

Running Head: Sport Leadership: A New Generation of Thinking

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Sport Leadership: A New Generation of Thinking

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Running Head: SPORT LEADERSHIP: A NEW GENERATION OF THINKING**Sport Leadership: A New Generation of Thinking**

It was an inspired decision by the editorial team at the Journal of Sport Management (JSM) to *invite* proposals to guest edit a special issue *on* sport leadership. In departing from previous calls, this action targeted a specific topic area (sport leadership, i.e., the topic of leadership in sport management), and, urged scholars to consider new and innovative approaches. For us, this said two things: sport leadership carries major significance for our field, and, we need a ‘booster shot’ of published research in sport leadership that is a step change in the evolution of leadership scholarship for sport management. The broader aim of the special issue was therefore to bring together articles that would set out what we know, where we are in our theoretical understanding of leadership in sport management (and as applied to practice), as well as present creative ways forward to explain and guide future thinking in research and practice. What shape would creative pathways forward take, and how would we encourage submissions that represented a step change in the evolution of leadership scholarship for sport management?

While we consider leadership theory and research to be constantly evolving, over the past 10 years we see a significant shift away from a pre-occupation with formal, assigned leaders (e.g., CEOs) toward greater emphasis on (what has been variously described as) the social construction of leadership (Grint, 2005). This perspective views leadership as a social, collaborative, relational experience focusing on the idea that leadership emerges from the interactions and constructions of people in a particular context (Grint & Jackson, 2010; Kihl, Leberman, & Schull, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). In this outlook, leadership is viewed as a collective achievement, not something that belongs to an individual (Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016).

This is an example of an innovative turn in leadership thinking that we consider has important implications for the study of leadership in sport management, organisations and systems, (or ‘sport leadership’). In what way have we (sport management scholars) kept pace with this new generation of leadership thinking? While we thought our field of sport management was perhaps too small to limit a special issue on sport leadership to submissions orientated toward the social construction of leadership, we did encourage approaches that considered multilevel analysis (Burton, 2015; Fink, 2008; Welty Peachey, Damon, Zhou, & Burton, 2015) and fresh approaches to leadership. As explained by Welty Peachey et al. (2015) in their 40 year review of leadership research in sport management, multilevel analysis of leadership research includes individuals, dyads, teams, groups, and organisations. We would also add systems. We agree that, “There is a critical need to incorporate multilevel investigations into our work to develop sport-focused leadership theory ...” (p. 578) in a way that appreciates the diverse contexts and ways within which leadership occurs within our sector.

A multilevel approach to leadership expands on a foundational bias in the literature toward researching traits and characteristics of individual leaders (often white, male) (Burton, 2015) where leader-centred perspectives and theories such as transformational, transactional and charismatic, have taken prominence (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). A response to concerns about the leader-centric focus (sometimes referred to as the hero leader – often propagated by the sports media) has been the emergence of follower-centred perspectives on leadership (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). Still relatively new to the leadership theory debate, this more expansive view of leadership aligns with the social construction of leadership, and has also helped to advance a resurgence of alternative theories such as authentic and servant leadership (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012; Greenleaf, 1998; Parris & Welty Peachey, 2013). Such approaches have extended mainstream leadership research and practice, but need more

exploration in sport settings (O'Boyle, Murray, & Cummins, 2015). We also point to the emergence of self-leadership and emotional intelligence as a central aspect of new leadership thinking that complements a more expansive view of leadership theory (Schneider, 2012). As Pearce and Manz (2005) offer, "In contrast to the traditional approach to leadership development, we argue that followers should also be included in leadership development efforts in order to prepare them to exercise responsible self-leadership and to effectively utilise shared leadership" (p. 130).

We considered there to be immediate relevance of this broader view of leadership for a special issue on sport leadership for JSM. Thus, collecting together articles that in some way exemplified leadership as a social construction became a more specific aim of the special issue and one we hoped would enable a focused themed approach. Most encouragingly for the scholarship of sport leadership, the Special Issue was 'oversubscribed' and we were forced to choose a maximum of seven articles from the successful submissions. While each of the seven articles chosen advances a particular idea, each in some way also acknowledges leadership as a social construction, and/or, values collective/multiple interactions of leadership. That is, these articles consider leadership as something beyond the individual. Grint (2005) describes this as the need to put the *ship* back into leadership. In Figure 1, we graphically represent how we saw the connections between articles and to our theme.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Overview of the articles in the Special Issue

Beyond the graphic representation presented in Figure 1, this section provides more detail about each article, and teases out its connection to our theme. The overview of this is set out in Table 1. The first article by Jones, Wegner, Bunds, Edwards and Bocarro examines the environmental characteristics of shared leadership in a sport-for-development (SFD) organization. The authors claim that leadership studies in sport have largely focused on

individual traits of leaders, and that multi-level analysis of leadership interactions is needed, in their case, to understand how environmental characteristics might influence leadership development. As a premise for their research, the authors' argue that community development philosophies that underpin SFD mean that the building of local leadership which fosters long-term sustainability will likely be critical. They therefore explore the notion of shared leadership and how environmental characteristics influenced the development of this particular approach to leadership. They point out that 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approaches to SFD necessitates a way of viewing and doing leadership that moves beyond conventional leader-follow dualities. Shared leadership, they argue, embodies this, and for the purposes of their study they draw on Pearce and Conger's (2003) definition of shared leadership as, "a dynamic, interactive process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group of organizational goals" (p. 1). They conclude that shared leadership (alongside servant leadership) can collectively empower the work of local champions to capitalize on multiple community assets and voices. A focus on leadership embodying something beyond individual traits and characteristics is clearly evident.

The second article by Welty Peachey, Burton, Wells, and Chung explores how servant leadership might influence work-related needs of followers within a SFD and peace setting. The authors point out that it is only in recent times that the SFD field has begun to examine the nature of leadership. Interestingly, as with Jones et al., those few studies that have done so have highlighted the association between SFD philosophies and servant leadership. The connection here to our theme is the emphasis that servant leadership has on multiple leadership interactions between leaders and followers, specifically, service to followers, follower development and stewardship (as explained by Welty Peachey et al.).

Perhaps just as we were becoming attuned to the notion that leadership as a social construct might be most aligned with pure SFD contexts, our third article focuses our attention

on Australia's leading national sport governing body, the Australian Football League (AFL). This article explores board member interactions within non-profit sport organizations (the legal status of the AFL, albeit highly 'professionalized'), and specifically authentic leadership as the construct of interest. As with our SFD authors, Takos, Murray, and O'Boyle lament the lack of leadership scholarship within their chosen context, governance, and urge both sport leadership and sport governance scholars to work with them to redress this. In their approach to leadership Takos et al. recognize the need for a shift toward relational aspects of leadership in order to advance the study of sport governance and board level interactions. They claim their study moves beyond the leader-centric focus, and, through the lens of authentic leadership, considers the relationships between board members.

Frawley and Schulenkorf's article on leadership development in professional sport organizations again reminds us that the ideas embedded within the social construction of leadership are relevant to the professional context as well as the community and non-profit setting. While largely focused on their thesis, which teases out the importance of experienced-based leadership opportunities for leadership development (using McCall's 2010 framework), they also acknowledge a broader view of leadership in their chosen definition of leadership development. They assert that leadership development involves "expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes" (McCauley, Moxley, & Van Velsor, 1998, p. 10).

Gendered leadership in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the focus and context of the next article. Katz, Walker, and Hindman recognize the multiple interactions of leadership in highlighting the significance of informal networks. Specifically, they compare the informal networks of both senior women administrators and athletic directors within NCAA Division I institutions. They argue that the social structures that operate within these settings greatly impact opportunities for women to engage in leadership. The mission to

understand leadership from the point of view of those less visible within sport management/journals (i.e., women, non-Western societies) is also the subject of our next article prepared by Chen and Mason. Intriguingly, these authors draw us to a reading of postcolonial representations of non-Western leadership within sport management. This article reminds us of how much there is to learn about leadership from 'alternative world-views'. More specifically, the authors point out the danger of viewing current leadership theories as universal/transcendental when such theories have largely been developed within Western societies (predominantly the United States). It is perhaps the section on Indigenous leadership perspectives that best exemplifies this as well as makes the connection to our theme. Here the authors explain that leadership models developed in Western settings are largely based on assumptions that the basis of human motivation is individualism and competition (which is less relevant for many indigenous cultures). It is potentially these assumptions that have fuelled the pre-occupation with the individual leader as the focus of leadership scholarship (Grint, 2005).

The final article by Billsberry, Mueller, Skinner, Swanson, Corbett, and Ferkins provides the opportunity to more fully explore the social construction of leadership as well as explain the multiple meanings embedded within it. The authors headline, 'reimagining leadership' signals their thesis which argues for a more inclusive understanding of leadership beyond conventional leader-centric viewpoints. In specifically drawing on the social construction of leadership, they reveal how observer-centric perspectives capture the way people (beyond the assigned leader) construct their own understanding of leadership. Their article teases out how this emerging theoretical approach can reframe and invigorate our understanding of leadership in sport management.

Insert Table 1 here

Social construction of leadership: A new generation of thinking

As set out in Table 1, we consider that the articles presented in this Special Issue, while not specifically exploring the social construction of leadership as a theoretical frame, have all acknowledged the multiple interactions among leaders and followers within a specific context. Table 1 also provides a summary of how the authors have approached the study of sport leadership in innovative ways. Each study has recognized that leadership is more than the work of individuals and their ability to assert influence or power over others. Rather, it is something created through the actions, conversations, language, and interactions between groups of people, and within a particular context (Foldy, Goldman, & Ospina 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016). As the SFD articles particularly exemplify, the examination of leadership within a certain context recognizes the intertwining nature of leadership within a situation, as distinct from viewing leadership as being independent of context (Kihl et al., 2010).

Grint (2005) identified the key elements of social constructionism as, what counts as 'true', 'objective' and 'fact' are the outcome of contending versions of 'reality'. This acknowledges the idea that reality is constructed through the views and interpretations of a collective group and not just through the ideologies of an individual. It also reinforces the idea infused within this Special Issue, that leadership is a collective rather than individual achievement (Cullen, Palus, Chrobot-Mason, & Appaneal, 2012; Foldy et al., 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2010). This approach to leadership challenges deep-seated beliefs about how we have been 'socially constructed' to understand the individual nature of leadership within sport. We hope this Special Issue goes some way to challenging such beliefs, and by collecting together articles that appreciate a multiple view, paves the way for a new generation of thinking about sport leadership.

Conclusion

The context of sport management is well suited to a relational, collective approach to leadership (Kihl et al., 2010). We need to know more about how this is happening, why it might be a valuable approach, and how advancements within leadership scholarship from broader, related fields (e.g., business, non-profit) might help stimulate the development of sport leadership. As the leading journal in sport management (arguably one of three), there is no better place to gather together empirical and conceptual articles on sport leadership that serve as an innovative, thought provoking resource for sport management academics and those in practice seeking to understand new ways of leadership within sport organizations and sport systems around the globe.

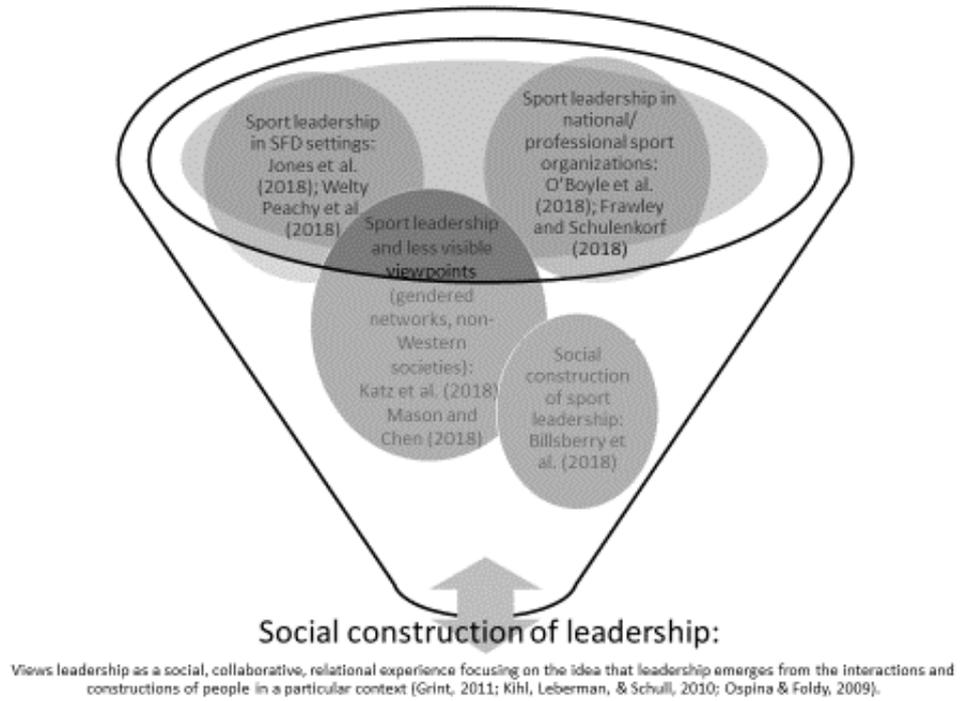
Finally, we would like to express our enormous appreciation to those colleagues who so willingly agreed to review for this special issue, who did so in such a timely way, and with such care and expertise. We found the pool of potential reviewers was not extensive, and for some this meant we drew on you heavily. Thank you. We hope the Special Issue offers you, in particular, a valuable resource for your work. Thanks you also to Dr Ben Corbett, formerly at Loughborough University London for your early contribution to making the Special Issue happen. We also received expert support and guidance from the JSM editorial team and would like to specifically thank, Professor Janet Fink (JSM Senior Associate Editor), Professor David Shilbury (JSM Editor-in-Chief), and Kathleen Burgener (Journal Division Director, Human Kinetics).

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Figure 1: Article Groupings in Relation to the Social Construction of Leadership



For Peer

Table 1: Summary of the Special Issue Articles and Association to the Social**Construction of Leadership**

Authors	Theory	Method	Key Findings	Association with the social construction of leadership
Social construction of leadership: beyond leader-centric, acknowledges multiple/collective contribution, values social, relational interactions, recognises significance of context				
Jones, Wegner, Bunds, Edwards, and Bocarro	Shared leadership; multilevel nesting model of leadership	Single qualitative case study	Found the relationship between a sport-for-development (SFD) program and its surrounding environment, exposing both the challenges and benefits to utilizing shared leadership principles. The focus on empowerment through a bottom-up rather than top-down approach highlights the applicability of servant leadership in the SFD context.	Shared leadership embraces the notion of collective achievement. Context also a focus.
Welty Peachey, Burton, Wells, and Chung	Servant leadership	Mixed methods, online survey (n=76) and qualitative interviews (n=14)	Revealed that followers perceived and leaders used aspects of servant leadership in sport-for-development and peace organizations (SDP). Supports use of servant leadership to satisfy the needs of followers in SDP organizations.	Interested in the multiple relationships and dynamics between leaders and followers. Context also a focus.
Takos, Murray, and O'Boyle	Authentic leadership	Multi-case study approach	Three key components of authenticity emerged as highly influential for board effectiveness; relational orientation, self-awareness, and balanced processing.	Authentic leadership values a relational orientation. Context also a focus.
Frawley and Schlenker	Experience-based leadership development framework	Multi-case study approach	The importance of experience-based opportunities for leadership development; networking opportunities gained from experience-based exposure; the relationship between on the job experience and formal leadership education.	Leadership development involves expanding the collective capacity of organizational members
Katz, Walker, and Hindman	Gendered leadership networks/framework of leadership networks	Co-affiliation network study	Results indicate that the Senior Women Administrators' network is far less cohesive than the Athletic Directors' (AD) networks, and the few women in the AD networks are largely located outside the center of the affiliation networks.	Interest in networks recognizes the multiple interactions of leadership

Chen and Mason	Leadership in non-Western contexts, postcolonial theory	Critical discourse analysis (CDA)	Concerned that a heavy reliance on Western theories provides prescriptive solutions in non-Western contexts. The adoption of theoretical frameworks developed in the West may not always yield constructive and valuable solutions for non-Western notions of sport leadership.	Raises the significance of diverse/non-Western contexts and cultures where social interactions construct meanings associated with sport leadership
Billsberry, Mueller, Skinner, Swanson, Corbett, and Ferkins	Social construction of leadership	Conceptual paper	Demonstrates that the application of the social construction of leadership helps us reinterpret our existing understanding of leadership in sport management and raises implications for research, teaching, and practice.	Argues for a more inclusive understanding of leadership beyond conventional leader-centric viewpoints

For Peer Review