partners an opportunity to curl together and obtain differing benefits from the sport.

Friends also influence many individuals to enroll in introductory curling programs beyond learn-to-curl leagues. One such program, the Northampton Sport and Social Club's (NSSC) curling league, acts a feeder to Northampton-area learn-to-curl leagues. Cathy, a recent learn-to-curl league graduate, recounts her friends and ex-boyfriend encouraging her to join the NSSC curling league:

So, like friends of mine; they were already in the [NSSC]. And they had a team together and they asked me to join and I'm like: "Oh, okay. I'll just come along." Like, I feel comfortable with my friends and my boyfriend at the time was part of that team and he's curled a couple times. So he helped me out. Or said he would help me out when I was on the ice and like taught me all the rules. It was a, sort of a welcoming environment. I didn't feel as awful joining that.

Moreover, Cathy's friends influenced her transition from the NSSC curling league to the Northampton's learn-to-curl league. Cathy explains:

So, after a couple of years at the [NSSC], ... a friend of mine and I, we basically said, “we’re not getting better.” And we’re not really learning. There’s no one to learn from. So, it’s sort of like the blind leading the blind. Like, no one really knows how to play. We’re just guessing ... And I wanted to learn the proper way of doing it. A couple of friends have done the learn-to-curl program before I did and they recommended that I join. And it’s been perfect!

Thus, Cathy and her friend joined Northampton’s learn-to-curl league based on their desire for formal training and after receiving favourable program recommendations from other friends. In this example, Cathy’s early curling experiences were shaped by her various social connections.

Grace’s friend also influenced her decision to start curling. Grace explains: “Jean was the catalyst for me to come. She was keen and it just was like, ‘Oh, alright. You want to do this? Let’s do this.’ But just for the record, I mean had I put my mind to it or had I seen it and had all the stars align, I would have done it by myself.”

While Grace credits her friend Jean for influencing her decision to join, she says her independent personality also played a part: “I tend to do things; actually, I’m pretty autonomous. So I’ve done lots of things by myself ... So I would have done it by myself potentially. But Jean was really interested and Jean and I have been friends for a long time.”

Despite her independent personality, Grace espouses the value of joining with her close friend: “And it was just really nice for us to be able to do something fun together ... It was nice to join with a friend. It created a certain comfort level.”

Grace further emphasizes her closeness with Carol in *Image 4*. Grace – Friends in footwear.



Image 4. Grace – Friends in footwear.

Friends and family members influence some participants to curl. For instance, friends and family members who already curl encourage new curlers to try the sport. In other cases, participants join family and friends in trying the sport together. These findings illustrate how familial and friendship connections strongly influence the decisions of many new curlers to take up the sport. And while many participants report having a predisposition to curling, familial and friendship connections are an important catalyst for new curlers entering learn-to-curl leagues. Next, I will address how many participants value expanding their social connections throughout their learn-to-curl league experiences.

“Curling is designed to make friends”: Expanding social connections in the sport.

Learn-to-curl leagues also afford participants opportunities to meet new people and expand their social networks. Primarily, newcomers to Northampton value expanding their social networks through joining their respective curling clubs. Furthermore, new curlers participate in bonspiels, in part, to meet new people. These two contexts will be examined to demonstrate how socializing and increasing one's social connections contribute to the lived experiences of league participants.

Many participants are new to Northampton and therefore lack extensive local social networks. These new curlers were drawn to curling based on its reputation as a social sport. For example, a baseball teammate's recommendation led Dorothy to try curling:

...I moved to Northampton and I didn't know anybody. So I was also looking to meet new people and to make some new friends and stuff like that so ... When Patrick told me, "Oh, well it's really social. It's really fun," I was like, "Okay well ... Give it a shot." [It] ended-up being ya, the most social thing I've ever done ... more so than any other sport I think I've ever played.

Roy, another newcomer to Northampton, says curling helps him make new friends:

"...and I just recently moved to Northampton – I moved here in the spring. And kind of a new beginning in my life shall we say ... So I don't know a lot of people in Northampton ... And I got work and, you know, making a new life up here ... I was looking for something to do, ya."

Frances also discusses how curling enriches her social life:

Well overall I really like the social aspect of [curling]. I mean there's time to kind of chat on and off the ice and there's time after the games to meet new people and to sit down, which is a great thing to do when you're like me, not from Northampton. So I'm playing, I mean I chose to make Northampton my like forever home...

Bonspiels also provide new curlers with ample socializing opportunities. Bonspiels help people strengthen existing social ties amongst teammates and forge new social connections with opposing players. While these bonspiels typically lie outside the purview of both learn-to-curl leagues, new curlers routinely include their bonspiel experiences, or longing to participate in

bonspiels, within their wider curling experiences. Hence, these bonspiel encounters deepen our understanding of the lived experiences of league participants beyond the learn-to-curl leagues.

For Iris, her novice bonspiel experience allowed her to get to know her teammates better:

Jean, she's on my new team right now ... Jean's an engineer. She's very like, very rational. And Joyce actually is also extremely analytical. But Joyce is a hard work person. She's like someone who knits and has to get every stitch right ... absolute perfectionist. And Barb, she was the third ... Jean is a real deliverable. Like, and then Jean ... she's got a very strong personality, very positive, very warm ... So it's been a neat experience, it's been a neat experience from taking what I know about team, creating teams and ... And how to create a team that achieves and how to work with them. ... It's been great.

Iris also captures her bonspiel experiences in *Image 5*. Iris – Winning a novice bonspiel with her teammates.



Image 5. Iris – Winning a novice bonspiel with her teammates

Bonspiels also enable curlers to meet new people, thereby further expanding their social networks. Grace recounts her team's post-game socializing at an out-of-town novice bonspiel:

It was good. It was really good. Like so after the first game, just like here you sat with the team that you played. So it gave you an opportunity to chat. We lost that first game. But it was a nice tight game. So we felt well matched. And they were from Manisville, so they had ... Home ice advantage ... They were in their home, so they were kind of welcoming to us as the visiting team. So it was fun. It was fun to sit with them after the fact and then drop any of the nervousness or the, you're the face of the enemy and we're just a bunch of folks having fun and we're all new at this and how is your experience? So that was awesome...

New curlers also play in club-wide bonspiels at their respective clubs. Trish describes her bonspiel experience as social and positive in nature:

...Especially the [bonspiels] around Christmas. There's like musicians. There's like a live band and they have, you know, a dance floor, which is great for me. ... But, there was one that we did around Christmas and it was like - We go out for like two ends. We'd come back in. We'd have dinner and then there'd be another group that would go out and play another two ends. And then, come back in ... So we were able to socialize ... get to know each other cause in that bonspiel - It was like put-together teams. So, I didn't necessarily know the other people that I was curling with. So, it's kind of a nice way to sort of get to know them and then be able to go back out on the ice and go from there. So it was good. So ya, every bonspiel I've participated in has some sort of social aspect.

Bob also portrays the friendships he and his partner formed in the league in *Image 6*. Bob – Forming friendships.



Image 6. Bob – Forming friendships.

Strengthening and expanding social connections is a primary consideration for many league participants. Specifically, newcomers to Northampton and bonspiel participants share the value of these considerations. For newcomers, curling provides a needed social outlet for integrating into their local community. Hence, social considerations achieve multiple aims by: enhancing the experiences of new curlers, and providing key supports to certain participants reaching beyond their club existence. Social connections shape many aspects of the lived experiences of league participants and inform the essence of being a new curler. Next, the value participants place upon acquiring and improving their curling skills is discussed. This discussion further expands our understanding of the lived experiences of league participants.

Valuing, acquiring, and improving skills

Participants value the skills needed for curling and thus described the importance of acquiring and improving their curling skills. Specifically, new curlers connect skill acquisition with enjoyment, thereby enhancing their league experiences. In this sub-theme, I describe how participants focus on the league instruction and quality of their instructors. Thus, skill acquisition and self-improvement, alongside social connections, are prominent experiential components of the lived experiences of league participants.

“It gets you coming back”: Acquiring skills.

For many new curlers, acquiring skills and becoming competent are important. Cathy, a former league participant and current league instructor, links her curling experience with her perceived competence: “And I felt like I was, I finally found a sport that I was kind of good at; or kind of okay at. That’s what turned me to the game.”

Susan also connects her own perceived competence with enjoying the sport: “It’s been really great. I’ve really enjoyed it. I feel like we are getting the basics of curling. I actually have confidence...”

New curlers also recall personal and interpersonal responses to acquiring new skills. Bob reports: “It’s the euphoria of getting that one shot keeps you going ... It gets you coming back next week and the next week.” Furthermore, Bob values the following positive feedback from more experienced curlers:

We had six [learn-to-curl league] sessions. So can you imagine when you’re playing against people over Christmas time that have been playing for five years and they’re looking at you and saying, “How many have you been playing?” “Well this is my sixth session.” And they go; their jaw just drops ... We can slide. We still fall, but we still slide and we’re getting better. And hitting the, we’re hitting the rock the way we want it to go. And they’re going, “Oh my god, that’s amazing.”

This feedback from more experienced curlers, as well as personally recognizing his improvement, shapes Bob’s experience as a new curler.

Grace discusses her expectations, as well as her frustrations, in learning how to curl:

No, there were definitely frustrating moments [In the learn-to-curl league] because I get like most things certainly ... You get a few shots and you’re like, “Well, look at me! I did that. I’m a hero!” And then, “Ah look at me, I really suck!” [When she misses a shot] And you’ve just gotta not let that get to you. So ya, there were frustrating moments for sure where your ego takes a bit of a hit. But I want to be competent. I’m an adult, I’m supposed to be competent. And I’m not. That sucks...

Grace believes adults are expected to be competent at their activities. This idea may, in part, speak to a societal expectation that adults are expected to be proficient at all activities they engage in. Although it is unclear if this perspective extends beyond Grace, it does provide insights into why participants emphasize acquiring and improving their skills. Namely, the diverse reasons why adults value acquiring skills may be influenced by the aforementioned societal expectation. Perhaps adults are conditioned to strive for self-improvement because

society expects it of them. Regardless, this sub-theme makes clear that participants value acquiring skills for various reasons.

Bonnie also values acquiring and improving her skills. Namely, Bonnie connects her increased participation to her self-improvement: “I’m curling on Sunday’s learn-to-curl and I’ve joined the last draw for the women’s league on Monday’s. I’m curling three days a week. And I think that’s the least you need to get better. I find big improvements since I’ve been doing that.”

Furthermore, Bonnie captures her self-improvement in *Image 7*. Bonnie – Assessing her slide.



Image 7. Bonnie – Assessing her slide.

Bonnie took this image to both illustrate how skill acquisition was important to her and to evaluate her own skill acquisition.

Linked to the notion of improvement and competency, some participants were critical of certain aspects of their league instruction. These complaints involve their personal preferences about acquiring new skills. For example, Tony criticizes how the Redwood league shifts from instruction in the program’s first half to supervised games in the second half.

I’m not sure about going straight to games in the second half. I don’t know that we’re quite ready. I think, you know, it’s some weeks I think I’ve got this all figured-out, and other

weeks it's shot-to-shot sometimes ... I don't know, I mean I feel like I could benefit from a little more one-on-one instruction...

Tony also questions the amount of feedback new curlers receive during these games:

I don't know how much feedback they're going to be giving people individually. I mean there's, I know there's a ton to learn: strategy, and rock placements, and all that as well. But, you know, I think individually if you don't have proper technique with your release ... I think there will obviously, there's still going to be instruction. But, I just don't know that ... when you've got an instructor looking at four or five people and they're watching every move and it's different than, you know, someone hovering, talking to one person and then peaking or helping. It's just, it's not as focused.

Frances echoes Tony's concerns by calling for more instruction and drills:

Honestly, I think I could even do more drills. I mean at the end of the night, I still feel like I'm, I haven't gotten quite enough. Like I haven't accomplished what I had set-out to do or what I think when you hear it in the theoretical sense or when Mark's saying, you know, "This is like the five-point release." And he says the words and then you try and get it done in your drills ... It's a lot, it takes a lot longer to actually execute then it does to say what it is in theory, you know?

Participants view acquiring and improving curling skills as an important part of their league experience. Some new curlers connect acquiring skills with feeling a sense of belonging in the sport, while others call for increased learning opportunities to improve their skills. Hence, diverse perspectives exist. Moreover, the level of critique some new curlers direct at the quality of league instruction demonstrates how attuned they are with their individual needs. Consequently, league organizers would benefit from collecting this information through participant feedback throughout the season (informally, formally, or a combination) to make both leagues more receptive to the differing needs of new curlers. Thus, skill acquisition, personal improvement and quality instruction are essential components of the lived experience for league participants.

"There's different styles": Evaluating league instructors.

Instructors influence how participants experience their learn-to-curl leagues. Some new curlers speak highly of their instructors, while others articulate the need for more diverse teaching methods to support their varied learning styles. Participants also discuss the differences between experienced and inexperienced instructors. In this discussion, I will explore how league instructors influence new curlers as they acquire and improve their skills. These insights will broaden our understanding of how skill acquisition is essential to the lived experiences of league participants.

Instructors can positively influence the league experiences of new curlers. For instance, Bonnie summarizes her interactions with her instructors: “And absolutely no negativity here. They’re friendly ... you ask for extra help, they’re willing. It’s amazing here, the coaches they actually, they made the whole program for sure ... Just because you know that you can approach them.”

Rose espouses her instructors’ commitment and encouragement: “...I can see [the instructors are] very responsive. They’re very attentive. ... They are very encouraging. So that’s really good. The instructors are attentive, patient, and provide you with the right kind of support.”

Furthermore, Bob values his instructors’ dedication in giving back to their curling club:

It’s the dedication, the giving back. And it’s the fact that they’ve reached the point where they like the sport that much that they want to give back to the sport ... which is the dedication to the club as well very much so. You can coach anywhere, but you decided to come coach back here.

Bob also appreciates the volunteer status and commitment of the Shaw league’s instructors: “And this is all volunteer. This is something that, again that I found-out after I joined. [The instructors are] not paid to do this. ... This is all volunteers. They’re all giving their time for our benefit to learn this sport and participate.”

Bonnie, in *Image 8*. Bonnie – Valuing her instructors, identifies three instructors who significantly impacted her league experience:



Image 8. Bonnie – Valuing her instructors

Grace and Iris discuss how one specific coach, Ralph, positively impacted their league experiences. Grace explains:

And what was really cool about that is one of our coaches, Ralph. I don't know if it's one of our team members who approached him, or did he volunteer. But he coached us [In a novice bonspiel]. We grabbed extra ice about four or five times prior to the bonspiel ... And Ralph was right in there. He was offering his time to come and coach us and I really feel that took my skills from the [learn-to-curl league] up a few more notches in an accelerated rate because there was four of us and he was paying lots of attention to us. And we totally benefited from that.

Iris also values Ralph's contributions: "But I think Ralph is extremely good at the early stage. Very compassionate ... Really, really cares. He has the ability to see the technical aspects of what you're doing at an early stage and fix them. And then, he also gave me some very good early advice on strategic things..."

Instructors have left lasting impacts on certain participants. For instance, Grace and Bob have been inspired by their instructors to consider giving back to their league as future instructors. Grace explains: “I’m jumping way too far ahead, but given that I’ve done teaching and training, if I continued in this and if my skill level got there, I could see myself [instructing].”

Grace goes on to describe her motivation for giving back as an instructor:

Probably the same thing that’s drawing most of [the current league instructors], is when I teach somebody something, it is a marvelous feeling to empower them with ability. When a student goes, “I get it,” or, “Look at what I did!” you just feel like a million dollars because you enabled them. You didn’t do it, but you enabled and that is - it rocks. So ya, that’s part of what I would, why I would do it for sure. And I think I’m reasonably good at that kind of thing. Yes. So those are the main reasons. And to give back, cause it feels nice. I mean; I’m in a fortunate enough position that I have a little bit of time, so it’s nice to give back.

Grace’s instructors act as role models as she contemplates one day instructing. Thus, instructors may also influence the trajectory of participants beyond their first year of curling.

For Bob, a single instructor inspires him to consider coaching in the future:

He’s also a coach. So he’s taking his training to be a coach. I can do it in that direction in this sport if I want to. If I want to be a mentoring stage, I can do that, which is another great thing about ... I do sports, I do referee and I do the mentoring for the referees. So that’s an aspect that I like to follow-up with in the future: being able to do some coaching and participating

Both Bob and Grace value the contributions made by their instructors. These contributions, coupled with possessing relevant sport and teaching experiences, lead both participants to consider one day giving back to their league as instructors. This example illustrates another way that instructors influence the league experiences of new curlers.

Many new curlers also recognize the importance of diverse coaching styles and differentiated league instruction in supporting their varied learning styles. These learning considerations influence the lived experiences for all league participants. For instance, Rose recounts her visual learning style being neglected: “I would tell the only thing I’m finding a little

bit difficult, a lot of the instruction is verbal and I'm a very visual person. Sometimes that becomes a bit difficult."

Rose reports approaching one league instructor with her concern:

I brought it up to Melissa because at one point the way it came up was actually out of frustration. We were looking at the rocks and they were calculating points and I couldn't for the life of me figure out how they were calculating the points. And I'm like, "I'm not that crazy or dumb am I?" I kind of looked at one of the instructors and I go, "Okay, I've got to stop them." And they were talking about the lines and everything and I'm like, "Jesus, can you draw this for me?" And then, I went to see Melissa after and I'm like, "I'm really sorry and everything, but do you think..."

Rose goes on to explain how her complaint was handled promptly: "...I did mention [the complaint] last session and got an e-mail; everyone got an e-mail this past week and it's, you know, it has the diagrams; the names of the lines. So, the response is there. So that's not an issue." The league organizer's prompt response to Rose's complaint illustrates their receptiveness to participant feedback, in this case, regarding different learning styles.

Rose also articulates the need to diversify league instruction to meet the needs of all learners:

...A visual learner, and an audio learner, and a kinetic learner. I think that's one way potentially that they can improve upon their instruction is the way, it's set-up right now is not necessarily, doesn't necessarily support all different types of learners. So, I think maybe that they could, but, I don't know – I'm not an expert in this sport to say, "Well, you can adapt it this way for visual and adapt it this way for kinetic."

Rose argues how learn-to-curl league instructors and organizers need to recognize and adapt to the diverse learning needs of participants to enhance their league experiences.

New curlers also pay particular attention to the diverse coaching styles of their instructors. Grace explains: "Like I said, some [instructors] have different styles and I appreciate different styles more than others."

Tony outlines the diverse coaching styles of his instructors:

I was really, really impressed with Roberta as an instructor. She instructed us two weeks in a row and then she wasn't back after ... which is a bit of a disappointment frankly because I thought, like I got tons out of those sessions with her. I thought she was really, you know, the feedback was excellent. I think she was top notch ... The older gentleman was very, you know, different communication style, but he's a little bit more gruff, but also had good feedback ... It's a bit more release than body position I think with Sue. ... She has a different approach ... Melissa: not bad. I think just she's got more limited experience. I just don't think she has the same grasp of knowledge. ... I might have had Patrick one week. I thought he was very good ... and then from the instructor point of view, you get, there's different styles.

Tony compares his instructors based on their ability to provide technical feedback. Although Tony considers some instructors more effective at providing feedback than others, he also acknowledges the importance of being exposed to different coaching styles. Thus, many new curlers pay close attention to instructors and value accessing multiple coaching styles to enhance their league experience.

Participants also note the differences between experienced and inexperienced instructors in their ability to provide technical skill support, encouragement, compassion, and commitment. While many new curlers report that experienced instructors meet their expectations, inexperienced instructors receive mixed reviews. This discussion illustrates what participants look for in an effective instructor and the degree to which receiving high quality instruction is important to them.

Susan distinguishes between experienced and inexperienced instructors, and criticizes one instructor, whom she describes as inexperienced:

I think the only thing that I would say is that everybody's super great and it's not that this person is not great, but Melissa is the one who's just out of the [league] ... And I find that she's great. I like her. But in terms of coaching; not so much. I actively try to avoid being in her group because with the other coaches, I get actual feedback, like, "You did this. You did that wrong. You did that or whatever" which is what you need to improve And Melissa just has no feedback. She'll say, "Okay ya, let's do this or whatever" ... and I'm sure she'll get better at it and it's awesome that she wants to come out ... Having the recent ex-[learn-to-curl] league curler, it's not really very useful...

Susan contrasts Melissa with more experienced instructors to illustrate Melissa's limitations.

Once again, participants link skill acquisition to their league experience, in this case, through evaluating specific instructors.

Additionally, Susan emphasizes the value of experienced instructors:

...It really does show how, like, I mean [experienced instructors have] done it for years. They know what they're doing. They've all had it. ... They've all been on teams ... Like top competitive. ... They were coached by somebody themselves who ... wanted them to do well and their competitive team. I mean you can just see the difference it makes when they're coaching you. It's huge.

According to Susan, experienced coaches are better positioned to enhance the lived experiences of league participants.

In comparison, Dorothy, a recent league graduate and an inexperienced instructor, refers to her own league experiences in arguing the value of inexperienced instructors. Dorothy explains:

And then there was a few weeks where the [learn-to-curl league], they needed some help and I was – I don't know if I was there or they asked me to come in or something, just to be a helper ... And I really enjoyed it. And I came in and I was working with these two women that were struggling and I managed to say something to them that helped them and [one woman] was so excited that she finally got - It was a bit better, her slide.

This preliminary instructing experience left Dorothy longing to continue making a difference for new curlers. Dorothy says: "And it made me feel really good as the helper, right? And I was like, 'Oh, I kind of like that, you know?'"

Some new curlers report they can better relate to inexperienced instructors because they perceive a closer match between their abilities. Dorothy discusses one such instance:

[Current league participants] said to me, "Oh really, you're only a fifth-year curler? Oh, that's really great." And they kind of open-up a bit more to you about what they're struggling with whenever I'm on the ice ... And it's a good example for them I think, right? Like, okay here's somebody that was just like you, probably worse; falling all the time and now she's playing more competitively and coaching...

As an inexperienced instructor, Dorothy is a role model for new curlers as they can better identify with her skill level, which leads to enriching the lived experiences of some league participants.

Indeed, new curlers pay much attention to their instructors. Overall, participants value the contributions instructors make to their skill acquisition. Moreover, new curlers focus on diverse coaching styles; both appreciating their existence and calling for greater differentiation.

Participants also vary in their opinions of experienced and inexperienced instructors. Some new curlers say inexperienced instructors lack the ability to provide thoughtful feedback, while others view inexperienced instructors as role models. Hence, participants possess high expectations of their instructors while also valuing their experience, commitment, compassion, and encouragement. Instructors represent the primary method by which new curlers are introduced to, acquire, and improve their skills. This focus on instructors illustrates the importance participants place on acquiring skills, as well as their recognition of instructors as the gatekeepers of this knowledge. Thus, instructors play a vital role in the lived experiences of league participants.

“I think it truly is equal parts”: Balancing social and instructional considerations.

As is made clear above, the lived experiences of new curlers are largely shaped by instructional and social considerations. Many participants value curling’s social culture primarily, while others equally embrace the sport’s social and instructional components. However, tensions sometimes emerge between these considerations. While social considerations figure prominently in the lived experiences of participants, they are tempered by a desire to learn and improve. Thus, social and instructional considerations both play evolving roles in the lived experiences of new curlers.

Many new curlers value their social experiences primarily. For instance, Grace found that the Shaw club and its learn-to-curl league both cultivate a social atmosphere. Grace explains:

But one of the goals of joining [the learn-to-curl league] was just to kind of expand my social circle and I think the [league] does that amazingly well. You know, we're getting to know each other as the [new curlers], the coaches are embracing us, the other [club] members have embraced us. As a league, we've gone out to the Monday night draw or to bonspiels and just everybody is really, really welcoming. So it speaks to the whole social experience part.

Susan also espouses her social experiences at Redwood's league:

We've had a really good time. I've personally had a really good time. Actually, I can't speak for everybody else. But, you know, it's been nice to really sit around for like an hour afterwards and just talk about whatever ... Several small or ducks. Horses. Duck-sized horses. Horse-sized ducks ... That's been really fun. And I was looking for that frankly. I was, I didn't just want to come and learn how to curl.

Susan's acknowledgment of looking for more than simply a sport experience speaks to the diverse expectations participants possess when entering these leagues.

Frances also values curling's social culture:

But curling is just the right fit and in the sense that you're close, and there's time to talk, and you're not, unless you're sweeping hard, like you're not super out of breath. And there is this aura of like community aspect. I mean it's almost quaint, like the way I feel like curling is designed to make friends because [the organizers] want you to sit and have a drink with [your fellow participants].

Frances emphasizes how curling is built on a social framework.

Participants also strike a balance between the sport's on-ice instruction and off-ice socializing elements. For example, Tony values these two components equally:

...Sitting around and chatting with the folks after curling is, you know, equally enjoyable. ... I'm here for a purpose so, you know, I really enjoy what's going-on on the ice and learning. ... I can't remember the last time I took-up a course that made me feel, I'm actually improving at it.

High quality instructional and social aspects mutually enhance Tony's introductory curling experience.

Moreover, some participants shift their thinking about the relationship between league social and instructional considerations over time. While Susan started her league experience in search of social opportunities, she grew to also value the instructional aspects. Susan explains: "I

think it truly is equal parts. I actually do enjoy doing the curling. I've had a really good time ... And then, for me, it's also 50 per cent the social aspect afterwards."

Instructional and social considerations exist on a continuum. While some participants value one consideration primarily, they both influence the league experiences of all new curlers. Many new curlers also value their instructional and social experiences equally. Hence, these considerations are entrenched in league experiences of participants and must be targeted equally by instructors and organizers to ensure high quality programs.

Participants value acquiring and improving curling skills to enhance their league experiences. Instructors also play an integral role in this process. Moreover, new curlers shared differing opinions about the league instruction. While skill acquisition is an essential component of the lived experiences for league participants, both programs would benefit from organizers being made aware of these opinions. Hence, improved communication between new curlers and organizers would further enhance the instructional experiences of league participants. Next, the contested role sense of belonging plays in the lived experiences of new curlers is described.

Belonging as a curler?

How new curlers perceive their sense of belonging to the club greatly influences their league experiences. Many participants describe developing a strong sense of membership and belonging to their learn-to-curl league and curling club. However, others encounter distinct barriers to belonging. Thus, the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging represents a contested aspect of the experience of these new curlers. As is noted below, these tensions influence the league experiences of participants generally, as well as their wider curling experience and intention to continue curling. These topics complicate and enhance our understanding of the processes through which new curlers become integrated into the sport.

“It’s an amazing place!”: Admiring membership and belonging.

Many participants report a strong sense of membership and belonging to their curling club. For some, this sense of belonging emerges only months into their first season. These feelings enhance the lived experience of league participants.

For instance, Cathy describes the Redwood club as home:

...[The Redwood club is] an amazing place ... Well, I spend way too much time at the club. ... The people here are really friendly and they’re open. I live two blocks away so it’s convenient. I can walk here. The bartenders are amazing. They all know what I like to drink. They know my name. Annette’s the club manager [and] is amazing. It feels very comfortable, familiar.

Grace describes a similar sentiment at the Shaw club:

But then we got an e-mail inviting us to a barbeque, cocktail party [in September]. How nice is that? It was here at the club. I saddled-up to another woman who was roughly my vintage who was also alone and I said, “Do you know anybody? I don’t know anybody.” We chatted, she introduced me to a few people and it just already felt a little bit like home.

Participants also connect their sense of membership and belonging to their club’s history, prestige, and elite curling prowess. Tony explains: “I love it. ... I like old clubs - the traditions. You come in and see the banners. You just get a sense that this is the place to curl. I was out practicing on Friday and Karen Miller [Canadian champion] came out and practiced. I mean you can’t buy that stuff, right?”

Roy also favours the Redwood club’s history and prestige:

Well, when you walk in here you can really kind of get a feel for the history, right? ... It’s well established. There’s lots of trophies and banners up on the walls. You get a real feel that this is a successful sort of ... The club is very – It’s prestigious. ... It felt warm and open since you came in. Or it didn’t feel intimidating at all. But it felt like a place for people to be successful.

Many participants identify a strong sense of belonging to their respective clubs. In both clubs, the people and staff, as well as the history and emphasis on elite curling, shape these feelings. Interestingly, new curlers do not all report the same sense of belonging to their learn-to-

curl leagues. Instead, participants identify more with their curling club than their league. This insight enhances our understanding of how participants view themselves as club members first and league participants second.

“What do I do?”: Lacking transitional support.

A successful transition for new curlers from learn-to-curl leagues to other club leagues requires the support of league and club personnel. Yet, participants face multiple challenges including breaking into established league and bonspiel teams, as well as worrying about their future league and club participation. New curlers describe lacking the resources or knowledge of these resources as roadblocks to a successful transition.

New curlers report the challenge of breaking into established teams. Bonnie explains:

[Established league teams are] very much a close-knit family. And I found it difficult to break [in] ... I'm a novice. I want to spare. Everybody's like, "Oh no, my team's full. We have our team or we have our regular spare." It's very much that, a close-knit ... So it's like, it's hard to just get in. Once you get in there, you're known, how you play and what position you play and how your personality fits with them.

Without support, this transition may become a barrier to future participation, thereby negatively influencing the lived experiences of league participants.

Similar challenges exist for new curlers trying to join established bonspiel teams. Bonnie describes her difficulty in finding a team for the Battle of the Sexes bonspiel:

...The Battle of Sexes [is] where I really wanted to participate, but I didn't have a team. So a team needs four people. I would have had to recruit three people. So I just asked if I could get on somebody's team ... and the answer was, "No, we have somebody in mind."

Bonnie's league and bonspiel experiences illustrate the challenges faced by participants attempting to expand their curling experiences. Without support from their learn-to-curl league or club, participants face distinct barriers to continue curling.

Despite encountering barriers, Bonnie persevered and registered her own team of new curlers in the Battle of the Sexes bonspiel. Bonnie explains her rationale: “I also wanted to have the experience of what [it is], the Battle of Sexes of curling. Cause it exists in other clubs. And I also wanted some face time, meaning if I’m out here, people will know that I’m willing and ... That’s how you get asked to sub, or asked to play.” Bonnie’s bonspiel participation involves both experiencing the event and marketing herself throughout the club. In the absence of league or club support structures, Bonnie instituted “face time” as a method to address her participation barrier and expand her curling experience.

Participants described having apprehensions about their future in curling. In particular, new curlers are unsure whether they can continue as club members upon graduating from their learn-to-curl league. This concern is very real as both clubs are approaching league and membership capacity. Furthermore, participants criticize the vague information they receive from league instructors about their ability to remain as club members once they graduate. This lack of information leads many to feel anxious about their future curling endeavours.

Such concerns manifest themselves in different ways. For example, Susan expresses concern for her future at the Redwood club once her learn-to-curl league participation concludes:

...I don’t know what it’s going to be like. But I think it’s a great thing that next year; you can come back and be in the learn-to-curl thing again. We’ve asked our coaches a little bit about, well what happens after that? And they do say, “Oh ya. You come back or you have to find yourself a spot.” I don’t know. To me, this is where I’m like, “Ya, but where, well how does it...” They seem unperplexed about it, you know, sort of like, “Oh well, or you end up going somewhere else or whatever.” You won’t be lost. But for me, I’m like, “What if I want to...” I don’t know. Every time I think about it, it makes me anxious.

Susan continues:

What happens then? What do I do? I don’t want to have to go somewhere else. It’s sort of like, “I started here.” ... But, it would be nicer if it felt in some ways more like there was some sort of future ... The thing is, I don’t know whether when you get to the end of your two, like how many people are actually not getting in? Unless you have those numbers or

have those stats ... They say, "Oh, it's a hard club to get into." But what does that even mean? Is there a bunch of people who aren't getting in?

The ambiguous feedback Susan received from her instructors leaves her feeling anxious about her curling future, only months into her first year. For Susan, lacking such information influences her league experience. Moreover, Susan's sense of belonging to the Redwood club shapes her intention to remain as a club member upon graduating from the learn-to-curl league. Other new curlers share Susan's sentiment. Hence, a tension is emerging amongst league participants at the Redwood club.

Meanwhile, Bonnie's concern involves determining where exactly she fits into the Shaw club upon graduating from the club's learn-to-curl league. Bonnie explains:

And I'm still trying to debate where I'm sitting as a novice. I'll be just out of learn-to-curl ... And how I'm going to find a fixed team if I want to curl on Wednesday's. So that leaves the open on Saturday. That leaves the mixed on Friday or Saturday. I work during the day, so the other leagues are out of question. ... So I'm not sure where I fit in [the Monday night women's league] ... Like I said, it's hard to pierce that and be welcomed in the women's. Mixed is not too bad. I could register with Bob. And the open - not an issue ... It's any combination. So, I'm not sure where I'm sitting yet. I'm loving the sport. I fell in love with it. I think I'm getting good at it. I'd like to continue, but I'm just not quite sure where I fit.

In this example, Bonnie appears to lack any league or club support for navigating her curling future. Without assistance, Bonnie displays uncertainty about her next action. However, this uncertainty is tempered by Bonnie's love for the sport. Overall, Bonnie's worries represent a significant participation barrier for many new curlers. Namely, these concerns may influence both the current and future sport experiences of participants.

Transitioning from learn-to-curl leagues into other club leagues is a primary consideration for new curlers. While participants receive extensive social and instructional support throughout their league experiences, there is a lack of support provided during the transitional stage. Thus,

new curlers face uncertainty about their future. This uncertainty impacts the current and likely, the future experiences of participants.

“You just don’t want to turn off people”: Disrupting curling traditions.

Participants engage with various curling traditions in complicated ways. Most predominantly, many new curlers discuss the prominent role alcohol consumption plays in curling’s social conventions. While many participants acknowledge and value this relationship, others critique the conspicuous position alcohol holds in curling. Critics argue this focus on alcohol prevents certain individuals and groups, who do not embrace drinking, from feeling welcome in curling clubs. These critical perspectives challenge established curling traditions, while enriching our understandings of the lived experiences of league participants.

New curlers clearly distinguish between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Many participants, when describing their alcoholic beverages, use the terms drink and alcohol interchangeably. Yet, those new curlers who mention non-alcoholic beverages are careful to identify them as non-alcoholic beverages. Accordingly, I also identify non-alcoholic beverages as such and refer to alcoholic beverages as either alcohol or drink.

Moreover, many participants voluntarily raised the subject of alcohol, even though they were not asked specific interview questions on the issue. New curlers primarily raised this subject when describing their social experiences in the league. Hence, the relationship between drinking and socializing appear to be deeply entrenched in curling.

Many participants consider drinking alcohol as synonymous with socializing in curling. For example, Grace discusses her overall observation of socializing in curling: “And it was just really nice for [Grace and her friend] to be able to do something fun together. Again, I’d rather do something like [curling] than just sit and drink; this, you can do both I suppose.” Grace positions

alcohol at the centre of her curling experience. Yet, she also values doing something active with her friend.

New curlers also link alcohol and drinking to their post-game socializing experiences.

Sean describes:

Well, it starts with the drinks. I guess they're a big part of it. ... The winning team gets together with their counterparts ... And the opposing team asks for drink orders which is a nice icebreaker ... Everyone always sits with the opposing team ... I think it's good socially, you kind of have a starting point talk to people you don't really know...

Thus, alcohol and drinking are ingrained in the post-game socializing fabric of curling.

Susan also connects drinking with the post-game socializing tradition:

It's very fun ... you're playing a game, but then afterwards you sit and have a drink and chat about life. That's very enjoyable ... We stick around and have a drink afterwards cause that's who we want to be curling with. ... When I go to the bonspiel, I want to stick around and have a drink afterwards.

For Susan, socializing after a game is as much a part of the experience as playing the game.

Furthermore, Susan also emphasizes the strong social bonds she develops during this social time.

For many participants, drinking and socializing hold a prominent position in curling. Yet, some new curlers criticize this relationship.

For instance, Grace is a critic of this tradition. She explains: "Ya this might come across weird, but I think one of the things that if I was to say, 'You guys could do this slightly differently' is maybe a slightly reduced emphasis on alcohol and drinking ... 'Cause I haven't drank this much in my whole entire life.'"

This emphasis is further illustrated in Grace's photograph, *Image 9*. Grace – What will you have?



Image 9. Grace – What will you have?

Moreover, Grace describes how she copes with this focus on alcohol: “And I feel that there is not a pressure, but a very mild pressure to [drink] ... And I’ve been drinking pop, you know, many of the times and nobody has given the look or anything like that...” Grace believes it is possible to disconnect alcohol from socializing and still enjoy oneself.

Despite successfully coping with the place of alcohol in curling’s social traditions, Grace warns: “... You just don’t want to turn off people or make them feel very self-conscious because [drinking is] not their gig.” Grace worries that others may be ostracized from the sport because they do not drink.

Additionally, Iris criticizes curling's overreliance on alcohol from multiple directions, including diversity and personal discomfort. Iris explains: "I think there's a problem in curling clubs that's over the top."

Iris also believes that if curling clubs want to increase their membership diversity, they need to rethink the place of alcohol within the club and sport. Iris explains: "I think one of the other things is to increase the ethnicity of this club ... And the diversity, they would have to abandon [alcohol] ... The new Chinese members; they don't drink at all ... I think they're quite frankly repulsed by the whole thing." Iris continues: "It's just a lack of sensitivity. Like, [the learn-to-curl league organizers] don't recognize the ethnic people, they sit over here. They sit literally in a different part of the club." Iris not only makes the claim for the Shaw club to abandon its emphasis on drinking, she also argues these practices are alienating current diverse league participants.

Despite her criticism, Iris offers a solution; namely redesigning the curling lounge and viewing area: "...And I think it's part of the reason people are turned off by; [the Shaw club is] not getting the uptake. Like look at these chairs, it looks like a bar here. It's really weird, right?" Furthermore, Iris states:

... There's a lot that can be done as well just [through] architectural design and decorating. ... But I think this whole section of the club is completely wasted. And I'd put the bar here. ... I think they should put the office there, and the bar here. And this should be blocked-off. And so, you have like the family ... Ya, go green, go natural make it ... so no child would ever pass that doorway unless their parent was with them.

For Iris, de-emphasizing alcohol's place within the Shaw club involves relocating the bar to a less prominent location. This re-design would foster a more family-friendly atmosphere, thereby altering the social experience in the club.

Moreover, Iris recounts a specific negative experience with a fellow curler involving alcohol. Iris explains: "I complained here because I went out one night sparing [filling-in] on one

of the teams and my skip was so inebriated he couldn't stand-up." After the incident, Iris approached her learn-to-curl league instructor with her concern. Iris continues: "...I wasn't sure who to talk to, right? And I was still very new ... And obviously [the instructor] told other people and I respect him for that, right? He should have."

Iris' complaint drew an immediate backlash. Shortly after complaining, Iris recalls being criticized by a fellow club member for raising her concerns. Iris says: "So I complained and I was told I was trying to impose a nanny state." Iris continues: "...But I talked to somebody, you know, after a curling game ... [Their criticism] was directed at me about this complaint that was said, you know, subliminally. ... Not overtly. And I mean ... I don't take that kind of thing very well."

Iris goes on to express her frustration with both the Shaw club's inaction, as well as being blamed for raising her concern: "And if anybody ever got hurt here because they were inebriated, [The Shaw club would] be cooked, absolutely cooked. ... They're not even aware of it. It isn't even a discussion. Those people that are complaining, like me, who present that point of view, we're wrong." Throughout this complaint process, Iris lacks support from her league or club (beyond the instructor she first complained to). Instead, Iris faces ridicule.

Despite her frustration, Iris intends to pursue her concern: "...And I'm not beyond raising it at an annual meeting. ... It depends where I ... go with the curling ... Whether I bring it up." Iris' concerns illustrate an example of current and impending future conflict. This clash between new ideas from league participants and existing club and curling traditions represents a significant consideration for learn-to-curl leagues organizers moving forward.

New curlers recognize and perceive the relationship between alcohol and socializing differently. Some embrace and identify with this relationship, while others critique alcohol's prominent role in curling. These different perspectives underline the diversity of experiences and

values among participants. Moreover, the perspectives of certain participants work to disrupt established curling traditions. These critical perspectives conflict with how league organizers and curling administrators view the changes being brought on by new curlers. This disconnect is explored in depth below.

Generally, new curlers identify more with their club than their learn-to-curl league. Thus, participants view themselves as club members first, and league participants second. This finding can inform league organizers and club administrators regarding how best to treat and meet the needs of new curlers. Furthermore, the various tensions outlined above illustrate how the sense of belonging reported by participants is contested and complicated. Thus, the sense of belonging participants report shapes our understanding of their league experiences.

Conclusion

Getting a sense of the lived experiences of learn-to-curl league participants is central to developing an understanding of adult introductory sport programs. For curling, these experiences involve social, instructional, and sense of belonging considerations. Social considerations shape how and why new curlers enter and experience the sport. Additionally, skill acquisition and their perceived sense of belonging contribute to fostering a multi-layered understanding of the league experiences of participants. These sub-themes also illustrate how new curlers rely on instructors, teammates, and organizers to enrich these experiences. Hence, the essence of the lived experiences of new curlers is rich and multi-layered.

Not surprisingly, intersections also exist between the three considerations. For instance, Cathy's recollection of transitioning from the NSSC's curling league to Redwood's learn-to-curl league illustrates an intersection between social connection and skill acquisition considerations. Namely, Cathy enrolled in the learn-to-curl league with her friend, in part, because they both

wanted to acquire new skills from certified instructors in a structured environment. Hence, exploring the interplay among these essences deepens our understanding of the multi-layered lived experiences of participants. Next, I examine how evolving league structures influence the lived experiences of these participants.

Chapter Six - Structuring the Leagues

Introduction

The structuring of learn-to-curl leagues is an important consideration. This theme captures the increasing standardization of both leagues, mainly by league organizers and curling administrators and considers how stakeholders rationalize this approach in terms of creating a uniform experience for new curlers. While the previous theme addressed the lived experiences of league participants, I now focus on league instructors and organizers, as well as various curling administrators, to garner a view of the broader, structural aspects of the learn-to-curl leagues. Data from interviews with league organizers and curling administrators, as well as content from Curling Canada's learn-to-curl league manual (*Getting Started for Adults: A comprehensive curling club program to build membership through superior customer service*), inform this discussion.

Both leagues are becoming standardized in an effort to enhance the experiences of new curlers. In this thematic chapter, I investigate the standardization of both leagues, the extent to which certain program alterations affect the experiences of participants, as well as various certification and training considerations for instructors. The notion of change is also framed as a source of tension between new curlers and their instructors and organizers, as well as curling club members. In particular, I re-visit the criticisms from some participants regarding the prevalence of alcohol in their curling clubs. These criticisms are juxtaposed against the overwhelmingly positive attitudes league instructors and organizers have of new curlers. Thus, some participants conceptualize change differently than their league instructors and organizers. The ways in which these differences influence the league experiences of new curlers will be unpacked to illustrate

how the structuring of these learn-to-curl leagues shapes the lived experiences of league participants.

Standardizing the leagues

Organizers and curling administrators believe the standardizing of learn-to-curl leagues enhances the lived experiences of new curlers. This structuring has evolved throughout the short histories of both programs. The *Getting Started for Adults* manual also emerged from the Redwood league's standardization and currently informs the Shaw league's current structuring process. Also, different league initiatives have been developed, in part, to shape the experiences of league participants. Moreover, the relationships between certification, training, and compensation of league instructors are examined in this sub-theme. These insights will illustrate the diverse ways the structuring of these leagues influence the lived experiences of new curlers.

"There's a process": Moving towards standardization.

Both learn-to-curl leagues are becoming increasingly standardized. This standardization emerges from responses to complaints made by previous league participants, as well as decisions from league organizers and administrators. Overall, and as is shown below, this process involves creating more professional and uniform programs to enhance the league experiences of new curlers.

Previous iterations of both leagues lacked structure. Organizers detail how both programs were disorganized and lacked uniformity. Liz recalls the first learn-to-curl league season at the Redwood club:

So, we had a bit of a plan every night. ... And we weren't very organized in that we didn't have lesson plans. We didn't have sort of a structure that we do now in that we teach the same thing sheet-to-sheet. ... But, often [coaches] would sort of vary from the plan naturally they'd start, you know, just talking about deliveries. They'd start talking about

releases. And it wasn't as organized and we started getting negative feedback from the curlers that they didn't like that. They felt they were missing something if they saw someone on another sheet doing something they weren't doing.

League instructors and organizers learned a great deal from that first season. Liz explains: “We spent that first year realizing that we had to be more organized and we had to make this [league] ... look more professional, both from a practical standpoint and ... from an experiential standpoint to give everyone what they felt was a good experience.” Hence, Liz recognizes the value of creating a more organized league to enhance the experiences of new curlers. This quotation also illustrates how the Redwood club's league organizers engaged in self-reflection to improve the program.

The Shaw club's learn-to-curl league also originally lacked structure. Nigel describes how the league previously operated: “[The new curlers] were left up to their own devices. There were coaches there, but the coaches were not following any kind of set game plan ... There was just a lack of structure.”

Wilson expands on the Shaw league's previous disorganization:

We split them up the same way [as is currently done], but the coaches tended to be more independent in terms of what they taught. ... We might set a time limit for, you know, we have 15 minutes, try to cover this and this and this and this. But everyone was on their own. The coaches were on their own.

Over the years, the Shaw's league became more organized. In particular, an informal instructor mentoring process emerged and was headed by Wilson and Fred, two experienced instructors. Wilson explains how this process developed: “My feeling was that Fred and I were de facto leading the groups because we'd start something on a sheet and then the person next to us would see it and do the same thing on the sheet beside us.” This impromptu coaching hierarchy represents the initial steps towards standardization for the Shaw's league. Instructional considerations are explored in greater detail below.

Both leagues lacked uniform instruction in their early years. Yet, organizers shifted their focus towards standardizing the leagues as they grew in popularity and became more established. Increasing standardization resulted from developing a curriculum and lesson plans, as well as regulating instructors. Moreover, the leagues at the Redwood and Shaw clubs have re-structured differently. Over the last ten years, the Redwood's league has undergone major restructuring, while the Shaw club started this process last year. Despite these different trajectories, increasing standardization has marked the recent histories of both clubs.

Redwood league organizers began standardizing their program by formalizing the curriculum. John outlines the diverse considerations behind these curriculum changes:

Well first of all, we recognized that there is a way that we want to teach people how to curl. ... A process. And the process that you go through in the curriculum is, you know, the usual stuff that you pick-up from attending other clinics, which include the equipment that's involved in curling: how to step on the ice, safety first. And those kinds of things, you know, manage the scoreboard or what the scoreboard is all about.

These diverse instructional considerations illustrate the robust training new curlers receive from this formalized league curriculum and subsequent lesson plans.

As noted above, the Redwood's league is the learn-to-curl pilot program for Curling Canada. As a result, the curriculum document created by the Redwood league is the basis of the *Getting Started for Adults* manual. The manual provides new curlers with a sequential introduction to the sport. This manual is organized into a series of lesson plans containing different drills. The standardization of these lesson plans and drills are explored next.

Creating the manual: Standardizing instructional resources.

The lesson plans and drills are standardized in various ways. First, the lesson plans are arranged in a prescribed order whereby participants acquire new skills and hone existing skills each week. For instance, new curlers are introduced to the components of the playing surface and

three-point delivery (a method for how to slide along the ice) in the first week of the league (Curling Canada, 2015). In the second week, new curlers review the components of the playing surface and three-point delivery, as well as learn the five-point delivery (a more detailed method for sliding along the ice; Curling Canada, 2015). The lesson plans are organized so that participants are continuously refining existing skills, while adding new abilities each week.

Second, all lesson plans contain various drills, which allow new curlers to apply what they learn, through practice, to enhance their skills. These drills are also progressive in nature, thereby enabling participants to build on previous skills. For example, the series of drills involving the five-point delivery illustrate this progression. New curlers perform these drills during the second week of the league. In the first drill, new curlers learn to slide with two rocks, one in each hand (Curling Canada, 2015). This is considered the most stable sliding position for participants. Once new curlers master this drill, they progress to sliding with one rock and a sliding device (Curling Canada, 2015). This sliding position (one rock and a sliding device) is the common way curlers deliver a rock. The third drill involves sliding with a rock and a curling broom (Curling Canada, 2015). This final drill is the most challenging of the three because sliding with one rock and a curling broom requires the highest degree of balance. These drills illustrate the sequential design of the manual, focusing upon providing new curlers with skills and opportunities to refine these skills.

The lesson plans and drills in the *Getting Started for Adults* manual are standardized and structured sequentially to enable participants to both receive new skills and develop existing skills each week. These lesson plans also contain multiple drills, which provide new curlers with opportunities to practice and develop learned skills. Additionally, the lesson plans and drills are standardized in the manual to promote league uniformity. Namely, each lesson plan contains certain pre-determined content. Hence, all clubs using this manual cover the same content and

drills in a particular week. Uniformity is also a main consideration in the organization of league drills. Each week, the new curlers are divided into groups and work with different instructors. While previous instructors did not follow a prescribed teaching structure, current instructors are now expected to teach the same drills at the same time as their colleagues. This uniformity and standardization represent the central considerations in the *Getting Started for Adults* manual. Thus, the prevailing belief among the authors of this manual (Redwood league organizers and Curling Canada administrators) involves standardizing learn-to-curl leagues to foster enhanced league experiences for participants. Next, the standardization of instruction at both clubs will be examined.

“But we’re going to drive the bus this year”: Standardizing instruction.

Instructor standardization is also a primary consideration within both clubs. In the Redwood’s learn-to-curl league, instructors are now mandated to teach league material the same way. Liz explains the transition to this standardized instructing approach:

But, now we’re teaching somebody else to do it cause we can’t teach it five different ways ... The next week they’d be on the ice with a different instructor teaching them a different way. We can’t have that. That doesn’t work. So, that was the major shift I found I made. I started enforcing the rules with the instructors and saying, “No, you can’t do it that way.” And literally, I’m sure you’ve seen it on the ice. We all move at the same pace on the ice. Okay, now we’re all changing activities. Now we’re doing this, right?

Organizers of the Shaw’s learn-to-curl league also standardized their program, albeit more recently. In the summer of 2014, a steering committee was struck to re-structure the league. This committee consisted of current league organizers, experienced instructors, and recent league graduates. Sheila, a committee member, outlines the work done by the committee:

We formed a committee. We got past novices to join the committee ... And we got coaching representation. So Wilson and Fred are third level coaches ... And we made decisions about the [league] structure. So this committee decided, after getting feedback, was that Fred and Wilson ... would be like the quarterbacks. So they took a look at the

curriculum. They broke it up so that it was a progressive approach and every week ... They would train, they would tell the other coaches, "This is what we're covering today." So that, no matter where you were on the sheet or who you got, everybody was getting the same [instruction].

Wilson expands on this hierarchical instructing model:

But that's one of the reasons why we've tried to go to a bit more of a hierarchical teaching this year; is the idea if you have someone overseeing and telling them what to do, like to try to focus them down on something ... we have sufficient coaches. Fred and I tend to be the ones walking around supervising one end of the ice, right? ... I've actually corrected my wife who's a wonderful teacher about not, about forgetting to say, "That was great! Now, on the next one..." Like, she'll go right into, "Now on the next one, I want you to do this." And that's my wife who's the nicest person I know. So it's having that extra set of eyes.

Standardizing league instruction and curriculum is the primary focus of the steering committee.

Similar to the Redwood's league, the Shaw's league organizers believe uniform instruction facilitates enhanced league experiences for participants. Hence, this perspective is pervasive among the league organizers and curling administrators involved in this study.

Wilson also emphasizes the anticipated outcomes of the Shaw league's steering committee:

So we made the conscious decision this year, if you don't like it, don't coach. But we're going to drive the bus this year. We're going to keep everyone going at the same time. As soon as it's game time, it's game time ... 'Cause we're evaluating it afterward, but we're hoping that [the participants are] more engaged in it. They feel like, "You know, it doesn't matter what sheet I go to, I'm getting the same coaching. I'm getting the same experience, the same pretty much."

Wilson, like the other league organizers, views standardized instruction as being paramount to the league experiences of new curlers. However, this perspective may clash with the varied leagues experiences of new curlers as outlined in the previous theme. Consequently, the needs of some participants may fall outside the purview set out by league organizers, potentially leading to unsatisfactory league experiences.

Programming serving two purposes: Promoting learning and socializing.

Promoting learning and socializing are also important league considerations. The Shaw league's steering committee addresses these considerations through creating a series of PowerPoint presentations. These presentations are held each week following the on-ice instruction. Various curling topics are discussed including etiquette, game strategy, and team dynamics. Moreover, organizers use these presentations to provide participants with consistent information and foster a sense of community through socializing.

Sheila explains the rationale and development of these post-session presentations:

The other thing that I wanted and based on feedback that we had gotten, I said "People learn, especially adults learn by doing. So they've got to be out on the ice doing it." ... But it's like information overload when they're standing there and you're saying, "Okay, here is the ... you know?" You've got to draw them in and then they say, "Well what does draw mean?" So this is the information that they're getting either before they go on the ice or after and one of the things that might help is if we did it after and they're sitting there and it would help ... Socialize as well 'cause we say, "Why don't you come back into the club?" We're going to have a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation and you can have your drink...

Nigel further clarifies the two post-session presentation goals, namely providing information and facilitating socialization.

...For the after session, which serves two purposes. It obviously gives [new curlers] knowledge that they might not be able to get on the ice ... And they all get it together so in terms of strategy, everything, you know, terminology, whatever. So that's one purpose: the learning. You know, learning in a more relaxed atmosphere as opposed to being on the ice for ... there's a lot of noise and movements and stuff like that. And the social aspect again; one of the things in talking about trying to harness the, the [participants] this year ... Is we want to build-up the social aspect of the game to make them aware that it is very social and that there is certain etiquette in terms of after a game where you sit down with the opposing team, or in this case, your fellow [participants] and coaches. And have a drink and get to know one another, that kind of thing.

Increasing standardization influences both leagues. Despite lacking structure in past years, league organizers now stress the importance of providing standardized and uniform experiences for new curlers. This perspective aligns with the *Getting Started for Adults* manual, which links

enhanced instruction to enhanced league experiences for participants. Thus, league organizers subscribe to the benefits of league standardization and uniformity. However, the extent to which this standardization influences the diverse league experiences of new curlers represents an important consideration moving forward. Next, I explore how league standardization influences various instructor considerations.

Evolving instructor training: Fostering nuanced, targeted instruction.

Instructors figure prominently in the standardization of learn-to-curl leagues. In the previous thematic chapter, the fundamental roles instructors play in shaping the league experiences of new curlers were outlined. How league organizers view instructors will now be explored; starting with the certification and training they receive. Primarily, league organizers and curling administrators criticize the current NCCP club coach certification for failing to meet the specific needs of learn-to-curl league instructors. Instead, many organizers and administrators believe the recently developed train-the-trainers program better prepares instructors to teach new curlers.

At the Shaw club, Wilson believes the NCCP club coach certification inadequately prepares instructors to teach new adult curlers. Wilson explains: “[Instructors are] taught how to coach a young, flexible, pliable, young body ... that is able to, whether they want to or not, is physically able to perform the technical slide that they’re required to do.” However, many adult league participants lack these physical attributes.

Wilson expands on the challenges in teaching adult participants:

And one of the challenges that we have seen is that when you get into adults, when you get into a 50 year-old person, when you get into a person with a different body status ... or a physical limitation: a knee issue or not, that becomes quickly apparent that this person will never have the perfect slide ... And it’s not their fault. It’s not attitude, it’s a physical

limitation. And how do you adapt to that ... through other mechanisms ... the stick right off the bat if it's someone who's got major physical problems: the stabilizer?

Wilson continues:

Some people get the club coach [certification] and don't have that ability to read the body language or the satisfaction of the individual that they coaching ... And some [instructors] get caught in telling people what they're doing wrong instead of what they're doing right ... My challenge with people who have club coach, because I don't know if it's the program or the individuals that may be taking it ... Is that the coaching becomes way too literal and way too black and white and doesn't become flexible.

Wilson argues many Club Coach certified instructors lack the skill to be adaptable to meet the diverse needs of new adult curlers.

Many league organizers and club administrators describe an alternative training opportunity. The Train-the-Trainer day is an initiative developed by the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA). This program provides prospective league instructors with specific training to supplement their NCCP certification. Mary, a PCA representative, explains the distinction between the Train-the-Trainer preparation and Club Coach certification:

...Because these volunteers – most of them have – lots of them have taken the Club Coach course, but that's different. Some people say, "Well, I've already taken the Club Coach course. I don't need to do the Train-the-Trainer." But you do because [the Train-the-Trainer day] is different. This is very specific to how to teach somebody who's never put their foot on the ice before.

Thus, the Train-the-Trainer program focuses on the skills necessary to coach new adult curlers in a learn-to-curl league.

Furthermore, Liz explains the content she provided during the inaugural Train-the-Trainer day, which occurred in September, 2014:

...I took what I teach the instructors over six weeks [at the Redwood's learn-to-curl league], which [are] our core, hard lessons if you will. I sort of taught those first six weeks. So that's where I'm really like working with the instructors on the ice saying, "Okay, this is how we're doing it." ... We combined into ... We were going to divide it up sheet-by-sheet and do sort of clinics on each sheet ... And sort of do mini lessons on each sheet to give everybody at least an idea of how to teach it. [The future instructors] won't take it all away, but hopefully they take some of it. And we gave them the brand-new curriculum to go over

with it and say, “Here you go. Here are the lesson plans. Go forth and see what you can do with it.”

The Redwood league’s best practices have become the model for other clubs to follow. Also, the Train-the-Trainer content was described by some participants as being able to supplement the general coaching information provided by the NCCP Club Coach certification. Thus, the Train-the-Trainer day is another example of the growing standardization within learn-to-curl leagues. Yet, this standardization process is specific to the needs of learn-to-curl leagues, thereby moving beyond the national level (NCCP) to a more nuanced level of training through the PCA’s Train-the-Trainer day.

The Train-the-Trainer content more fully prepares instructors to coach in learn-to-curl leagues. Specifically, this program represents an attempt by league organizers and curling administrators to better meet the diverse needs of adults trying a sport for the first time. Further, Liz’s efforts, which I observed during the inaugural Train-the-Trainer day, illustrate the process of transferring this information to other parties. Thus, the Train-the-Trainer day is the vehicle by which individuals learn and broadcast information about meeting the needs of new curlers.

To pay or not to pay: Differing perspectives on compensating instructors.

Divergent opinions govern the issue of compensating league instructors. The two camps are paid instructors and volunteers. Officials with the Redwood club, as well as Curling Canada, subscribe to the importance of having paid instructors, while league organizers from the Shaw club value volunteer instructors. Thus, a tension is emerging regarding professionalizing the sport. Supporters of professionalization say paid instructors enhance the league experiences of new curlers, while opponents argue volunteer coaches provide diverse benefits to participants. This tension is explored below.

Paid instructors are thought to both enhance the league experiences for participants, as well as professionalize the sport generally. Scott, a prominent national-level curling administrator, favours having paid staff over volunteer instructors and uses the Redwood's learn-to-curl league to support his argument:

Well, there was two main reasons why John thought [paying league instructors] was critical. One was just to add the professionalism to this sport. This sport is dominated by volunteers and the trend today is reduction of volunteer commitment. Volunteers are willing to work one-off jobs for organizations for minimal times. And they're not; they don't want to fall into this dark hole of two hours a week for like 87,000 weeks ... They won't do that anymore. So his concept was if this thing is going to work, we cannot rely on volunteers. We want to rely on instructors who are trained specifically to teach this program, who are knowledgeable and experts in the field of curling. And to do that, they need to be paid to get the commitment.

Scott also points to the general trend of declining volunteerism nationally and the value of trained and knowledgeable instructors to back his argument.

John, a league organizer, compares the commitment of paid instructors to volunteers:

Well if you have volunteers then you may not get the same level of commitment from the instructors then if you are paying them ... And so therefore, you have a better chance of having a solid academy of instructors if you pay. And it puts value on what it is that they're doing.

Fellow league organizer, Liz, argues the commitment level for a full-year learn-to-curl league is too great for a volunteer:

And we want people to sign-up for 26 weeks? ... And do it at 9 o'clock on a Friday night? ... Like, people have to be pretty committed to do that ... And so that to me is the hurdle. And you have to have pretty committed instructors who want to be volunteers and do it at that time.

League organizers also argue paying instructors increases their accountability. Mark explains: "...It makes the instructors accountable. It turns it from a volunteer position to a job. Because there's some attachment to commitment." This accountability involves committing both to the league and new curlers.

Mark continues:

...And I know, even for myself in January and February, when I was not the convenor in previous years ... It's hard, on a Tuesday at 8 o'clock in the freezing rain or slush or whatever, to be like: "Oh, I've got to go down there." Where if we were volunteering, we might not want to go ... And you have that accountability to the curlers as well. We stress this to the instructors at the beginning of the year and throughout the year. When we don't have a full slate of instructors for what we've planned ... you can see it in the other instructors. They're struggling to get people shuffled around to different sheets. Curlers notice they're standing around more because there's a greater ratio ... It's a negative experience for them.

Mark argues paid instructors are more likely to follow through on their league commitment; thereby ensuring participants enjoy their league experiences.

While organizers at the Redwood club espouse the value of paid instructors for the sport and participants, organizers at the Shaw club differ. They argue volunteers play an integral role in their club's success generally. Furthermore, proponents of volunteer instructors face opposition.

Wilson recalls arguing with a fellow league organizer during a curling workshop:

And I actually argued ... that you pay [instructors] only if you need to and the response back was, "Well, you're going to wear-out your volunteers if you don't." I said, "Well, if you wear-out your volunteers, then you pay them, right?" But, I mean we're a volunteer club and so are many clubs all across, you know...

Wilson argues the Shaw club, and many others, are steeped in a history of volunteerism. While Curling Canada increasingly shifts its programs and services towards a more business and customer-service model, many Canadian curling clubs remain entrenched in volunteer operations. Hence, a resulting tension emerges. For Wilson, the strength of his club's league is its volunteer instructors.

The availability of a large pool of volunteers is the key to the Shaw club's success.

Wilson explains:

So I think it's a needs-based ... If you don't need [paid instructors], you don't pay. And there are times where we've had too many coaches [at the Shaw club's learn-to-curl league]. That's the level of volunteerism I think at this club. In this club, if we were to pay versus not pay, I don't think it improves the quality ... I cannot think off the bat of anyone that would come in that is not coming-in now because we're paying them \$20 an hour or whatever the number may be.

It is clear, then, that opposing perspectives shape this debate. While Curling Canada favours paid instructors, the Redwood and Shaw curling clubs have different views. The Redwood club uses paid instructors, while the Shaw club relies on volunteers. However, the success attained by these leagues illustrates how both approaches are effective. Based on the Redwood and Shaw examples, other curling clubs may employ either paid or volunteer instructors and experience success based on their individual circumstances. The debate over paid versus volunteer instructors is complex and one with no clear answer.

The discussion above illustrates how league standardization is a prominent consideration, and perhaps growing trend, for both clubs. League organizers and curling administrators, as well as information provided in the *Getting Started for Adults* manual, link this standardization to enhancing the league experiences of participants. Additional league initiatives, such as the post-session PowerPoint presentations at the Shaw Curling Club, further enhance the experiences of new curlers. These dimensions, as well as considerations of growing uniformity of league instruction complicate and enhance our understanding of this subject. Specifically, these issues shape our understanding of how growing standardization lies at the centre of learn-to-curl leagues. Yet, the diverse experiences of league participants illustrates a tension and hints at the need to think carefully about the many changes faced by curlers and organizers.

Problematizing change involving new curlers

All participants discussed change. Change within curling is complicated due to an image within and outside the sport that it is grounded in history and thereby change-averse. This theme conveys the tension emerging between how new curlers are sought after and valued by those who

run learn-to-curl leagues, and a growing concern by new curlers over the entrenched curling tradition of drinking after a game.

“It’s the lifeblood of the club”: Valuing new members.

Many instructors and organizers, as well as curling administrators recognize the contributions participants make to their respective curling clubs. These contributions include increasing membership, volunteering, and infusing clubs with new energy. While learn-to-curl leagues attract new curlers and club members, the impacts of individuals joining clubs are complex. Generally, new members are a welcome addition to curling clubs. Dorothy, from the Shaw club, argues that their learn-to-curl league “generates new membership number one for sure.”

Nigel echoes Dorothy’s sentiments by positioning the Shaw league within the larger club framework: “The [learn-to-curl] program ... is instrumental in bringing in new people. It’s the lifeblood of the club.”

Furthermore, new members enrich curling clubs. Liz explains:

And the added benefit of like bringing new people into the club, it brings new energy ... It will help any club, even if it’s full or not ... Like, “Why is everyone wearing black pants? It’s so weird. I don’t wear black pants in real life, why would I wear them curling?” So this non-traditional energy that they bring to curling is really great. So, it would be great if you could run these programs everywhere.

Dorothy also values how incoming participants enhance her club: “And [new curlers] bring like fresh blood, like different people into the club, different personalities and like I’ve met so many different friends coming up through the [league] ... It is a big part of why everyone curls, right?”

Many new curlers also contribute as volunteers to their club. Nigel welcomes the fresh ideas and volunteer work that new members bring to the Shaw club: “So it’s good to have new

ideas and in fact we have many of our [new curlers] from the program who have now stepped in to significant roles at the club. Zach, one of the novices who came in I guess four or five years ago ... is now the ice director.”

A recent league graduate, Dorothy is now an active volunteer at the Shaw club: “I was a board member two years ago, I was president of the women’s division ... I committed to a three-year term volunteering in the women’s division. So I was like vice-president, president, now I’m past president.”

Many other recent league graduates, beyond Zach and Dorothy, hold prominent volunteer positions with their clubs. Wilson notes:

...One of the things we have observed over the years of this program is that many of our core volunteers now in the club, I mean members of the board ... come from this program. They get engaged that quickly into the volunteer aspect of this club ... It’s not a new revelation that a lot of new curlers have gotten involved right off the bat with volunteering here at the club.

League design also influences new curlers to contribute. For Scott, a national-level curling administrator, the sense of belonging that is cultivated in these leagues influences many participants to volunteer:

And I mean the second, the other unintended consequence is all these learn-to-curl people, because of the way the program treats them as full-members ... we don’t ignore you. We’re spending all of our time and effort to make sure that you become a long-term member here. We’re finding these curlers are now showing up on the board of directors of curling clubs.

Hence, the work and commitment to organize and run learn-to-curl leagues is paying off for curling clubs. New curlers are not simply enjoying the sport. They feel like members, and in turn, many actively contribute to their club.

Grace captures this sentiment through *Image 10*. Grace – Helping with ice maintenance.



Image 10. Grace – Helping with ice maintenance.

Shortly before Christmas, the Shaw club experienced roof damage. In response, a call for club members to help repair the damage was sent out by email. Numerous learn-to-curl league participants, including Grace volunteered. Hence, new curlers feel compelled to give back to their club in various ways.

Specific league initiatives also cultivate participant volunteerism. The Redwood club's Christmas party organizing committee is a prime example. Scott describes:

And [those participants on the Christmas party organizing committee] become volunteers. We say to them, "You're having a Christmas party, you organize it. Like, we're not organizing it, you organize it." So they put a little committee together and they organized a Christmas spiel. So another consequence that nobody ever expected; they became volunteers.

New curlers also formed friendships among themselves. Sam discusses the benefits emerging from these friendships:

The other benefit, which we didn't expect, was that [participants] would form friendships. So you might have joined as a couple or even a single, and through the 30 weeks or whatever for the program, you make friendships. Some became a team. My couple met your couple. We left the [learn-to-curl league] and joined the mixed league.

The development of new curling teams also benefits curling clubs. Dorothy explains:

“But, I think it's good to bring new teams into the club, like generate new teams and you have different competition, you play against the same teams all the time, it gets a little boring, right?”

The desire of these new teams to experience bonspiels led to the creation of a novice bonspiel infrastructure. Scott articulates:

...[Learn-to-curl league teams] started playing in bonspiels. We never expected them to play in bonspiels. All these U-2s and U-3s. That was started at the Redwood [club] out of the program all because the pilot is on going, right? And we said, “You know, these people actually; there were two teams that actually have been curling for, what is it? October, November, December, maybe 16 weeks they've been curling and they actually, the four of them went and registered for an out-of-town mixed bonspiel ... So we decided to start a U-2 and now it's gravitated to U-3 and there's U-5s and there's U-10s and ... That whole thing has just exploded. Again, that was something we never envisioning happening.

These U- bonspiels target new curlers with a specified number of years of curling experiences.

For instance, U-2 bonspiels are open to participants with fewer than two years curling experience.

As Scott states, the emergence of novice bonspiels throughout Northampton and area coincides with the existence of various local learn-to-curl leagues.

New curlers also challenge established curling stereotypes. Broadly speaking, curlers hold the reputation of being frugal spenders. John explains:

...Curling has a reputation that they, it's deservedly earned, that many of the people in curling are cheap screws. And they might have great golf equipment, they might have great ski equipment, but if they can curl with a blue curling shoe and a green curling shoe, they'll do it ... And not be concerned about how it looks.

Sam adds:

Curlers, old school curlers, do the biggest disservice to the sport of anyone. Their mentality is, “If you raise my curling club coffee by 5 cents a cup, I will never buy coffee here again.” Everything should be as cheap as possible. If possible, I shouldn't have to pay

anything. You should give me that pair of shoes 'cause I wouldn't want to spend anything on my sport.

New curlers thwart this categorization by purchasing quality curling equipment and apparel. John says: "So the beauty of [the learn-to-curl league] is people bring a different mentality and they're happy to spend a couple hundred bucks for a pair of shoes, a couple hundred bucks for equipment, and that's been good for curling."

Sam believes curling's long-standing frugal mentality is vanishing: "This is what you hear more often with new curlers and this happened three weeks ago. Literally, I'll quote the gentleman: 'I've never been on the ice before, but I only want the best.' He spent a thousand dollar and felt happy to do it."

It is clear that new curlers are viewed as contributing greatly to their clubs. League organizers and curling administrators identify these benefits, which include increased memberships and volunteerism. Overall, new curlers provide their clubs with rich, multi-layered benefits. These insights enhance our understanding of how organizers and administrators view participants. Yet, tensions exist between these perspectives and how new curlers report their leagues experiences. These tensions are addressed next.

"Downplaying the drinking part?": Disrupting curling traditions.

Participants question curling traditions, namely alcohol's place in the sport. While participants recognize the connection between alcohol and socializing in curling, they also question its predominance. These findings were discussed above. However, an exploration of how the injection of new curlers into the clubs is challenging and disrupting what are perceived to be long-standing sport traditions is also warranted. In particular, tensions around the place of alcohol in curling seem to be at the forefront of this disruption. In the following discussion,

drinking in curling clubs is positioned as a structural issue that many participants want to have addressed. This idea illustrates how all change may not be welcome.

League organizers recognize the link between alcohol and socializing in curling. Nigel explains:

... We want to build-up the social aspect of the game to make [new curlers] aware that it is a very social and that there is certain etiquette in terms of after a game where you sit down with the opposing team, or in this case, your fellow novices and coaches. And have a drink and get to know one another...

Yet, certain league instructors question this relationship. For example, Sheila believes in:

Downplaying the drinking part. I mean we have some people in the club who [drink alcohol] and that's fine. ... But I also want people to know that, that's not all what it's about. ... It's social and yes [curlers] have a drink after. But, even if you're not a drinker, have a soft drink, stick around. It's more about the social atmosphere ... Cause I do get concerned that we'll get a reputation as a party club...

Wilson addresses this relationship by emphasizing curling's social dynamic, while de-emphasizing the role alcohol plays:

And part of it was if you're going to get the full appreciation for the sport, the social is as important as the game outside. It is our belief that you spend as much time probably in the bar, and you don't have to drink, as much as you do out on the ice ... If you're getting the full experience.

While Wilson presents the option of not drinking while socializing, alcohol's entrenched place in curling is an important consideration. Thus, league organizers hold differing views about the relationship between alcohol and socializing in curling. Some participants validate this ingrained relationship, while others strive to chart a new and perhaps more inclusive path for new curlers.

League and club stakeholders consider participant change differently. Mainly, the changes new curlers bring to clubs are positively received. However, less support is given to change targeting entrenched club and curling values. As discussed in the last thematic chapter, Iris' encounter with an inebriated teammate and the subsequent backlash she received after complaining illustrate a tension involving change. League and club stakeholders embrace certain

change concerning new curlers. Yet, Iris' complaint demonstrates that not all change is welcomed. Perhaps the institutionalized role of drinking in curling accounts for the negative response Iris received. Thus, certain change is embraced; while other changes, specifically those targeting entrenched sport customs, are met with resistance. This tension complicates our understanding of change and growth in the sport. Further, Iris' intention to pursue her drinking complaint with the Shaw club's board of directors may result in a stronger reaction against her. Such reactions epitomize the clash between the new and old schools of curling. Consequently, change represents a complex topic in learn-to-curl leagues; one which participants negotiate, and invariably will continue negotiating into the future. Moreover, how league and club stakeholders perceive participants, as well as the change they bring to their club, impact the league experiences of new curlers.

Conclusion

The discussion in this thematic chapter illustrates support for the notion that learn-to-curl leagues are becoming increasingly structured and standardised. This evolving process involves standardizing the league structure and instruction to create uniform experiences for new curlers. League organizers and curling administrators believe uniformity enhances the league experiences of participants and the language in the *Getting Started for Adults* manual validates this perspective. Nonetheless, the success of the leagues results in change in the clubs and participants viewed the impact of these changes differently. Indeed, it is clear, increases in club membership and volunteerism rates are well received, and yet, change targeting entrenched club and sport values are met with opposition.

Learn-to-curl leagues are structured, in part, to maximize the experiences of new curlers. However, league organizers and curling administrators typically make decisions without

consulting league participants (with the exception of the Shaw league's steering committee). Thus, a resulting tension emerges between how new curlers experience these leagues and the perceptions of league and club stakeholders. This tension will be re-visited in the discussion chapter. In the next thematic chapter, I explore the role leveraging plays in both leagues.

Chapter Seven – Leveraging on the Ground

Introduction

As was discussed in the review of the literature, leveraging involves translating media attention (primarily television coverage) from elite sport events (e.g., the Olympics) in order to increase sport interest and participation rates (Boardley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012). Media attention is translated through various methods including program investment and development, targeted advertising campaigns, and large-scale public health initiatives (Coalter, 2004; Bauman et al., 2013; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Weed et al., 2012). Leveraging impacts adult introductory sport programs. However, organizers do not consider the learn-to-curl leagues at the Redwood and Shaw clubs to be leveraging initiatives. Instead, the Redwood's condensed learn-to-curl league and the Shaw's Try Curling session are leveraging programs, which fuel the full-year learn-to-curl leagues at both clubs. Moreover, the leveraging initiatives and learn-to-curl leagues exist within the wider membership recruitment strategies in each club. These programs work together to ensure continued growth within the Redwood and Shaw clubs. In this thematic chapter, I examine the leveraging efforts at both clubs, as well as the interplay between these programs and the full-year learn-to-curl leagues. The extent to which league participants are influenced to start curling by media coverage of sport mega-events will also be investigated. Also, the extent to which experiential and structural considerations inform effective leveraging programs will be explored. Thus, the place of leveraging within the Redwood and Shaw clubs will be positioned as complex and ever changing.

The Redwood and Shaw clubs both leverage, albeit differently. For the Redwood club, leveraging was employed to help ensure the first learn-to-curl league was a success. Leveraging

practices were discarded once membership reached capacity. In comparison, the Shaw club has leveraged throughout the existence of their league. I am dividing the leveraging experiences of both leagues into separate sub-themes to explore the nuances of these approaches. As previously discussed, explorations of tangible sport participation leveraging initiatives are non-existent in the leveraging literature (Potwarka & McCarville, 2010). The subsequent analysis will provide an understanding of two distinct leveraging initiatives and will provide an original contribution to the literature on the subject.

Leveraging and Curling

As described in the methodology chapter, *Leveraging 2014* assists clubs in better understanding and implementing leveraging initiatives (Curling Canada, 2014). This publication positions leveraging programs within multi-faceted membership recruitment campaigns. Furthermore, learn-to-curl leagues are viewed as the step following successful membership recruitment campaigns (Curling Canada, 2014). As previously mentioned, learn-to-curl league organizers also share this perspective. Yet, these organizers and instructors were not familiar with the *Leveraging 2014* publication, nor aware of its existence. And those individuals who were aware of the publication only had a cursory understanding of its content. This disconnect illustrates that the role of leveraging in connection to learn-to-curl leagues is worthy of study.

Throughout the remainder of this theme, I explore how participants, organizers, and administrators experience and conceptualize leveraging. These cases do not showcase an ideal leveraging initiative. Rather, they provide examples of how leveraging operates in practice. Although the relationship between these leagues and leveraging is not necessarily direct, key insights emerge. These insights expand our understanding in two ways. First, we learn how two

specific leveraging initiatives function and evolve. Second, we can see how these leveraging initiatives impact both the experiences of participants and league structures.

Are people inspired?: Complicating the link between television viewership and participation of new curlers

In the study, new curlers were asked about the relationship between trying the sport and seeing it on television. Participant responses varied. For some, this influence was weak or non-existent. Others were inspired by television coverage to try the sport. Also, participants who watch elite curling make a distinction between Olympic and non-Olympic events such as the Brier (Canadian men's curling championship), the Scotties Tournament of Hearts (Canadian women's curling championship), and the world championships.

Some participants lack television access. For Grace, living without a television has shaped her elite curling viewership: “[It is] pretty safe to say that if I have [viewed elite curling], it's pretty minimal. Not in any significant fashion. Though I do listen to the radio a lot.”

Despite lacking access to a television, Grace does have a general understanding of curling and its place in Canadian society: “I'm aware of what's going on in the world. And I think I was aware that curling's a pretty cool sport that more people than we realize do it. And that a lot of people like it. So there was an awareness that its popularity and the Canadian success and it's profile...” Thus Grace gained her curling knowledge from non-television sources.

Susan also does not have television access.

To be honest, I have spent several periods of my life either living outside of Canada or living within Canada without a television. ... So television watching isn't ... Like a priority anyway and isn't really necessarily like how I think about my life. I'm sure I've watched curling in the Olympics 'cause I generally try to find a television at that time when the Olympics are on.

Susan says her brother-in-law introduced her to watching curling on television. “Well we would go away skiing all of us together and about the time curling was on. So, we watched [curling] on TV. It’d be something he’d want to watch.”

Despite her limited viewing of televised curling, Susan knows about Canadian curling: “‘Cause there’s that Scotties Tournament and the Brier. ... Even ages ago that got some coverage on TSN.” Grace and Susan’s knowledge of the sport, despite limited television exposure, speaks volumes of the place curling holds in Canadian society.

Some participants start curling without ever (or rarely) watching it on television. Susan summarizes how televised curling shaped her sport introduction: “Not so much. No. My influences were elsewhere.” As discussed in the experiencing the league theme, participants start curling for diverse reasons. Thus, television is only one influence drawing people to the sport.

Some participants are influenced by televised curling to try the sport, while others are drawn to curling for other reasons. Rose explains her motivation to start curling: “I’ve always known and I’ve always been exposed to it or aware of it if you will from TV, competition, that type of stuff. But, never really known anybody who’s played. I just figured on my own. That’s it.” When asked whether viewing televised curling specifically influenced her intention to curl, Rose answers: “Not at all. That was a simple answer.”

Bob says his viewing of televised curling did not draw him to try the sport. “[I watched] Olympic curling, but it had no, no bearing on my willingness to register. It was just my little bit of exposure to the sport...”

Instead, it was the Shaw club’s level of organization that attracted Bob to curling. “I joined after looking at what was done ... I could have gone to the Evergreen Centre ... For me, joining the Shaw club was the organization itself. I could have gone to the Evergreen Centre, even the Hillview...”

Bob believes that watching curling on television does not draw people to try the sport. “Some people say the Olympics is an inspiration to join it. I can’t see it. Personally ... it may lead to an increased number of registrations after the Olympics, ‘Okay, I’ll take your word for it, but I can’t really see it.’”

However, watching the sport on television shaped Tony’s curling intentions.

...I’ve watched curling for a number of years ... I really have wanted to start curling for a number of years now. ... I mean it goes back to probably; I probably started watching curling 25 years ago. So it would have been, in those days, the only thing that would have been televised would have been, either the Brier or the World Championship. ... It’s not the type of sport that was on every weekend. And I didn’t watch it that frequently. But I certainly got a taste for it.

Tony’s story illustrates how one’s interest in a sport can be sustained for many years before they take it up.

Other participants also report being inspired to curl after viewing televised curling. Cathy says her decision to start curling coincided with the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. “I started to play with the Northampton Sport and Social Club [NSSC] around the time of the Vancouver Olympics. That’s when I started watching curling. It came hand-in-hand, I’m sure. ... I definitely remember watching the Olympics, ya.”

Frances also was drawn to curling after watching television coverage of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics:

...So the last Winter Olympics ... in Vancouver, there was a woman on the Canadian Olympic curling team who was five months pregnant and my law school buddies and I thought that was so cool that like this was like probably the most feminist sport out there. You could do it at any stage of your life and not only just do in a half-assed kind of way, but do it at such a professional and high level. We thought that was so amazing. So we got together, about seven feminist law students ... We called ourselves the “Hail Mary’s” and we got sweatshirts and everything and we joined like an adult recreational league.

Frances was further inspired after viewing television coverage of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Frances was motivated to advance her curling career after watching Olympic curling

gold medalist Jennifer Jones compete. That is when she progressed from the NSSC to the Redwood club's learn-to-curl league. Frances explains:

But it was really just seeing that woman who curled on the Canadian Olympic Team. That was so inspirational. And then to see the next, I mean just kept fueling the fire; The last Olympics when Jennifer Jones was the skip. I mean she's a lawyer and a pro curler. I mean I feel like anything is possible. ... And she's like a single business owner or she's like a partner in a law firm? So she's basically self-employed and I think she must be a really kick-ass like can-do kind of person.

Frances says Jones inspires her:

...Jennifer Jones is a real inspiration and that was something that I think about every time: she's somebody that every time I'm curling it, I think it's just like I happened to find out about her. Like I probably wouldn't have cared as much about her specifically had she not been a lawyer and personally identified with that.

The role that televised curling plays in attracting new curlers differs. It ranges from having no influence to being a major course of inspiration and motivation. This discussion adds nuance to our understanding of how the media influences introductory sport experiences for new curlers and may provide important lessons for future leveraging initiatives. Furthermore, many participants differentiate between Olympic curling and annual non-Olympic events (the Brier, Scotties, and World Championship), all of which receive television and other media exposure. Next, our attention shifts to the specific leveraging initiatives employed by both clubs beginning with the Redwood Curling Club.

Leveraging as an afterthought: The Redwood Curling Club

This sub-theme addresses leveraging initiatives at the Redwood club in three ways. First, relevant best practices and growth areas are viewed from the club's leveraging efforts. Second, this leveraging initiative is positioned as having evolved to best meet the club's changing needs. Third, important lessons emerge at to what happens when leveraging initiatives run their course. The Redwood Curling Club first employed leveraging through the implementation of condensed

learn-to-curl leagues during the 2006 and 2010 curling seasons to coincide with the Torino and Vancouver Winter Olympics. The club did not use leveraging in 2014 (e.g., during the Sochi Winter Olympics) because membership was at capacity. In this sub-theme, I also address how various structural considerations influenced the development and operation of Redwood club's leveraging initiatives. These lessons are also of value in all sport contexts.

Leveraging to respond to demand: The Redwood's condensed learn-to-curl league.

Leveraging was formerly employed at the Redwood club following the 2006 Olympics as club officials were inundated with inquiries from people interested in trying the sport. In response, an additional learn-to-curl league was created in response to this demand. To facilitate clarity, this league will be referred to as the "condensed league". Liz, a former league organizer, explains the circumstances behind developing this league:

And [prospective participants] were calling like crazy after the Olympics. So much so that we're like, "Okay, if we want to pick-up this momentum for next year and get them in the door, to do this in September." Cause we didn't really need them at that point, we didn't need to run another program. We just didn't want to lose them. Because we didn't want to say, "Ya, you can curl but you have to wait eight months.

Liz goes on to describe the condensed league:

'Cause we ran a program on Sunday's. Six or eight weeks I think. Basically whatever ice we had left in the year. And ran like a condensed version of it to get those people, you know, give them something. And then, we got most of them signed back up again for September. And that was the start of our waiting list.

Liz's comments illustrate both the ad hoc nature of this condensed league, as well as its contribution to the existing learn-to-league reaching capacity.

Liz frames the condensed league specifically as a leveraging initiative:

Definitely after Torino, we leveraged that. There was momentum coming in after that, right? We didn't proactively do anything other than the fact we ran that second program at the end of the year. So, we leveraged that a little bit and we took advantage of that momentum. The other clubs that they're doing it now definitely could take feedback on that kind of stuff.

Sam expands on the condensed league's structure:

We also had some ice on Sunday morning ... And I said, "Let's do a [learn-to-curl league] Sunday morning with two sheets and see what happens," 'Cause we would have gotten lots of exposure on TV. ... So we managed to find a couple of instructors who didn't mind getting up at 9am on a Sunday morning. The stupid league filled. There was a waiting list to get into the ... On Sunday morning at 9am.

Sam expresses surprise that the league exceeded expectation as it was offered Sunday mornings, a time deemed relatively inconvenient for participants or instructors. Yet, this condensed league defied this preconception.

However, the timing of the league ended up being its downfall. "And we couldn't sustain it though. It was hard getting instructors, so we dropped it," Sam says. This 2006 leveraging initiative was a short-term success for the Redwood club, ending the following season.

Leveraging was once again employed in 2010 when the Redwood club re-started the condensed learn-to-curl league to coincide with the Vancouver Olympics. Mark explains:

And we also did a spin-off [of the learn-to-curl league] in 2010 ... was a big boom with the Vancouver Olympics. So, what we ended up doing that year was after the Olympics were over, which would have been mid February, we did a half year program, which was chaotic. But it worked and we garnered some people out of it into the club for the next season, but that was kind of a spin-off and that was extra. I think we did it on Tuesday's: we added more people if I recall. It was 4 years ago now, but I think we added more people. We definitely did extras on Saturdays and Sunday with it too though. There was league ice that was available.

This version of the condensed league attracted more participants than in 2006 as it was provided on three days.

Despite this expansion, Mark discusses some program drawbacks:

[The condensed league participants] didn't get nearly as much attention as the people that were in the [learn-to-curl league]. But then again, they weren't paying full membership. I

don't even think they were technically members. It was more of an instructing opportunity. ... There were fewer instructors. ... We were cramming a lot into it. ... I do recall getting some people out of that group into the next season.

Yet, Mark says the Redwood club's membership grew as a result of offering condensed leagues in 2006 and 2010.

The 2006 and 2010 condensed leagues are both positioned as leveraging initiatives tied to the Winter Olympics. The positioning of these leagues thereby provides lessons about the leveraging experience. For instance, the 2006 iteration was organized in response to increased curling interest from the Winter Olympics. Thus, organizers characterized this league as an example of impromptu leveraging. Despite its reactive origins, this condensed league successfully attracted new members to the Redwood club. Also, organizers report learning various lessons from these previous leveraging efforts. These include scheduling the leagues at convenient times, as well as investing resources into uniform instruction.

“Do we even need this league anymore?”: Leveraging challenges and learning opportunities for organizers.

This sub-theme explores how the Redwood club is wrestling with capacity considerations. The Redwood Curling Club no longer leverages. Since 2005, the learn-to-curl league has contributed to the club nearing membership capacity. Leveraging initiatives undertaken in 2006 and 2010 fueled this growth. Many league stakeholders believe these membership increases result from expanding Olympic exposure and the league's favourable reputation for introducing people to the sport. Leveraging has been abandoned because the club and learn-to-curl leagues are full. Thus, various learning opportunities arise. These include how leveraging initiatives impact sport clubs and what happens after a club no longer needs to leverage.

Structurally, the Redwood club's learn-to-curl league has evolved over time. Namely, participants' needs have shifted. These changes result from club membership growth caused, in part, by leveraging. Liz explains how the league used to operate:

And the idea had always been that we kicked everyone out [of the league] after the first year and they joined leagues in the club. ... [But] now, all the sudden, we had filled the leagues and the club. ... So, all the sudden we said to the people in April or March, when the league was done, we said, "Okay, you have to find a spot in a league. Everybody sign-up on the sign-up sheet what league you want. Our manager will put you in that league."

Liz goes on to describe the challenge emerging in 2007:

All of the sudden, September rolled around and we couldn't get them into leagues. And we didn't think about that at all ... So, initially we, you know, said "No. It's a one-year program. Like, you're on your own." Well, the problem was we had told all these people all along; there's a lot of handholding. "You're members of the club. We want you here. We really love that you're here. Here's your membership tag." And they bought into that. They felt like members of the club. So again, we did too good of a job. And now all the sudden, we were telling them, "You're out." ... There's no spots [in the club]. Go find another curling club, right? ... And that didn't sit very well. So much so that they showed-up at the [annual general meeting]. ... And [the participants] weren't particularly happy with this. So, we got word that people were upset ... Well we can't have that. And it was never intentioned. ... It was a capacity issue.

In response to this capacity issue, the club added a second year to the program to accommodate participants who could not find spots in other club leagues.

Capacity concerns persisted after league expansion. Sam explains: "[The new curlers] were actually the saviour of this club. ... It's now a monster problem because you want new people to get into the league, but you have no room for them." Herein lies the tension. On one hand the league contributed to the club's increased membership, while on the other hand, this membership influx created problems.

Al, a Redwood club administrator, addresses how the club perceives the league:

I would say that the [learn-to-curl league] has been successful in one of its original intentions because it's really hard to get into this club ... [The lack of space at the Redwood club is] probably the biggest frustration about the whole thing. ... There's no space even to sign-up for the [league], let alone, what are you going to do after you go through the

[league]? So, we're in the process right now of doing triage, even just getting into the program. It's a great problem to have, but it's still, again, a frustration.

Once again, the league's past success is tempered by current and future concerns.

Annette, a Redwood club staff member, illustrates the current league demand: "I turned about 35 [people] away this year. I turned 35 people away from our program because we're only capable of taking 20." Consequently, this league remains popular and is unable to meet current demand.

This league is facing an uncertain future. The Redwood club no longer needs to recruit new members. However, the league still holds a prominent place in the club. This tension leads league organizers and club administrators to debate the league's future purpose and existence. Leveraging is embedded in this topic. While leveraging is no longer employed, previous leveraging initiatives contributed to the club's current membership profile. This next discussion enriches our understanding of the tensions and opportunities that arise after a club no longer needs to leverage.

Mark outlines the questions informing this debate: "...There's been questions: 'Do we even need this league anymore?' Does it need to be a [learn-to-curl league] because is the club gaining from the [introductory] aspect of it ... because would just a [recreational] league work better?'"

Mark argues against altering the league:

My thoughts on that are you could [modify the league] but then you'll have to revive [it] at some point again and if you lose those instructors, you lose the knowledge. And we have the opportunity to ... try new ways of doing the [league] ... because there's plenty of curling clubs that are just starting this, and need this.

For Mark, this league holds great value beyond the Redwood club.

Scott, a prominent national curling administrator, also emphasizes the league as a testing ground for other programs: "[This league] was a pilot we started in 2005. It's still a pilot today.

We still use the Redwood Curling Club and what they're doing as our testing ground. ...

Anything new that we implement, we start there first and let them do it..."

Growing the sport is another league rationalization. Namely, some argue for distributing league graduates among neighbouring clubs. John, a former league organizer, explains:

And [the Redwood's league is] still relevant because we can take these people and if there's room, we can feed them into here, or we can send them off to other clubs. So it's good for curling and therefore it is relevant and I think we deliver it better than anybody. And so why not expose people to that and at the same time, as long as we're upfront with them: "By the way, you may not be able to be a member after the Getting Started League, but there'll be other clubs that will take you" sort of thing.

Patrick, a league instructor, sees the value of sending participants to neighbouring clubs, but he questions the purpose of welcoming new curlers to a club only temporarily.

...There's a ton of curling club's in this city and if we were or are still the only one that's offering something like this or more established program then it's an opportunity for us to get people interested in the sport and then say to them, "Hey play at the Granite. Or play Pleasant View. Or play somewhere else." But it is too bad when we bring them here and sell them on the idea of being at the Redwood, which is a great curling club that I love being a member of ... I don't know if we have space for them when they're done.

A relationship exists between leveraging and learn-to-curl leagues. At the Redwood Curling Club, there were two different learn-to-curl leagues. One was a full-year program and the second was a condensed version that was used specifically as a leveraging tool. The two leagues were coordinated and this resulted in increased membership. The condensed league was a leveraging initiative. However, leveraging represents only one component of the larger membership recruitment system.

The Redwood Curling Club is a victim of its own success. Leveraging initiatives, along with the learn-to-curl program, has resulted in membership reaching capacity. Consequently, leveraging is no longer needed and league stakeholders are debating the future of the learn-to-curl league. Some of the issues being considered include disseminating league best practices and sending league graduates to other clubs. These considerations benefit the sport, not the Redwood

club. Membership recruitment and leveraging initiatives are thought to improve sport clubs. Yet, this sub-theme has demonstrated how new tensions emerge once a club approaches membership capacity.

Leveraging at the forefront: The Shaw Curling Club

Leveraging is a prominent and annual consideration at the Shaw Curling Club. Namely, the Shaw club's learn-to-curl league uses their spring Try Curling event to acquire more curlers. In this sub-theme, I examine the Try Curling session as a leveraging initiative. Furthermore, I discuss how league participants are actively recruited.

“Hey, why don't you come try it out?": Try Curling session as a leveraging initiative.

A Try Curling session introduces individuals to the sport of curling. Participants receive instruction from certified coaches and are able to socialize afterwards. Sheila describes last spring's Try Curling session:

Last March ... we did [the spring Try Curling session] right after the Olympics. ... And we had over 100 people sign-up. ... We actually could not accommodate everybody who wanted to and we didn't want to disappoint anybody so what we did is we ran the session on the date that we had determined, end of March. And then, for three other Sunday's, we took one of the sheets from the [learn-to-curl league] ... And took the overflow ... And it was so successful that we had actually about 14 people sign-up for the league that was starting in October. ... And then afterwards if you want to stay we'll serve pizza.

The spring Try Curling event is purposefully scheduled in March. Wilson explains this rationale: "...The spring session was always meant to be just after the Brier. We have done that on purpose." Sheila also connects the spring Try Curling event to the Winter Olympics: "Oh yes. We had decided that we would do [the Try Curling session] in March to make it coincide with the Olympics."

Nigel outlines how the spring Try Curling session uses leveraging to recruit new curlers:

...If for example you're talking about the Shaw and people see curling on TV and get interested, and then sparks their interest and brings them into the game ... one of the aspects of the novice program is our Try Curling. So that's what we try to use as a lever to bring people in. And so holding whatever exposure people might have to curling through TV for example ... So we use that to try and bring people in.

Dorothy explains how the spring Try Curling event leverages Olympic television

coverage:

Like people need to be, like [the spring Try Curling event] was a huge success so we did that, right? 'Cause the Olympics were on, people were watching it and it's the perfect opportunity to say, "Hey, why don't you come try it out?" And it goes back to getting people into the club and new people into the club I think. So by having the Try Curling events and learn-to-curl, you're using the Olympics I guess to get ... You're using things to get new members, but you're also doing it to kind of inspire people and help people that want to learn the sport.

League advertising materials also reflected this leveraging focus. For instance, all promotional resources directly reference televised elite curling tournaments. Sheila explains:

"...We put out one of those signs ... near the street basically saying, you know, 'Have you ever wanted to try curling? If you've seen it on TV, come on down type of thing. Now's you're chance for free.'" Thus, the spring Try Curling session leverages elite curling events in two ways. First, it coincides with television coverage of major curling events. Second, these advertisements link televised curling coverage with the club's promotion of the sport. These approaches work to capture the large curling television audience each February and March and translate this attention into new curlers at the Shaw club.

Interest from the spring Try Curling session translates to increased league enrollment.

Sheila explains this process:

And we find that if people come out and give it a try [during the spring Try Curling session], then we say well, the [learn-to-curl league] will be starting in October. It's close enough that they can say "Oh, maybe that's something, that will be my winter activity for next year. I'll sign-up." ... And then they sort of get hooked and sign-up for the [league].

Last year, the Shaw club recruited many spring Try Curling participants. Wilson says:

We agreed that there'd be a maximum of 40 [participants]. [The organizing committee] wanted to cut it off at 32 and I went, "No, no, no. Make it 40 people. We can handle that, so make it 40." They had before we ran our fall one, 36 paid memberships from the spring, for September, from the spring [Try Curling event].

The Shaw Curling Club uses media coverage of elite curling events as a leveraging tool to get people to join its Try Curling program. Participants are then encouraged to join the learn-to-curl league. Thus, the Shaw Curling Club provides a model of effective leveraging within a curling context.

While both clubs differ in the trajectory of their leveraging initiatives, they provide valuable insights into what leveraging looks like on the ground. The Redwood Curling Club used past Winter Olympics to attract participants to their introductory sport programs. Meanwhile, the Shaw Curling Club structured their leveraging programs annually to coincide with both the Winter Olympics and annual elite curling events. Today, the Redwood Curling Club no longer leverages because it has reached membership capacity. In comparison, the Shaw Curling Club continues to leverage. It is important to note that league organizers at both clubs consider their recruitment efforts to be connected to leveraging. Yet, the learn-to-curl leagues are not considered leveraging initiatives. Rather, the learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging efforts contribute to the wider membership recruitment strategies at both clubs. Namely, these leveraging programs recruit new curlers to both learn-to-curl leagues. Thus, these cases illustrate how leveraging informs structural considerations of program development. Furthermore, a plethora of leveraging diversity exists at the program level.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I organized the findings into three thematic chapters: experiencing the leagues, structuring the leagues, and leveraging the leagues. These chapters address the learn-to-curl league from three distinct perspectives. These include how participants enter the program and experience the league. It also addresses how league organizers and curling administrators develop and shape league structures. Their decisions are informed by, and shape the league experiences of new curlers. Finally, leveraging initiatives incorporate both experiential and structural considerations to bring new curlers into the sport. Although leveraging initiatives and learn-to-curl leagues are separate entities, they work together to grow the sport. Overall, significant insights emerge from these enriched understandings of learn-to-curl leagues. Namely, adult introductory sport programs flourish when certain experiential conditions are provided. These conditions include fostering a positive and inclusive space where adults can cultivate and nurture relationships through social experiences, acquire and improve new skills, and adopt and strengthen a sense of belonging to their curling club. While I divided my findings into three distinct themes to promote clarity, many intersections exist. These intersections will be addressed in the following discussion chapter to foster a deeper understanding of learn-to-curl leagues.

Discussion

Chapter Eight – Uncovering the Experience: Making Sense of Learn-to-Curl Leagues

Introduction

The study of learn-to-curl leagues offers many important insights. This information informs our understanding of the breadth and depth of both leagues, as well as adult introductory sport programs generally. As outlined in the previous three thematic chapters, these insights include experiential, structural, and leveraging considerations. In summary, participants reported the importance of social connections, acquiring and improving their curling skills, as well as fostering a sense of belonging to their respective curling clubs. Moreover, the leagues are becoming increasingly standardized (with diverse implications) and there was a tension between how change involving new curlers was perceived and what some participants experienced. Finally, the link between television viewership of elite curling events and grassroots participation was complicated, as well as the leveraging initiatives at both clubs were explored. Relatedly, and as is explained in depth below, the study contributes to three areas of academic literature: (1) the experiences of adults in introductory sport programs, (2) organizational capacity in community sport clubs, (3) and leveraging. This chapter is divided into three sections that highlight the new understandings generated by this study: introductory sport experiences, organizational capacity, and leveraging.

Introductory Sport Experiences

Little is known about the experiences of adults in introductory sport programs. The study addresses this research gap by exploring in depth the essence of the experiences of learn-to-curl

league participants. Three core thematic ideas inform our understanding of these experiences: (1) bridging and extending social connections, (2) acquiring and improving skills, (3) and becoming a curler? Each of these ideas will be explored separately, along with relevant intersections, to enrich our understanding of the experiences of adult introductory sport programs.

Bridging and extending social connections.

As the data analysis made clear, social connections shape the league experiences of participants. Many new curlers entered the sport looking to expand their social networks. Various individuals also influence participants to start curling. These people include friends, family members, and work colleagues, some who already curl; while others joined the leagues as participants with their recruits. The leagues allow new curlers to strengthen existing social relationships, while fostering new ones. This is mainly accomplished through post-game socializing, as well as novice and club-wide bonspiels. These opportunities allow participants to develop relationships with a range of people including other participants, league instructors and organizers, other club members, and new curlers from other clubs. Thus, participants are continually establishing and strengthening social connections and this came out repeatedly during the interviews. Indeed, socializing is an essential component of the league experiences of participants.

These findings can be connected to broader consideration of introductory sport experiences for adults. This study provides a first step in developing an understanding of the important roles social connections play in enriching the introductory sport experiences for adults. Namely, socialising was positioned as a significant consideration for study participants with curling being the perfect sport because it facilitated meeting new people, which is challenging for adults outside of their working lives. As previous studies of curling report, social considerations

are embedded into the fabric of this sport (Leipert et al., 2011; Mair, 2007, 2009). According to this study, the same holds true for new curlers. Moreover, these thesis findings align with Harada and Siperstein's (2009) research that social interactions figured prominently in the sport experiences of athletes with intellectual disabilities. Hence, social interactions are at the core of not just introductory sport experiences, but of the experiences for many diverse sport participants. Also, social capital theorists such as McLean, Schultz, and Steger (2002) and Putnam (1995, 2000) point to the decreasing participation of adults in social activities since the 1950s as hindering, among other things, their civic engagement, health, and economic prosperity. Consequently, Putnam (2000) argues the need to critically re-engage with education, family, and social activities more generally to reverse this trend. Thus, the social benefits emerging from introductory sport experiences, such as adult learn-to-curl leagues, may contribute to increasing social capital: "connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Yet, and is noted below, future research is required to explore this relationship.

Acquiring and improving skills.

Alongside wanting a social experience, adults also want to acquire and improve their sport skills. This notion was made abundantly clear during the research and became even more prominent when participants continually evaluated league content and instructors. Specifically, many new curlers expressed a need for more drills and valued experienced instructors. Yet, some participants valued inexperienced instructors through feeling more comfortable with individuals they perceive to be more alike ability and experience-wise. Hence, diverse perspectives exist.

Indeed, new curlers situated skill acquisition at the core of their overall league experience. For many, self-improvement and competence connect to their enjoyment of the league, club, and

sport. Yet, participants expect and appreciate support from qualified instructors to improve. Namely, building skills through the standardized league instruction was highlighted as an important consideration. Overall, adult participants want to be competent and, in turn, seek support from instructors to reach their goal and these notions could surely extend to other sport contexts. In this case, adults “become” sport participants, in part, through learning and acquiring certain skills. Hence, a major component of the introductory sport experience for study participants involved receiving assistance from experts to continually improve. Adults want to succeed; and this, in part, is why skill acquisition is important to them. Acquiring and improving skills is the second pillar in our understanding of the experiences of league participants and potentially adult sport experiences more generally. Moreover, these findings make an important contribution to existing research on skill acquisition (e.g., Handford, Davids, Bennett, & Button, 1997) by outlining the importance adults place on acquiring skills within their introductory sport experiences. Additional research is required to better understand this topic, namely: (1) what importance do adult introductory sport participants place on skill acquisition in other sport contexts, (2) why was skill acquisition an important consideration for many new curlers in my study, and (3) how can introductory sport programs best tailor their initiatives to enhance the skill acquisition of new sport participants. Whereas my exploratory study uncovered this gap, further investigation is required to more fully understand this topic.

These two pillars (social and skill) are equally important to the experiences of adults. While socializing typically occurs off the ice and skill acquisition involves on-ice components, the two can occur simultaneously. Moreover, all participants value socializing and acquiring skills within their league experiences, although to differing degrees. Arguably, these two needs must be provided for successful adult introductory sport experiences and more research is warranted, particularly in other sport contexts.

Becoming a curler?

Participants described the importance of belonging to their respective clubs. Mair's work (2009) supports this finding through positioning rural curling clubs as third places where club members experience a strong sense of belonging. Yet, belonging can involve diverse, multi-layered considerations, as evident in leisure (Spracklen, 2010) and sport (Walseth, 2006) contexts. While many participants note feeling a sense of belonging to their club and learn-to-curl league, others raise concerns. These new curlers report specific barriers to belonging. For instance, some participants find it difficult to join established teams beyond their learn-to-curl league. Those adults who experience a strong sense of belonging to their club may see this space as an important entity in their lives. However, those who encounter barriers to their sense of belonging risk having their connection with their club, and likely the sport, being compromised. Participants also express anxiety over their curling futures and whether they will belong to the club over the long term. At the Redwood's learn-to-curl league, new curlers are unsure whether there will be space for them in other leagues once they graduate. League instructors and organizers add to this anxiety by failing to provide participants with information about their prospective curling futures. Finally, Iris's concern regarding an inebriated club member, and ensuing negative response to her complaint, illustrates her club's resistance to an entrenched sport tradition and has presented a barrier to feeling like the club is a place where she can contribute equally.

One's sense of belonging as it relates to a sport and club experience takes time to develop. Moreover, adults in introductory sport programs require supports to cultivate a sense of belonging. In the study, instances arose where both clubs did not provide the assistance needed for all participants to experience such a connection. Furthermore, differences were not always

embraced within these introductory sport experiences. Learn-to-curl leagues are positioned as being open and inviting entities. Yet, these leagues exist within curling clubs, which possess well-established traditions. As long as adults follow these customs, they can more easily acquire and maintain acceptance. However, challenges to entrenched club traditions are met with resistance, leading to one's sense of belonging being compromised. Difference, in its many forms, is not always welcome. Indeed, opportunities to become introduced to a new sport or club, which may appear accessible, are shaped by barriers and these can influence one's ability to belong and, arguably, their commitment to the activity.

For these participants, a strong sense of belonging is fueled through membership to their club. Membership was cultivated through positioning new curlers as members of both the learn-to-curl leagues and their clubs from the outset. Yet, increasing membership capacity concerns at the Redwood club mean there may not be space available for new curlers in the club once they graduate from the league. Thus, introductory sport participants inherently strive to belong and appreciate program efforts to cultivate belonging. However, they also require sustained support to maintain this sense of connection to the clubs and sport. These findings add to research by Eime, Payne, and Harvey (2006) who argued for the need to facilitate welcoming, inclusive environments in sport clubs to facilitate increased participation. While my study also found that cultivating an inviting atmosphere positively influenced the experience of new curlers (through strengthening their sense of belonging), more support is needed. Relatedly, although capacity was mentioned briefly in this discussion of belonging, it is addressed in greater depth in the next section as issues of organizational capacity are of obvious importance.

Viewing Community Sport Programming through an Organizational Capacity Lens

Organizational considerations figure prominently in understanding the two learn-to-curl leagues. In this section, I conceptualize how both leagues are organized and how these insights inform relevant literature. These ideas include how both leagues are structured, the training and compensation of instructors, and the relationships between various stakeholders (curling clubs, PCA, and Curling Canada). Organizational capacity provides an appropriate framework to explore these considerations. Namely, this section builds on previous research on organizational capacity in community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014) and more broadly, community sport organizations (Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013; Sharpe, 2006). In this context, community sport clubs “are a type of membership association largely run by member volunteers who organize and deliver opportunities for recreational and competitive sport participants,” (Doherty et al., 2014, p. 124). While both the Redwood and Shaw clubs have paid staff, I consider them to be community sport clubs because they have large volunteer bases and deliver community sport services.

Whereas community sport researchers have examined how community sport organizations and clubs have employed organizational capacity broadly, I apply the framework to how clubs develop and operate programs. Throughout the study, various insights and issues emerged from study participants with regard to the ability of both clubs to operate their learn-to-curl leagues. These ideas involve organizational capacity, namely the intersections between multiple capacity dimensions (Doherty et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2003, Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006). Next, I turn to the relevant organizational capacity literature to address these insights and issues.

Various human resources and structural considerations emerged during the data analysis process. Hence, I focus on two specific organizational capacities - human resources and structural - in the subsequent discussion. Structural capacities are sub-divided into relationship and network capacity, planning and development capacity, and infrastructure and process capacity (Hall et al.,

2013). The relationship and network, as well as infrastructure and process capacities, connect most clearly to the structural considerations mentioned by study participants. These three capacity dimensions will be addressed next. Moreover, this organizational capacity discussion bridges the structuring and leveraging themes by examining the leagues at both clubs and their relevant leveraging initiatives. Cumulatively, these findings enhance our understanding of how organizational capacity considerations enable community sport clubs to successfully implement and sustain programs, in this case, learn-to-curl leagues. The following organizational capacity discussion is grounded in what various study participants reported about their differing league experiences. These insights range from new curlers participating in the leagues to organizers and curling administrators discussing past, current, or future league iterations.

Infrastructure and Process Capacity.

Infrastructure and process capacity involves the ability of both clubs to engage with different forms of infrastructure and processes (Hall et al., 2003). In both clubs, the number of sheets of ice is their primary infrastructural consideration. The Redwood Curling Club has five sheets, while the Shaw Curling Club has four. Hence, the number of sheets of ice governs the number of leagues both clubs can operate and the size of their membership. Both clubs started their learn-to-curl leagues in the 2000s because ice was available. In this context, both clubs were able to use their infrastructure to implement new programs.

As previously discussed, both leagues quickly flourished after inception bringing new members into their facilities. For the Redwood club, infrastructure capacity began in 2006, one year after the learn-to-curl league started as a leveraging initiative tied to the Torino Winter Olympics. Many participants of this condensed league were subsequently enrolled in the club's full-season, learn-to-curl league beginning in the fall of 2006. This influx in registrants

contributed to the learn-to-curl league quickly filling up and the start of a waiting list to get into the league every year since.

Infrastructure capacity is starting to further influence the Redwood's learn-to-curl league. The league's original aim was to attract new members to the club. Yet, the cumulative success of the program has resulted in the club reaching infrastructure capacity. All leagues are nearly full and rarely is there ice available to practice or play additional games. Consequently, participants from the Redwood's learn-to-curl league are struggling to find spots in other leagues once they graduate. Various tensions have emerged as a result. On one hand, current new curlers expressed anxieties over whether they have a future at the Redwood club. Other club members, as well as league instructors and organizers, questioned the appropriateness of continuing with the learn-to-curl league when the club lacks infrastructure capacity to accommodate current members. Hence, reaching infrastructure capacity is negatively impacting the league experiences of many study participants involved in the Redwood's league.

In comparison, the Shaw club has followed a different trajectory. While their learn-to-curl league reached infrastructure capacity with 40 members across four sheets of ice for the first time this season, space still exists for new members throughout the club. Therefore, the Shaw's learn-to-curl league is not facing the same capacity issues as the Redwood club. Further, the Shaw's league started three years after the Redwood league. If the Shaw club's growth continues, it may have the same capacity problem as the Redwood club. Hence, the Shaw club may learn important lessons from the Redwood club's experiences (and other similar clubs) regarding the impending tensions that emerge when both learn-to-curl leagues and entire clubs reach infrastructure capacity.

Various insights emerge from this discussion of infrastructure capacity. First, league organizers from the Redwood and Shaw clubs report needing to continually adapt to evolving

circumstances. While the facilities at both clubs have remained the same in recent years (number of sheets of curling ice), the demand for these facilities has changed. The Redwood's learn-to-curl league has demonstrated adaptability to infrastructure capacity changes, namely when the league expanded from a one-year to a two-year program during the 2006/2007 season. This change resulted from league graduates being unable to find spaces in other leagues throughout the club due to membership growth. The adaptability exhibited by the Redwood's learn-to-curl league illustrates a contribution to organizational capacity literature. Previous literature identified formalization, communication, and facilities as significant infrastructure capacity considerations in community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Yet, the ability of these clubs and their programs to adapt to changing infrastructural concerns adds to our understanding of this topic. As previously mentioned, the Redwood's league is facing an uncertain future as the club grapples with the needs of membership expansion. Evidently, programs must continually adapt to remain viable in their respective clubs.

Second, accessing facilities is a primary concern at both clubs and supports previous research (Allison, 2001; Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). For curling clubs, the ability to grow is dictated by the number of sheets of curling ice. Even in Canada, which globally has the largest number of curling clubs and curlers (Weiting & Lamoureux, 2001), only a finite number of dedicated facilities exist. In this study, the demand for both learn-to-curl leagues leads organizers to consider adding another edition of the league. However, infrastructural capacity considerations (e.g., lack of available ice and instructors) prevent this from occurring. Namely, organizers report lacking the available ice needed to run a second program. Organizers also acknowledge concern over asking too much of their paid or volunteer instructors, thereby causing burn out. While various factors influence league expansion, access to facilities is prime consideration facing both clubs.

Finally, the leagues at both clubs are following similar, yet different trajectories. While both leagues successfully increased the membership at their respective clubs, the Redwood league accomplished it at a greater rate than the Shaw league. This may be explained in part by the fact that the Redwood league started as a Curling Canada pilot thereby increasing its professional status, whereas the Shaw league is a more grassroots, volunteer-based program. Other differences include the history, location and reputation of both clubs. These differences show how diverse, individual characteristics of clubs shape the existence and growth of learn-to-curl leagues. These context-specific considerations align with Misener & Doherty's (2009) finding that individual organizational contexts may yield unique case-specific capacity conclusions. Overall, infrastructure and process capacity inform why these two leagues formed, how they grew, and current tensions governing their future state. The role flexibility and adaptability play in both cases contributes to existing organizational capacity literature in community sport. Moreover, flexible and adaptable programs within community sport clubs are able to negotiate the evolving landscape to grow and prosper. Yet, the Redwood's learn-to-curl league illustrates how a range of factors influence the sustainability of programs, in this case, infrastructure capacity and an increasing membership.

Relationship and Network Capacity.

Relationship and network capacity involves the ability of community sport clubs to draw on relationships with different partners. These partners include clients, funders, and collaborators (Hall et al., 2003). Misener and Doherty (2013) also argue that inter-organizational relationships (IORs) are one way for nonprofit community sport organizations, in this case, curling clubs, to acquire needed resources, knowledge, and other social benefits. Babiak and Thibault (2008) define IORs as a "voluntary, close, long-term, planned strategic action between two or more

organizations with the objective of serving mutually beneficial purposes in a public domain” (p. 282). League organizers and curling administrators stated that IORs figured prominently in the development of the Redwood Curling Club’s learn-to-curl league. Furthermore, the Redwood club continues to engage in IORs to strengthen its league and introduce learn-to-curl leagues to other curling clubs. These IORs are discussed next and include the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) and Curling Canada. Hence, Misener and Doherty’s (2013) finding that IORs commonly occur between community sport organizations and provincial and national sport organizations is evident in this study. Further, the Shaw Curling Club’s lack of IORs will be addressed to demonstrate the diverse roles relationship and network capacity play in both clubs.

In 2005, Curling Canada and the Redwood club partnered to create the learn-to-curl league pilot. The pilot was designed collaboratively by both organizations, funded by Curling Canada, and housed in the Redwood club. Further, the pilot arose from the Redwood’s need for more members and Curling Canada’s vision to develop a program (the learn-to-curl league) and manual (*Getting Started for Adults*) that could be shared by all Canadian curling clubs. Thus, this partnership was mutually beneficial (Babiak & Thibault, 2008).

This relationship also connects to relevant research. Namely, Misener and Doherty (2013) argue that community sport organizations use relationships to enhance their programs and services through various means. For the Redwood club, their relationship with Curling Canada contributed to the introduction of their learn-to-curl league. Specifically, Curling Canada’s financial assistance enabled the Redwood club to design the league, pay instructors, and provide various amenities (rental equipment, prizes, and a holiday banquet in December) to create an enhanced league experience for participants. Further, Curling Canada’s financial assistance allowed the Redwood club to offer the program at a reduced cost. Hence, this partnership benefited the Redwood club by facilitating increased membership recruitment. This finding

builds from Misener and Doherty's IOR research by illustrating how community sport clubs use IORs, in this case funding, to create and implement programs.

Another prominent IOR involves a collaboration between the PCA and Curling Canada. The relationship occurred when these two organizations jointly hosted the first Train-the-Trainer day in the fall of 2014. The event, designed to introduce instructors from various Northampton and area curling clubs to the learn-to-curl league and *Getting Started for Adults* manual, required knowledgeable facilitators to present the content. Consequently, instructors and organizers from the Redwood league were selected, partly because of the club's status as Curling Canada's ongoing learn-to-curl pilot. The instructors presented core lessons from the *Getting Started for Adults* manual and their best practices acquired over the years. In this example, the Redwood club built from its original IOR with Curling Canada.

IORs involving the Redwood Curling Club are ever changing. Originally, the partnership between Curling Canada and the Redwood club involved developing a learn-to-curl league to both expand the club's membership and develop a national manual (*Getting Started for Adults*). Consequently, Redwood's league has grown into an established and professionalized program with a standardized structure. Also, the PCA and Curling Canada coordinated the Train-the-Trainer event in response to the increasing popularity of learn-to-curl leagues in Canada. The inclusion of Redwood league organizers and instructors in the event illustrates both the prominent place the Redwood's league holds among the PCA and Curling Canada, as well as the changing nature of IORs. This relationship has evolved from the Redwood club being the testing ground for learn-to-curl leagues, to now disseminating league knowledge to other clubs seeking to implement such programs. Thus, IORs are evolving entities that shape the relationship and network capacity of community sport clubs. Further, this finding aligns with Misener and Doherty's (2013) belief that IORs enable community sport organizations (community sport clubs

in this context) to facilitate community cohesion. This is achieved through Redwood instructors and organizers disseminating league information to neighbouring clubs.

IORs also facilitate league standardization. These relationships influence the structuring of the Redwood's league first, and subsequently, the standardization of all learn-to-curl leagues. The Redwood club's role in developing the *Getting Started for Adults* manual resulted in the league structuring their own program and other clubs following suite. Moreover, the Train-the-Trainer day involved Redwood league instructors disseminating these standardizing materials to local curling clubs. Through corroboration between three levels of organizations (national, regional, and community) came the identification of a need for standardization and the development of a program to be used across the country. Hence, IORs represent a catalyst for the increasing standardization of learn-to-curl leagues. Moreover, many organizers state that participating in IORs improves both the quality of their learn-to-curl league experience, as well as all leagues. This finding aligns with relevant literature (Misener & Doherty, 2013). Yet, as previously stated, a challenge lies in providing standardized league experiences that meet the diverse needs of new curlers. League organizers must be weary of this tension moving forward.

Organizers of the Shaw club's learn-to-curl league do not engage in IORs. Namely, organizers do not seek out IORs, nor have been approached by other organizations (e.g., Curling Canada and the PCA) to enter into partnerships. While Shaw league organizers did access the *Getting Started for Adults* manual during their recent program re-structuring, no established IORs are evident. During interviews with various Shaw league personnel, they reported being unaware of the various PCA and CCA publications and programs available to clubs. This may explain why Shaw league organizers have yet to engage in IORs. Despite lacking such relationships, the Shaw's league is successful and has grown since its inception. Instead of IORs, the club has

relied on their large pool of volunteers to sustain the league. This idea will be addressed next in the discussion of human resources capacity.

Both clubs engage with relationship and network capacity differently. While the Shaw's league does not maintain relationships with non-club stakeholders, the Redwood league's origins and continued successes can be linked to their involvement with IORs. Hence, IORs positively influence the Redwood league. Yet, the Shaw league's strength illustrates how community sport clubs can operate successful programs without relying on IORs. In the context of these two community sport clubs, relationship and network capacity play differing roles depending on the context in both clubs.

Human Resources Capacity.

Human resources capacity involves “the ability to deploy human capital (e.g., paid staff and volunteers) within the organization, and the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, motivations, and behaviours of these people” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 5). League instructors and organizers, as well as curling administrators identified various human resources considerations (e.g., the competencies, knowledge, and skills of dedicated instructors and organizers) as being integral to the continued success of both programs. This insight aligns with existing literature (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006) Differences also exist between both clubs, namely involving human capital. The Redwood league uses paid staff, while the Shaw league uses volunteers. In the following discussion, the human resources capacity of both clubs will be examined to illustrate its importance in community sport clubs.

The philosophy at the Redwood's league is to pay organizers and instructors to attract competent and knowledgeable people. The league's first organizer adopted this philosophy during the creation of this program. In 2005, this individual was tasked with conceptualizing the

league, designing its curriculum, and recruiting instructors. The organizer was selected for this role based on their diverse playing, competitive coaching, and grassroots instructing competencies. Beyond organizing and supervising the first three years of the league, this person also wrote the original draft of the *Getting Started for Adults* manual (which was updated in 2015). Similar to Doherty et al., (2014) and Misener and Doherty (2009), individuals' possessing the appropriate skills is an important consideration in community sport clubs. This consideration becomes more important for organizers of fledgling programs. In this example, the original organizer's diverse skill-set greatly contributed to the Redwood league's initial growth and success. Hence, the skills that organizers possess figure prominently in the early development of such programs.

Transitioning between organizers is a key idea in the Redwood league. While Doherty et al., (2014) note the importance of transitioning volunteers in and out of key roles, Redwood league organizers discuss succeeding paid organizers. Since 2005, three different organizers have supervised Redwood's league. Like the first organizer, the two successors possess differing skills and competencies, thereby contributing to the league's growth. In both cases, experienced instructors were recruited to fill the vacant organizer role. While these prospective organizers were targeted based on their skills and competencies, a transition process was employed. This process consists of the out-going organizer remaining involved in the league during the incoming organizer's first season by helping with various logistics and fielding questions. This transfer of knowledge facilitated a smooth transition both times it was used. While all three organizers possess the necessary skills and competencies, this exchange of knowledge occurs to ensure league specific information is transferred to the succeeding organizer. This example illustrated the process whereby competent organizers were selected and transitioned into the role to ensure their ability to facilitate effective league programming. Hence, succession between personnel in

community sport clubs is an important consideration regardless of whether those individuals are paid or are volunteers. As evident in the Redwood's league, these transitions result in the delivery of positive program experiences for a prolonged period of time.

Literature on human resources capacity outlines skills, enthusiasm, and knowledge as important considerations for community sport clubs to accomplish their goals (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). These considerations also influence the operation of the Redwood league, namely the acquisition of instructors. Organizers look for strong communication skills, curling knowledge, and enthusiasm. They also feel the likelihood of getting such quality instructors is enhanced through payment. However, instructors reported various factors influencing their league participation, with compensation being an afterthought. Relevant factors included having friends already instructing in the league, giving back to their club and sport, and introducing new curlers to their passion. Thus, Redwood league organizers and instructors viewed compensation differently. This study backs the literature findings on human resources capacity, except for the issue of compensation, which requires further research.

Findings emerging from the Shaw's learn-to-curl league also align with existing literature. Specifically, group dynamics and skills are important concerns within human resources capacity (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). The Shaw's learn-to-curl league exclusively used volunteers. The club's large pool of volunteers made this possible and individuals adopted specific league roles based on their competencies. For instance, members of the league's steering committee each possessed relevant professional experiences (e.g., management), curling-specific skills (e.g., NCCP coaching certification), or desired experiences (e.g., recent league participation). The committee used these diverse competencies to re-design the league structure and curriculum. Hence, the ability of league organizers to embrace their collective skills in a group (the league steering committee) enabled them to strengthen the league.

Furthermore, individuals with diverse competencies contributed to delivering the weekly league activities. As a result, league organizers faced the challenge of placing people in roles that suited their competencies, while including as many volunteers as possible. The league's two-tiered instruction system of instructors and assistants illustrated how organizers attempted to accommodate both groups of volunteers. Instructors must possess their NCCP club coach certification, while assistants do not. Thus, instructors provided individual and small-group instruction, whereas assistants provided logistical support. However, some instructors and organizers reported instances where some assistants overstepped their boundaries (e.g. providing mis-information to participants). Despite these occurrences, participants, instructors, and organizers all described this instructional approach as providing positive league experiences for new curlers. Hence, many organizers and instructors considered their group dynamic and diverse skills as the two primary reasons why the Shaw's league is successful as a volunteer entity.

The analysis of both leagues further contributes to existing community sport literature. Similar to Misener and Doherty's (2009) research on one nonprofit community sport club, this study also uncovered unique, case-specific findings. The volunteer structure of the Shaw's learn-to-curl league is one such finding. This past season, there were about 25 volunteers at this league, many volunteering weekly. The Shaw's reliance on volunteers challenges existing community sport literature. Namely, Allison (2001) and Sharpe (2006) noted the struggles of community sport organizations to recruit volunteers. Yet, this was not the case at the Shaw club. The Shaw league's large volunteer base emerged from the existence of a strong sense of community among club members, the league's status as an entrenched club institution, and the desire of people to contribute to their club and sport. Hence, club members valued strengthening their club through volunteering. In contrast, the Redwood league illustrated how community sport clubs can

implement successful programs by compensating instructors and organizers. Overall, these findings enhance our understanding of organizational capacity's role in community sport clubs.

Human resources capacity figures prominently in both clubs. While the Redwood league employed paid instructors and organizers, the Shaw's league was solely volunteer. Despite this distinction, both leagues were successful in recruiting new members and the leagues have become key components of their respective clubs. Furthermore, both leagues access existing competencies and develop new ones. Namely, this development is accomplished by mandating that league instructors receive their NCCP club coach certification. Hence, success is not dictated by whether a club pays their league personnel or solicits volunteers, but rather through the club's ability to use relevant competencies of its members.

Understanding organizational capacity informs community sport club research (Doherty et al., 2014). In this section, three capacity dimensions were explored from Hall et al.'s (2003) multi-dimensional framework of organizational capacity. They are infrastructure and process capacity, relationship and network capacity, and human resources capacity. Findings from both curling clubs build on existing literature and provide new insights. Furthermore, this section focused on the development and evolution of the learn-to-curl leagues at both clubs. Infrastructure capacity, namely the ability of curling facilities (sheets of ice) to accommodate club members, is an evolving entity. Hence, the learn-to-curl leagues at both clubs continually adapt to address these changing infrastructure circumstances. Relationship and network capacity also influences both clubs differently. While the Redwood club relied on IORs to create and strengthen their league, the Shaw club developed their league independently of outside authorities. Within human resources capacity, the ability of both clubs to use existing competencies of club members, and cultivate new ones, is key to their continued success.

Organizational capacity shapes our understanding of how the leagues at both clubs evolve. Moreover, intersections emerge between the various capacity dimensions. For instance, infrastructure and human resources capacities collectively influence the expansion of both leagues. These leagues are unable to accept more participants because they have limited facilities (sheets of ice). One solution involves expanding the leagues by introducing a second draw time at another time in the week. However, different circumstances prevent both clubs from expanding their leagues. For the Redwood club, they lack available weeknight and weekend ice time (considered by many to be desirable program times). Meanwhile, the Shaw club does have access to available ice, league organizers fear expanding the league could lead to volunteer burnout. Capacity considerations, in this case infrastructure and human resources capacities, intersect to further inform our understandings of community sport clubs and their programs. This illustrates one example of the multidimensionality of organizational capacity (Hall et al., 2003; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Various community sport researchers have explored the many connections between capacity dimensions (Hall et al., 2003; Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009, 2013; Sharpe, 2006). A detailed exploration of the connections between capacity dimensions is beyond the scope of this paper and represents a future area of research. Overall, organizational capacity informs our understanding of community sport clubs, namely the implementation of programs. Next, I explore the various contributions this study makes to leveraging and legacy literature.

Leveraging Contributions

As established by the review of the literature in Chapter Two, leveraging involves combining the media attention (mainly television) for sport mega-events with infrastructure and program investment to increase sport and physical activity participation (Hindson et al., 1994;

Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012). Yet, television was not a major motivating factor for many league participants to start curling. As presented in the data analysis in Chapter Four, new curlers began curling for a range of intersecting reasons including being influenced by social connection and striving to socialize, becoming competent, and belonging to a club. The implications of this finding for leveraging researchers will be discussed below. In this study, I started out exploring the extent to which learn-to-curl leagues considered leveraging initiatives, in part, resulting from Curling Canada's (2014) portrayal of membership recruitment programs as leveraging efforts in its *Leveraging 2014* publication. What began as an evaluation of leveraging initiatives evolved into: a) examining the relationship between adult introductory sport programs (the Redwood and Shaw's learn-to-curl leagues) and leveraging initiatives (the Redwood's condensed learn-to-curl league and the Shaw's Try Curling session) and b) unpacking how the experiences (primarily social) of league participants may provide organizers of leveraging initiatives with insights to enrich their leveraging programs.

Participants reported that both learn-to-curl leagues are not leveraging initiatives. Rather, programs like the Try Curling session at the Shaw club and the condensed learn-to-curl league at the Redwood club were considered leveraging initiatives. Despite this distinction, the research on learn-to-curl leagues provides important information for leveraging organizers and researchers. As previously outlined, the recruitment and retention of new curlers link the leveraging programs and learn-to-curl leagues. Furthermore, leveraging efforts are driven by the desire to encourage individuals, in this case, adults to try new sports (Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010). Although the learn-to-curl leagues are not positioned as leveraging initiatives, their primary aim also involves introducing adults to curling. Hence, the experiences of learn-to-curl league participants inform leveraging organizers and researchers of the important role social

considerations, skill acquisition, and belonging play in meaningful adult introductory sport experiences. These insights can then be applied to future leveraging programs.

Organizers of learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging initiatives both strive to make participants more active. Consequently, specific insights from this study contribute to existing leveraging literature. These insights target both the learn-to-curl leagues and the leveraging programs at both clubs. This results from the leveraging initiatives and learn-to-curl leagues being inherently linked by the league organizers interviewed in this study, namely because the former are designed to feed the later. This study makes three contributions to leveraging research. First, the Shaw club's role in leveraging major curling events broadens our understanding of leveraging beyond sport mega-events. Second, the relationship between watching sport mega-events on television and becoming inspired will be explored. Third, this study provides empirical evidence from the two aforementioned leveraging initiatives. These insights enrich our understanding of leveraging initiatives and how they can better encourage adults to become more active.

Capitalizing (or not) on major curling events for growth.

Scholarly research on leveraging typically focuses on sport mega-events. These spectacles receive global media coverage (e.g., television), thereby fostering extensive international attention (Coalter, 2004; Frawley & Cush, 2011; Girginov and Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Jones, 2001; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Ritchie, 2000; Veal, 2003; Veal et al., 2012). In Canada, sport mega-events (e.g., the Olympics) also receive widespread television coverage (Mick, 2009). Yet, the Shaw's Try Curling session complicates the exclusive link between leveraging and sport mega-events by leveraging major curling events. For instance, Canada's men's and women's national championships, the Brier and Scotties, receive extensive television

coverage and hold important places in Canada's amateur sport fabric (Mair, 2007, Maxwell, 2002; Mick, 2009; Peezer, 2003; Weeks, 1995). Consequently, the widespread television coverage curling receives every February and March (when the Brier and Scotties are held) leads to increased interest in the sport. For example, various club administrators interviewed for this research, reported receiving more inquiries from non-curlers to try the sport in February and March than at any other time. These numbers also increased every four years when curling receives extensive television coverage in Canada during the Winter Olympics.

The Shaw club targeted the interest generated by annual television curling coverage. Namely, they leveraged media attention from the Brier, Scotties, and Winter Olympics through their spring Try Curling session. As previously discussed, organizers purposefully scheduled the Try Curling event shortly after these championships and made explicit reference to the television coverage of these competitions in advertisements. Hence, the Shaw club leveraged both sport mega-events (the Winter Olympics) and major curling events (the Brier and Scotties). This example expands our understanding of the relationship between leveraging and sport mega-events. While competitions like the Olympics and Soccer World Cup have been the primary interest of leveraging researchers, leveraging opportunities also exist in sport-specific major events.

However, this finding is context specific. Curling's prominent place in Canadian culture, identity, and history, as well as Curling Canada's efforts in building the Brier and Scotties into eminent national sport events garnering extensive television coverage, makes these events viable leveraging opportunities. The Shaw club viewed these curling championships as opportunities to expand their leveraging portfolio from every four years (coinciding with the Winter Olympic quadrennial) to annual events. Yet, while Shaw league organizers interviewed in this study argued how leveraging increases their learn-to-curl league membership, league participants

disagreed. The new curlers said viewing televised curling did not solely draw them to the sport, but rather they were motivated by social, skill acquisition, and sense of belonging considerations. Hence, a disconnect exists between the perceptions of Shaw league organizers and participants. Organizers believe participants are drawn to their Try Curling session as a result of their advertisements linking televised curling and to their program. However, participants are drawn to curling for diverse reasons. These diverse motivators, captured in this study, provide insights in to how learn-to-curl league and leveraging organizers can make their programs better meet the needs of new curlers. Also, these diverse motivators expand our understanding of leveraging initiatives broadly, as well as what participants are looking for in their new sport experiences.

Complicating the inspiration of watching sport-mega-events.

Television coverage of sport mega-events is a key consideration presented in leveraging literature (Boardley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville). Yet, my analysis found that participants are influenced by numerous factors to begin curling. During the interviews, new curlers answered questions regarding the amount of elite curling television coverage they watched and the extent to which this viewership (especially Olympic curling viewership) inspired their curling participation. A range of responses followed. Many participants remembered watching curling on television during the Olympics, but reported it had only a minimal influence on trying the sport. Others reported being inspired by watching the Olympics. Yet, these individuals were influenced by other factors too, namely friends who were also interested in the sport. Hence, no one was exclusively motivated to start curling after watching the Olympics on television. Instead, participants were influenced by various (predominantly social) factors.

This finding encourages us to think more critically about leveraging as a motivating factor for participation. Namely, this information contradicts concepts such as the trickle-down effect in leveraging scholarship, where people become inspired to try a sport after watching sport mega-events on television (Boardley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Frawley & Cush, 2011; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal et al., 2012). While television viewership of sport mega-events can shape how individuals view certain sports, the factors influencing people to try new sports, in this case, curling, extend far beyond television. This finding strengthens the call by researchers to implement leveraging efforts by demonstrating how people are shaped by diverse and multi-layered factors to begin curling (Broadley, 2013; Coalter, 2004; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Hindson et al., 1994; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Veal, 2003; Veal et al., 2012; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007). Moreover, the diversity of peoples' motivations to participate in curling illustrates a limitation in how leveraging programs are currently positioned. Leveraging initiatives that focus on television viewership fail to meet the diverse motivations of adults presented in this study (social considerations, skill acquisition, belonging to a club).

Empirical explorations of leveraging initiatives.

More empirical research is needed to understand how leveraging initiatives operate (Barrick, Mair, & Potwarka, in press; Devine, 2013; Griffiths & Armour, 2013; Grix & Carmichael, 2012; Mahtani et al., 2013; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Potwarka & McCarville, 2010; Shipway, 2007; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2009; Weed et al., 2012). As explained in the review of the literature in Chapter Two, three empirical studies have explored specific leveraging initiatives (Frawley & Cush, 2011; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007). However, these studies do not address the operation and impact of leveraging initiatives

during and following sport mega-event, nor, and perhaps most importantly given the focus of this project, the experiences of participants in these programs.

In comparison, this study provides evidence from two leveraging initiatives, namely the Shaw's Try Curling session and the Redwood's condensed learn-to-curl league. Differences exist between these two leveraging efforts. The Try Curling session is an organized annual event, while the condensed league was an impromptu initiative coinciding with the 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympics. Although these leveraging initiatives are structured differently, they both achieve the goal of feeding their full-season learn-to-curl leagues. Thus, the specific characteristics of each club shapes the extent to which they use, and in the case of the Shaw club, continue to use leveraging programs.

Lessons regarding organizational capacity also arise when we are able to assess a club that no longer needs to leverage. As previously discussed, the Redwood club ended their leveraging efforts in 2010 because their full-year learn-to-curl league was exceeding membership capacity. The club's 2006 and 2010 leveraging initiatives contributed to this circumstance. Consequently, the Redwood club is approaching membership capacity. This development leads various club stakeholders, including league instructors and organizers, to debate the current usefulness of the club's learn-to-curl league. Moreover, the experiences of league participants are compromised because they are uncertain about how to continue to participate. The question is: What, if any, roles do introductory sport programs (and leveraging more broadly) serve beyond just filling up the ranks of clubs? The answer to this question will influence the future of Redwood's learn-to-curl league. Hence, the Redwood club's previous leveraging efforts and their full-year learn-to-curl league have fueled the club's membership growth. As a result, tough questions are now being asked about existing club structures and organizational capacity. While Redwood's leveraging initiatives were abandoned in 2010, the future of the learn-to-curl league

is now being debated. This example illustrates how leveraging efforts create program tensions as clubs undergo changes, in this case, increasing membership rates.

The learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging initiatives at both the Redwood and Shaw Curling Club's contribute to our understanding of leveraging. Namely, the experiences of league participants offer important insights to leveraging research. Social, skill acquisition, and sense of belonging considerations influence why curlers enter learn-to-curl leagues, along with their ensuing program experiences. Although the learn-to-curl leagues in this study have not been positioned as leveraging initiatives, they share the goal of attracting new sport participants with leveraging. Moreover, no research exists on the experiences of participants in leveraging initiatives (Barrick et al., in press). Hence, insights from this study inform leveraging researchers of both the experiences of new sport participants and how experiential contributions can enrich leveraging initiatives. Through adopting these three considerations, leveraging programs will be better positioned to meet the diverse needs of adult participants.

Conclusion

Learn-to-curl leagues are complex entities. Assessing these adult introductory sport programs provides many insights, thereby contributing to experiential, organizational capacity, and leveraging research. The experiences of adults in these leagues are diverse and inform various structural and leveraging considerations. Furthermore, issues and concerns regarding organizational capacity inform the evolving structures of these leagues. Also, various leveraging insights inform existing literature, namely the need for experientially-focused, empirical evidence from two introductory sport programs and their related leveraging initiatives. These contributions build from the three experiential, structural, and leveraging perspectives to explore two learn-to-curl leagues. The resulting complexities and intersections illustrate the diverse nature of these

programs. Next, I end this study with some closing remarks including future areas of research and recommendations for practitioners.

Chapter Nine – Examining the Experience: Concluding Remarks

The experiences of league participants are a primary consideration in learn-to-curl leagues. This thesis presents an in-depth exploration of two adult introductory sport programs. Namely, the thesis explores the experiences of league participants, the organization of these leagues, and the extent to which these leagues are leveraging initiatives. A qualitative case study methodology was employed to unpack the rich and multi-layered insights within the learn-to-curl leagues at two specific central Canadian curling clubs: the Redwood Curling Club and the Shaw Curling Club (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Multiple research methods were used to uncover the various forms of data. These methods included photo elicitation interviews (PEIs) with four league participants, and in-depth qualitative interviews with various league participants, organizers, and instructors, as well as curling administrators. It also included my observations of the league participants, memos to myself, and reflexive journaling. Additionally, preliminary document analyses of two Curling Canada publications; *Getting Started for Adults: A comprehensive curling club program to build membership through superior customer service* and *Growing the sport of curling: Leveraging 2014* were conducted for background. Through the process of crystallization (Richardson, 2000), multiple data sources were brought together during the data analysis process resulting in the emergence of nuanced and layered findings (Yin, 2009).

The following three themes arose from the data analysis process: experiencing the leagues; structuring the leagues; and leveraging the leagues. These three perspectives enrich our understanding of the complexity within these learn-to-curl leagues. Also, experiential considerations inform how the leagues and relevant leveraging initiatives are structured. Moreover, these findings address three prominent research gaps. Namely, contributions are made to adult introductory sport, organizational capacity and leveraging literature. First, this study

provides insights about the experiences of participants in adult introductory sport programs.

Three core essences of the experience were uncovered including: bridging and expanding social connections, acquiring and improving skills, and belonging as a curler? These essences illustrate what new curlers are in search of and value during their learn-to-curl league participation.

Second, this project builds on existing organizational capacity research targeting community sport clubs (Doherty et al., 2014; Misener & Doherty, 2009). Specifically, infrastructure and process capacity, relationship and network capacity, and human resources capacity considerations inform the development and existence of the leagues in both clubs. Third, various leveraging contributions emerge from this study. Leveraging contributions include providing empirical data from the leveraging initiatives at both clubs, increasing our understanding of the multiple influences shaping how people enter new sports (beyond being inspired by sport mega-event television coverage), and uncovering the potential of televised major curling events to contribute to leveraging initiatives. Hence, this study makes diverse contributions to academic literature.

Prominent insights emerge from this project. For instance, adults flourish in introductory sport programs, albeit under certain conditions. These conditions include fostering a positive and inclusive space where adults can cultivate and nurture relationships through social experiences, acquiring and improving new skills, and adopting and strengthening a sense of belonging to their curling club. Experiential considerations are also significant and inform how leagues and leveraging initiatives are structured. However, a disconnect exists in these leagues. Both leagues are moving towards standardization, mainly through incorporating uniform instructional experiences for all participants. While organizers support standardization, new curlers instead espouse valuing diverse league experiences. Hence, a balance must be struck between creating uniform league experiences and meeting the diverse intended experiences (social, skill acquisition, and sense of belonging) of new curlers.

Moreover, learn-to-curl leagues are not considered leveraging initiatives. Instead, these leagues are components of the larger membership recruitment strategies employed at both clubs. Despite this distinction, learn-to-curl leagues and leveraging initiatives both strive to attract new sport participants. Yet, this thesis illustrates how the need to foster inclusive, social spaces where participants become competent and foster a sense of belonging also applies to strengthening leveraging efforts by enriching the new sport experiences of adults. The leveraging initiatives used by both clubs (the Shaw's spring Try Curling session and the Redwood's condensed learn-to-curl league) also fit into their membership recruitment strategies. Thus, the leveraging efforts and learn-to-curl leagues are related, yet separate club entities. Building from Chalip's (2014) work, effective leveraging initiatives contribute to sport participation growth when integrated into existing programs, in this case, learn-to-curl leagues. Overall, these two learn-to-curl leagues are significant entities in the lives of the adult sport participants.

As this thesis draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on how my thinking has evolved regarding the sport of curling, sport participation, and my future research journey. Nearly 16 months ago, I began conceptualizing this study of new curlers having no idea how adults encounter trying a sport for the first time. Personally, I have never tried a new sport as an adult. Despite lacking any personal reference point, my passion for the sport of curling and genuine curiosity of the topic spurred me on. Through the last year of field research, data analysis, and thesis writing, I have come to appreciate the complexity of the introductory curling experience for adults at both study sites. Moreover, I recognize the challenge league organizers face in providing structured programming to meet the diverse expectations of all participants. Namely, specific concerns must be addressed in both leagues to improve the quality of programming moving forward. I will continue exploring these concerns in future research projects.

As the Canadian population ages, concerns about the health and well-being of our society will surely increase in importance. My thesis builds from Leipert et al. (2014) and Mair's (2009, 2014) research arguing that curling contributes to the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of individuals across their lifespan. Namely, well-designed learn-to-curl leagues can (and already do) introduce new adult curlers to this vital community and health-care service. Through my future research and sport-specific involvement (e.g., prospective curling administrative work), I aim to better understand and disseminate the role curling plays in ensuring healthy and active Canadian communities.

Further research involving introductory sport programs is needed. Beginning in September, my work in this topic will continue at the University of Calgary. Specifically, I will be working under Dr. William Bridel, in partnership with Hockey Canada and Skate Canada, to develop a national learn-to-skate pilot program for ethnically and culturally diverse Canadians. This project will build from my thesis research by creating and evaluating inclusive introductory sport programming for all ages. Furthermore, the experiences of introductory sport participants will be framed through the lenses of diversity, belonging, and inclusion. In the last two years, I have progressed to viewing experiences of introductory sport program participants as a primary consideration for sport practitioners and policy makers. Effective introductory sport programs are key to increasing sport participation, making sport more accessible to all Canadians, and enhancing the profile of sport as an essential health-care service moving forward.

Recommendations for practitioners

Various recommendations arise from the study findings. These recommendations are divided into general and curling-specific categories. While the general recommendations target

all introductory sport programs, the curling-specific suggestions address the nuances of introductory curling programs. The recommendations are listed below.

Introductory sport programs: General recommendations.

- Organize social events to cultivate social experiences for participants (e.g., introducing participants to sport-specific social conventions)
- Encourage socializing between participants, instructors, and organizers to create a sense of community
- Foster a sense of belonging to the program, club/organization, and sport in general (e.g., give participants name tags and a tour of the facility)
- Provide thorough and responsive instruction
- Ensure instructors receive program-specific training
- Develop an in-program instructor mentoring system (e.g., have an organizer mentor a different instructor each session to ensure consistent, high-level instruction)
- Provide adaptable programming based on the needs of participants
- Respect participant diversity through developing and offering inclusive programming (e.g., culturally sensitive instruction and social practices)
- Offer participants opportunities to evaluate the program formally and informally
- Organize and communicate a plan for what participants can do once they graduate (e.g., progress to another level or program)

Introductory sport programs: Curling-specific recommendations.

- As presented in this study, clubs may use either volunteer or paid instructors in their learn-to-curl leagues:
 - o Clubs should select the approach that best suits their individual circumstances
 - o For instance, the Shaw Curling Club used volunteer instructors, in part, because they possessed a large pool of willing volunteers
 - o For the Redwood Curling Club, learn-to-curl league organizers chose to recruit paid instructors, in part, to enhance the commitment of these individuals and foster a sense of professionalism across the league
 - o Hence, clubs should select the approach that best suits their needs and appropriate resources (e.g., available instructors and finances)
- Whether clubs use volunteer or paid instructors, it is important to keep the following considerations in mind:
 - o Provide instructors with clear roles and expectations (e.g., teach your group of four new curlers the three-point delivery for 15 minutes)
 - o Also provide instructors a weekly copy of the lesson plan so they feel prepared and are not required to prepare material ahead of time

- Support instructors with formal and informal mentoring to ensure new curlers are receiving high quality instruction and instructors are developing their coaching skill sets
 - Acknowledge your instructors' contributions throughout the league (e.g., continuously thanking them throughout the league, acknowledging their contributions at an end-of-league activity, and recognizing their efforts in your club's newsletter)
 - These considerations will ensure your instructors feel valued, remain committed to the league, and provide high quality instruction
- Leveraging sport mega-events (e.g., the Olympics) or major sport events (e.g., the Brier or Scotties Tournament of Hearts) can expand the exposure a club's learn-to-curl league receives, subsequently increasing the number of league participants and club members:
 - Leveraging involves scheduling club introductory curling events coinciding with relevant major curling events (e.g., the Olympics, Brier, or Scotties Tournament of Hearts)
 - Following such introductory curling events, learn-to-curl leagues can be introduced to participants as the next step in their curling experience
 - For example, the Shaw Curling Club hosts a two-hour Try Curling event immediately following television coverage of the Brier and Scotties Tournament of Hearts annually. At the conclusion of this event, individuals are introduced to the Shaw's learn-to-curl league and are invited to register for the next season
 - Linking these introductory curling experiences provides clubs with the opportunity to capture the interest of non curlers and sustain it over time
 - Moreover, advertising is important to effectively leverage sport mega-events and major sport events. Various advertising strategies (e.g., signs placed outside the curling club, website advertising, as well as print and radio advertisements) placed before, during and immediately following sport events aid in capturing sport-specific interest and translating it (through leveraging initiatives) into increased sport participation
- Host bonspiels and other curling events (e.g., social activities) to provide participants with comprehensive curling experiences
 - Organize events where new curlers meet other club members to foster their sense of belonging to the club and expand their social networks (e.g., club-wide meet and greet social events)
 - Provide instructional flexibility during the second half of the season (e.g., different concurrent lessons occurring across sheets of ice that participants can choose from)
 - Develop and communicate a strategy for placing graduating participants in other club leagues
 - Offer support to new curlers as they graduate to other club leagues (e.g., place graduating participants on a team with an instructor or organizer)
 - De-emphasize alcohol consumption to promote inclusion and diversity
 - Provide off-ice instructional sessions to teach specific topics (e.g., strategy, etiquette, curling equipment)

Areas for future research

This research on the experiences of adults in introductory sport programs raises additional questions. These questions represent future lines of inquiry. In this section, various areas for future study are presented to help guide forthcoming research on this topic. To begin, this study presented findings involving two learn-to-curl leagues from curling clubs in the same urban community. Thus, an in-depth examination of rural leagues, or a comparative exploration of leagues in urban and rural clubs would build on these study findings. Addressing regional, national, and international differences between adult introductory sport programs also warrants attention. Furthermore, conducting a comprehensive inventory of different introductory curling programs (e.g., day time learn-to-curl league targeting seniors) would uncover commonalities and nuances between these initiatives.

Social capital involves individuals being actively engaged in networks that are generated through meaningful interactions with others (Doherty & Misener, 2008). This concept provides researchers with a lens to better understand the diverse social relationships unearthed in this study by examining how trust and reciprocity influence meaningful relationships between inter-organizational relationships (e.g., between the Redwood club and Curling Canada) or within the leagues themselves (e.g., between new curlers and instructors). Since research on social capital typically focuses on the existence of meaningful and durable interactions, a qualitative, interview-based study including all relevant stakeholders in the specific relationship of interest would more critically address the non-material social effects that were uncovered in the study (Doherty & Misener, 2008). Further insights also arise involving organizational capacity. For instance, exploring the intersections between the multiple capacity dimensions will deepen our understanding of how these leagues operate and evolve. Moreover, other adult introductory sport,

recreational, and leisure programs should be examined to see if findings from this study resonate in other contexts. The skill acquisition and sense of belonging new curlers reported also requires more in-depth examination to understand their role in the introductory sport experiences of adults. This knowledge would contribute to the existing bodies of knowledge in both areas. Additionally, diversity considerations (e.g., ethnicity, culture, religion, sexuality, and language) deserve attention. Namely, the league experiences of diverse participants, as well as the barriers to participation by both diverse participants and non-participants are of interest. Lastly, the experiences of children, youth, and teenagers in introductory sport programs should be compared with adult participants to determine whether age-specific differences exist. These areas for future research represent possible directions to increase our understanding of adult introductory sport programs moving forward.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide for Learn-to-Curl League Participants

The following questions will be asked only to league participants engaging in the photo elicitation interviews (PEIs). Once these questions are addressed, they will continue with the remaining questions.

1. Can you explain to me why you took these particular photographs?
2. Why do you believe these two photographs are most meaningful to your overall league experience?
3. What messages do you believe are being conveyed by your photographs?
4. Why did you select these two photographs over all the other ones you took?
5. Were there other pictures that you would have liked to take but could not?
6. What about these potential photographs was most meaningful to you?
7. What do you think prevented you from taking these pictures?

League participants not engaging in PEIs begin their one-on-one interviews here. League participants engaging in PEIs start at the top of this page, but also answer these subsequent interview questions.

1. Please tell me about your experiences in curling?
2. What factors influenced your decision to try curling and subsequently register for this learn-to-curl league?
3. Did viewing the recent 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic curling competitions on television influence your decision to try curling?
4. How did you find out about this specific league?
5. Why did you join this specific curling club and league?
6. How would you describe your experience in this league?
7. What aspects of this league were most meaningful to you?
8. What aspects of this league were least meaningful to you?
9. In your opinion, what areas for growth/improvement can this league make for future years?

10. Please describe your relationship with the league organizer(s) and instructors?
11. Please describe your relationship with the other league participants?
12. Do you feel your voice and opinions were heard and acted upon during your time in this league?
13. Throughout this league, do you recall any connections being made to Canada's recent successes at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics? If so, please describe them.
14. At this stage, please discuss your intentions to continue curling once this league concludes?
15. Are there any additional insights you would like to share at this time?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Curling Administrators

1. Tell me about your experiences in curling?
2. Can you please describe your role within curling and curling administration?
3. What are your past experiences with learn-to-curl leagues?
4. In your opinion, what is the PCA's and CCA's role within Canadian curling?
5. In your opinion, what is the PCA's and CCA's role specifically within growing the sport and learn-to-leagues?
6. In your opinion, what role does the PCA and CCA play in individual curling clubs' learn-to-curl leagues?
7. In your opinion, what role does the CCA play in the PCA's "Adult Learn-to-Curl" program?
8. In your opinion, do learn-to-curl leagues connect to curling leveraging efforts?
9. Please describe the history of curling leveraging efforts from your point of view?
10. Do any documents or artifacts exist from past PCA or CCA learn-to-curl league and leveraging discussions (ex. minutes from previous PCA or CCA annual general meetings)?
11. What is your role in these specific learn-to-curl leagues and learn-to-curl leagues in general?
12. Are you familiar with the following leveraging/learn-to-curl programs and publications: the PCA's "Adult Learn-to-Curl" program, and the CCA's "Leveraging 2014" and "Getting Started for Adults: A Comprehensive Curling Club Program to Build Membership Through Superior Customer Service" publications?
13. Did you play a role in the creation or implementation of these programs and publications? If so, please explain your role?
14. How do you believe learn-to-curl leagues contribute to recruiting new curlers?
15. Are there any additional insights you would like to add at this time?

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Learn-to-Curl League Instructors and Organizers

1. Can you please describe your personal experience with curling?
2. Please describe the role you play in your curling club's learn-to-curl league and learn-to-curl leagues in general?
3. Why are you involved in your club's learn-to-curl league?
4. In your opinion, what is your club's rationale for operating a learn-to-curl league?
5. What role(s) do you believe this league plays within your club?
6. Please describe your awareness of and familiarity with the following leveraging/learn-to-curl programs and publications: the Pleasant Curling Association's (PCA)'s "Adult Learn-to-Curl" program, and the Curling Canada (CCA)'s "Leveraging 2014" and "Getting Started for Adults: A Comprehensive Curling Club Program to Build Membership Through Superior Customer Service" publications?
7. Please discuss if the organization of your league connects in any way to the PCA's "Adult Learn-to-Curl" program?
8. Please discuss if the organization of your league connects in any way to the CCA's "Leveraging 2014" and "Getting Started for Adults: A Comprehensive Curling Club Program to Build Membership Through Superior Customer Service"?
9. Do you believe your club's learn-to-curl league is a leveraging initiative?
10. Are there any additional insights you would like to add at this time?

Appendix D: Letter of Information for Participants (Photo Elicitation Interviews)

Study Title: Leveraging, Legacies, and the Olympics: A Qualitative Case Study Analysis of Learn-to-curl Leagues

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You are being invited to take part in a study looking at the experience of learn-to-curl leagues. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. All league participants are invited to participate in this study.

What will I have to do if I choose to take part?

Upon agreeing to participate in this study, you may choose to engage with one of two interview methods: one-on-one qualitative in-depth interviews or photo elicitation interviews (PEIs). PEIs involve the research participants taking photographs of their learn-to-curl league experience. If you choose to participate in PEIs, then you will first partake in a one-hour group PEI information and orientation session. In this audio-recorded meeting, the researcher will describe the research project and provide you with instructions regarding the parameters for taking pictures. You will then be asked to take pictures that

capture what the overall learn-to-curl league experience means to you during subsequent league times. You may use your personal camera or camera phone. Or you will be provided with a disposable camera from the researcher. For example, you may choose to include photographs of the various spaces within the curling club, action shots of the curling experience, images of various league participants, instructors, or organizers, and any activities that connect to your learn-to-curl league experience in some way. For photographs where people's faces are visible, the researcher will blur these faces in the subsequent photograph proofs to protect the individual's identity. Prior to taking photographs of people, you will need to provide a "Letter of Information for Person Having Her/His Photograph Taken" to those people and A) ask for their consent to have their picture taken and B) have them sign a "Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participant)." Please do not take photographs of children or youth under the age of 18 years old. You will be provided with the information and consent forms for the people whose pictures you take during the PEI information and orientation session. During this session, you will also be given a notebook and asked to keep a log of what you photograph, and what you decide not to photograph, and other thoughts you have about your experience in this learn-to-curl league. Towards the end of the league, you will be instructed to e-mail your photographs to the researcher (sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca) or give your disposable camera to the researcher. Your notebook will also be collected from you at this time. Next, the researcher will develop your photographs and provide you with duplicate prints.

If you instead choose to participate in qualitative in-depth interviews, you will not be asked take photographs of your league experience. Instead, you will participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. This interview process will be discussed next.

League participants partaking in either qualitative in-depth interviews or PEIs will all engage in a one-on-one interview. This interview will be arranged between you and the researcher at a mutually agreeable location and last for approximately one hour. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate accurate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. To start this interview, you be asked to select from your developed pictures two photographs that best represent your experience in the learn-to-curl league. You will be asked about what message is conveyed by your picture, why you took this photograph, what made you select this picture over others, and if there were other picture that you would have liked to have taken but could not and what kept you from taking these pictures. Once this part of the interview is completed, the researcher will continue asking a series of questions regarding your league experience. For the qualitative in-depth interviews, the researcher will skip these photograph questions and only ask questions targeting your league experience. Shortly after the interview is completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis, report, or publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Furthermore, with your permission, pictures taken by you and pictures including your image may be used in academic and non-academic presentations and publications, as well as in promotional materials for your learn-to-curl league, your individual curling club, or the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) or Curling

Canada (CCA). To protect your identity, and the identity of others, all faces appearing in photographs will be blurred. Data collected during this study will be retained for three years in a locked office in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. Only researchers associated with this project will have access to the data. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

Furthermore, I will be conducting unobtrusive observations of league play throughout the learn-to-curl league's duration. These observations will aid in understanding the experience of these leagues. I have received permission from both the curling club's board of directors and learn-to-curl league administrators to conduct these observations.

Are there any risks or discomforts?

There are no known anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Your first hand knowledge of the experience of new curlers in learn-to-curl leagues is very important information that only you have. With your permission, the photographs and information you share may be presented to others through both academic and non-academic journals, publications, at conferences and meetings, and through promotional materials for your learn-to-curl league, curling club, PCA or CCA. Furthermore, your views may help to influence future learn-to-curl leagues and the experiences of new curlers moving forward. You may benefit personally from your participation by gaining more information about curling and the experience of new curlers, and a sense of empowerment by being part of this research.

Through participating in this study, your league, club, or curling administrative organization may also experience multiple benefits. These benefits include: receiving a summary document of study findings providing your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league, contributing to the wider understanding of these leagues and best meeting the needs of new curlers, and being provided with material that may contribute to the creation of promotional materials for your club's learn-to-league, your curling club in general, the PCA, or the CCA.

Remuneration

At the end of your one-on-one interview, you receive a \$5 dollar gift card to the establishment of your choice to thank you for your participation in the research. By PEI and qualitative in-depth interview participants are entitled to this remuneration. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes.

What happens to the information that I tell you?

With your permission, the one-on-one interviews will be audio recorded. To ensure accurate interview transcripts, the researcher will type-out what you said during the interview. Furthermore, the researcher will be the only person who listens to the tapes and views the subsequent interview transcripts. To protect your identity, only numbers will be used to identify pictures, tapes, and transcripts of the tapes. Also, pseudonyms will be used to replace the use of your name, the names of others, and the name of your curling club to ensure anonymity. The

consent forms, tapes, and transcripts will be locked in a secure place at the University of Waterloo and kept for three years based on the University of Waterloo's data security guidelines. After three years, these documents will be shredded and destroyed. If you reveal sensitive information (Ex. abuse allegations, risk of harm to self or others), the researcher will discuss this with you. This information cannot be kept confidential – by law it must be reported to the appropriate agency. If the results of this study are published, your names will not be used and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your permission.

Other Information about this Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary, you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the researcher. If you do withdraw from this study, any information that you have provided to that point will also be withdrawn. Furthermore, you may participate in this league without engaging in this study. Both the league and study are separate entities. Also, you are not required to answer any questions during the interviews. Your participation in this study, or your decision to drop out, will not affect your standing in this league, nor the level of instruction and support you receive. Also, please note that the researcher will be attending and making observations of your learn-to-league sessions throughout this study. Please be assured that the researcher has permission from the league administrators and curling club board of directors to conduct these unobtrusive observations.

Data collected throughout this study will be organized into themes and presented back to your club through a summary document. This document will include major insights and corresponding photographs taken by the participants. This document will provide your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Simon Barrick at (519) 744-1077 or sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 3605 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca

This letter is for you to keep.

Appendix E: Letter of Information for Person Having Her/His Photograph Taken

**Study Title: Leveraging, Legacies, and the Olympics: A Qualitative Case Study
Analysis of Learn-to-curl Leagues**

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You are being invited to take part in a study looking at the experience of learn-to-curl leagues. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. All league participants, organizers, instructors, and relevant club, Pleasant Curling Association (PCA), and Curling Canada (CCA) administrators are invited to participate in this study.

What will I have to do if I choose to take part?

You are being asked to have your picture taken as part of this research study. In this study, certain individual league participants may take your photograph using their personal camera, camera phone, or a disposable camera. The person taking your photograph has been asked to take pictures that capture what the overall learn-to-curl league experience means to them. For example, pictures might include photographs of the various spaces within the curling club, action shots of the curling experience, images of various league

participants, instructors, or organizers, and any activity that connects to the learn-to-curl league in some way. For photographs where people's faces are visible, the researcher will blur these faces in the subsequent photograph proofs to protect the individual's identity. Prior to having your picture taken, you will receive this information letter and be asked to sign a "Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participant)." The photographer will have both forms for you. All of the pictures that your photographer takes will be collected and developed by the researcher.

Your photographer will then participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher. In this interview, the photographer will be asked to select from their pictures two photos that best capture what the overall learn-to-curl league experience means to them. Your picture may or may not be selected as one of these photographs.

Are there any risks or discomforts?

There are no known risks to participating in this research.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By allowing your picture to be taken, you are assisting others to better understand the experiences of new curlers in learn-to-curl leagues. Including your picture in this research may help people involved with learn-to-curl leagues better understand your experiences and make changes to enhance the experiences for future new curlers.

What happens to my photograph?

To protect your identity, only numbers will be used to identify pictures, and the pictures will be locked in a secure place at the University of Waterloo. Also, with your permission, your picture may be included in future league, curling club, PCA, or CCA promotional materials. You have the option to be included in a photograph, and indicate your intention for your photograph(s) to not be included in promotional materials. Your preferences can be indicated on the "Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participant)."

Furthermore, any identifying information about you, such as your name or location, will be kept in a secure, separate location from your picture. Your picture and all related information will be kept for the next three years based on the University of Waterloo's data security guidelines. After three years, your photograph will be shredded, as well as electronically deleted. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your permission.

Other Information about this Study:

You do not have to permit your picture to be taken if you do not wish this. Your decision will not affect your standing in this league, nor the level of instruction and support you receive.

The subsequent data emerging from the photographs you are included in will be organized into themes and presented back to your club through a summary document. This document will include major insights and corresponding photographs taken by the participants. This document will provide your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Simon Barrick at (519) 744-1077 or sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 3605 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca

This letter is for you to keep.

Appendix F: Supplemental Letter – Photographing Participants Guidelines

Leveraging, Legacies, and the Olympics: A Qualitative Case Study Analysis of Learn-to-Curl Leagues

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Simon Barrick

This document contains guidelines for learn-to-curl league participants engaging in the photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs).

When you identify people whom you would like to include in a photograph, please ensure:

- You ask the individual(s) if they would like their photograph taken
- You give the individual(s) a copy of the “Letter of Information for Person Having Her/His Photograph Taken”
- Have the individual(s) sign the “Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participant)”
- Once these steps are completed, then you may take the photograph involving the individual(s)

Some overall photography tips:

- Before taking a photograph, ask yourself if you would want to appear in that photograph
- Ask the participants for their feedback during the picture-taking process
- If a participant wants a particular photograph deleted, please delete it from your camera
- Please do not take photographs of children or youth under the age of 18 years old

To ensure the privacy of all individuals is protected, please follow these steps:

- Once you send your photographs electronically to the researcher, please delete these pictures from your camera or camera phone and your computer
- Please do not post these photographs to social media outlets or distribute them to others

If you have any questions throughout the process, please do not hesitate to contact Simon Barrick at 519-744-1077 or sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca.

Appendix G: Consent Form for Participation in the Study (League Participants)

Leveraging, Legacies, and the Olympics: A Qualitative Case Study Analysis of Learn-to-Curl Leagues

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Simon Barrick

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear (*insert participant's name*):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Heather Mair. I would like to provide you with more information about this study and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Sport administrators, policy-makers, and academics have a limited understanding surrounding the experiences of new sport participants, specifically learn-to-curl league participants. Thus, you are being invited to take part in a study looking at the experience of learn-to-curl leagues. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games.

This study will focus on learn-to-curl leagues and the experiences of the new curlers enrolled in these leagues. Specifically, the participants' league experiences, their motivations behind trying curling, and their intentions to continue curling once this league concludes will be explored through this project.

Participation in this study is voluntary. I am recruiting learn-to-curl league participants at your club interested in sharing their experiences. Your participation in this study will include either partaking in photo elicitation interviews (PEIs) or qualitative in-depth interviews with the researcher. Participation in either type of interview will require approximately one hour of your time and occur outside of your learn-to-curl league commitments in a mutually agreed upon location. If you chose to participate in the PEIs,

you will be asked to take photographs of your experiences in your league. These photographs can be taken using your personal camera and camera phone, or a disposable camera provided by the researcher. Additionally, these photographs will be used in the subsequent interviews with the researchers. Participation in the qualitative in-depth interviews will involve you responding to questions posed by the researcher. During the interviews, you may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. If you do withdraw from this study, any information that you have provided to that point will also be withdrawn. Your participation in this study, or your decision to drop out, will not affect your standing in this league, nor the subsequent level of instruction and support you receive. Moreover, you may participate in this league without engaging in this study. Both the league and study are separate entities

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview is completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis, report, or publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Furthermore, with your permission, pictures taken by you and pictures including your image may be used in academic and non-academic presentations and publications, as well as in promotional materials for your learn-to-curl league, your individual curling club, or the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) or Curling Canada (CCA). To protect your identity, and the identity of others, all faces appearing in photographs will be blurred. Data collected during this study will be retained for three years in a locked office in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Only researchers associated with this project will have access to the data. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 519-744-1077 or by email at sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Heather Mair at 519-888-4567 ext. 35917 or email at hmair@uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin in the Office of Research Ethics at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to both you as a new curler and future new curlers, your curling club and curling administrative organizations, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Barrick

CONSENT FORM

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Simon Barrick of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that both excerpts from the interview and photographs from the PEIs may be included in the thesis, presentations, publications, and/or promotional materials to come from this research, with the understanding that all quotations and photographs will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis, presentations, publications, and/or promotional materials that come from this research.

YES NO

I also agree that information for this study and any pictures of me and my environment and property may be used for the following purposes:

1) In articles: ____ Yes ____ No

2) In print and slide form: ____ Yes ____ No

3) In various promotional materials: ____ Yes ____ No

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H: Participant Feedback Letter

University of Waterloo

Date

Dear _____,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study entitled “Leveraging, legacies, and the Olympics: A qualitative case study analysis of learn-to-curl leagues.” As a reminder, the purpose of this study involves capturing the overall learn-to-curl league experience, and the league participants’ lived experiences, as well as situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you, as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. This information may also be shared with various curling and non-curling audiences through seminars, conferences, presentations, non-academic publications, and promotional materials used by organizations such as your learn-to-curl league or curling club, or the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) or Curling Canada. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please provide your email address, and when the study is completed, anticipated by August 31st, 2015, I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at 519-744-1077 or by email at sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Heather Mair at 519-888-4567 ext. 35917 or by e-mail at hmair@uwaterloo.ca.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you,

Simon John Barrick

University of Waterloo
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

519-744-1077

sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca

Appendix I: Verbal Script – Recruiting Study Participants (League Participants, Instructors, and Organizers)

Hello everyone,

My name is Simon Barrick and I am a Master's student working under the supervision of Dr. Heather Mair in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am presenting to you all today about my study of learn-to-curl leagues. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games.

For this study, I am looking to work with individual learn-to-curl league participants, instructors, and organizers to capture a rich picture of the overall league experience. I will be present throughout this league observing all activities to gain a deeper understanding. If you choose to participate in my study, I will invite you to participate in an approximately one-hour one-on-one interview with myself that will be audio tape-recorded. This interview will be at a time and location of your convenience outside of league times.

Also, league participants have the opportunity to participate in photo elicitation interviews (PEIs). These PEIs consist of the participant taking photographs during the league to capture what the overall league experience means to them personally. These photographs may be taken using your personal camera or camera phone, or using a disposable camera provided by me. These photographs will then be used in subsequent interviews as conversation starters, and may be used in a research study summary document or future promotional materials for the individual league, curling club, PCA, or Curling Canada if the individual participant consents. If you are a league participant and interested in these PEIs, I will organize a group training session where more details about this process will be described.

The subsequent data will be organized into themes and presented back to your club through a summary document. This document will include major insights and corresponding photographs taken by the participants. This document will provide your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league. For further study information, please see the information letter (Letter of Information for Participants – Photo Elicitation Interviews). I will distribute these letters after my presentation.

Through participating in this study, you may benefit by gaining a greater understanding of the learn-to-curl league experience and contribute to strengthening future learn-to-curl leagues.

At this stage, I am simply recruiting people interested in this study. By contacting me, you are not confirming your spot in this study. You are simply expressing your interest. Also, you are free to

leave this study at any times and it will not affect your standing in this league or club. Furthermore, you can also participate in this league without having any connection to my study. If you would like to hear more information about my study, please speak to me during today's session, or contact me at either sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca or 519-744-1077.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin in the Office of Research Ethics at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you for your time today and I wish you all the best in this league.

Appendix J: Letter of Information for Participants (Administrator Interviews)

Study Title: Leveraging, Legacies, and the Olympics: A Qualitative Case Study Analysis of Learn-to-curl Leagues

Student Investigator:

Simon John Barrick
Master's Student
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario
Phone (519) 744-1077
E-mail: sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca

Project Supervisor:

Dr. Heather Mair PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario
Phone (519) 888-4567 ext. 35917
E-mail: hmair@uwaterloo.ca

You are being invited to take part in a study looking at the experience of learn-to-curl leagues. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games.

What will I have to do if I choose to take part?

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to partake in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. This interview will last about one hour. With your permission, this interview will be audio recorded. You will be asked a series of questions involving your role in curling club or curling administrative organization, your connection to learn-to-leagues, and if these leagues connect to curling leveraging initiatives. As the researcher, I will listen to the audio recording and transfer your interview responses into a typed interview transcript.

Shortly after the interview is completed, I will send you a copy of this transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not

appear in any thesis, report, or publication resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for three years in a locked office in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. Only researchers associated with this project will have access to the data. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

Furthermore, I will be conducting unobtrusive observations of league play throughout the learn-to-curl league's duration. These observations will aid in understanding the experience of these leagues. I have received permission from both the curling club's board of directors and learn-to-curl league administrators to conduct these observations.

Are there any risks or discomforts?

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Your in-depth knowledge of curling administration and learn-to-curl leagues is very important information that only you have. With your permission, the information you provide during this interview may be presented to others through both academic and non-academic journals, publications, or at conferences and meetings, and in promotional materials for the participating curling clubs' learn-to-curl league, for the individual curling clubs, or for the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) or Curling Canada. Your views may help to influence future learn-to-curl leagues and the experiences of new curlers moving forward. Your league, curling club, or curling administrative organization will also receive a summary document of study findings providing your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league. This knowledge may contribute to a wider understanding of these leagues and how to best meet the needs of new curlers.

Remuneration

At the end of your one-on-one interview, you receive a \$5 dollar gift card to the establishment of your choice to thank you for your participation in the research. The amount received is taxable. It is your responsibility to report this amount for income tax purposes.

What happens to the information that I tell you?

The one-on-one interviews will be audiotape recorded. To ensure accurate interview transcripts, the researcher will type-out what you said during the interview. Furthermore, the researcher will be the only person who listens to the tapes and views the subsequent interview transcripts. To protect your identity, only numbers will be used to identify the tapes, and transcripts of the tapes. Furthermore, pseudonyms will be used to replace the use of your name, the names of others, and the name of your curling club or curling administrative organization to ensure anonymity. The consent forms, tapes, and transcripts will be locked in a secure place at the University of Waterloo and kept for three years based on the University of Waterloo's data security guidelines. After three years, these documents will be shredded. If you reveal sensitive information (Ex. abuse allegations, risk of harm to self or others), the researcher will discuss this with you. This information cannot be kept confidential – by law it must be reported to the appropriate agency. If the results of this study are published, your name will not be used and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your permission.

Other Information about this Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary, you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the researcher. If you do withdraw from this study, any information that you have provided to that point will also be withdrawn. Also, please note that the researcher will be making observations of the learn-to-curl leagues throughout this study.

Data collected throughout this study will be organized into themes and presented back to your club through a summary document. This document will include major insights and corresponding photographs taken by the participants. This document will provide your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Simon Barrick at (519) 744-1077 or sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin, the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 3605 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

This letter is for you to keep.

Appendix K: Recruitment Email for Curling Administrators

Hello,

My name is Simon Barrick and I am a Master's student working under the supervision of Professor Heather Mair in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am contacting you about my study of learn-to-curl leagues based on your experiences in your curling club or curling administrative organization. Through this study, I will be exploring: (1) the overall league experience, (2) the individual experiences of the league participants, and (3) situating the league experience within the broader leveraging context. Leveraging refers to financial and program support aimed at increasing sport participation in partnership with the Olympics. My main goal involves capturing a rich picture of the learn-to-curl league experience. Furthermore, the data collected during this study will contribute to better understanding the experiences of new curlers, as well as how these learn-to-curl league initiatives connect with leveraging the media attention and wide-spread enthusiasm surrounding the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games.

For this study, I am requesting your participation in a one-hour one-on-one interview exploring various topics including your connection to learn-to-curl leagues and your understanding of these leagues as leveraging initiatives. Further details about this study are included in the attached "Letter of Information for Participants (Administrator Interviews)."

Through participating in this study, your league and club may experience multiple benefits. These benefits include: receiving a summary document of study findings providing your curling club with information surrounding your learn-to-curl league, contributing to the wider understanding of these leagues and best meeting the needs of new curlers, and using information from this study in the creation of promotional materials for your club's learn-to-league, your curling club in general, or the Pleasant Curling Association (PCA) or Curling Canada. Please see the attached "Letter of Information for Participants (Administrator Interviews)" for further details.

If you would like to participate in this study, please indicate your interest at either sjbarric@uwaterloo.ca or 519-744-1077.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Maureen Nummelin in the Office of Research Ethics at 1-519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

Sincerely,

Simon Barrick