

**WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
THROUGH SPORT ON MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS**

by

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Abstract

Educational leaders are responsible for the academic achievements of all students in a safe, caring, diverse, and inclusive learning environment. Sport and same-gender programming effectively develop self-efficacy, build lifelong leadership skills, and improve academic standing for middle-school girls. This capstone project provides a literature review that demonstrates the need for sport and same-gendered programming designed to help middle school girls develop their self-identity, socialization, team building skills, and confidence and to become valued as equal members of society. Supporting research on diversity representation in school leadership roles correlate to breaking traditional gendered and ethnic career roles, social stigmas, and stereotypes. Additionally, this paper includes recommendations for the ways school principals, who play a pivotal role in the process, can implement strategies that increase the participation of middle-school girls in sport, thus increasing their capacity to take on future leadership roles. These strategies enhance principals' ability to ensure a practice that fosters equitable opportunities for all.

Key words: Diversity in Education, Alberta Education, principal, leadership, academic success, social cognitive career theory, inclusion, leaky pipeline, middle school girls, physical literacy, social role theory, recruitment for diversity, sports, extra-curricular, teacher of colour, women in leadership, minorities in leadership.

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Women in School Leadership: The Impact of School Leadership Through Sport on Middle School Girls

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

School principals play a pivotal role in supporting the development of middle-school girls' self-efficacy and confidence through providing equitable opportunities in sport and physical activity. Participation in sport activities can help girls break gender stereotypes and develop leadership skills that can lead to academic and career success. Women are still underrepresented in careers dominated by men due to attitudes influenced by traditional societal norms and expectations. School principals can provide opportunities for diversity in sport and physical activities by creating mentoring positions that model how middle-school girls can be agents of social change.

The Government of Alberta is focused on girl empowerment initiatives like *Women and Girls in Sport: Advancing Gender Equity in Alberta* (Alberta Sport, 2019). At a school level, principals are responsible for creating an inclusive school culture and implementing policies put forth by the provincial government to develop the socialization, health, well-being, and academic success of all students (Alberta Education, 2018b). When school leadership promotes a shared vision that values the skills development of girls in sport, staff and trained personnel are more likely to implement strategies to retain students in sports activities (O'Neil & Boyce, 2018). School principals who are effective in their supervision of instruction, ensure the most relevant resources are in place to build the teaching capacities of staff and hiring those best suited for such mentorship roles (O'Neil & Boyce, 2018).

Background to the Problem

Despite women earning the majority of bachelor's degrees, less than 20% of women represent leadership positions in general (Voelker, 2016, p. 10). The absence of social networks and female mentors in top leadership roles has historically hindered women from attaining leadership positions (Voelker, 2016, p. 12). As people move up the career ladder, fewer women remain in leadership roles. This diminishing number of women on the top of the leadership hierarchy¹ negatively impacts the participation rates of middle-school girls in sport (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015).

The Government of Alberta's Diversity and Inclusion policy (2019) states its commitment to a diverse public service workforce that reflects the qualities and differences of the broader population it serves. The policy embeds a commitment to inclusive workplaces that welcome, respect, and value the diversity of employees and supports them to actively engage in the workplace and achieve their full potential (Government of Alberta, 2019). Alberta Education Leadership Standards (2018a) provides inclusive education to ensure every student is provided with an accommodating learning environment to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society. Education is based on the values of opportunity, fairness, citizenship, choice, diversity, and excellence (Alberta Education, 2018a).

However, in schools across North America, teachers do not represent the general population in female and ethnic minorities in top leadership roles in education (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Cherkowski (2010) argues that school leaders play a role in constructing cultures that inhibit or promote inclusion as a way of life. Furthermore, principals are

¹ The diminishing number of women up the leadership hierarchy is often referred to as the "leaky pipeline" (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter, Martin, Deyton, & Hammer, 2015).

encouraged to provide teachers with instructional leadership and access to appropriate programming and the extra-curricular activities that help students develop confidence and team-building skills and engage in their own learning (Alberta Education, 2018a). Relevant leadership programming and trained personnel have a significant positive effect on middle-school girls' confidence, self-efficacy, and leadership career paths (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Voelker, 2016).

Statement of Problem

School leadership impacts the career choices that middle-school girls believe are available to them (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Volker, 2016). Through ministerial order #001/2013, Alberta Education (2013a) mandated that students receive an education based on the values of opportunity, fairness, citizenship, choice, diversity, and excellence. The lack of women in sport leadership roles as athletic directors and head coaches (Ladda, 2015; Voelker, 2016) make it more difficult for girls to choose to participate in sports activities, and they often lose out on some of those educational values. Following Alberta Education's education values is even more challenging because the social stigmas and societal gender norms that girls learn from social media, family, and friends also have a significant influence on what future options students perceive to have available to them (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015).

Effective school principals create the spaces and conditions in which learning communities embrace diversity as a way of life rather than as problems to be solved (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 24). Principals positively influence the college and career aspirations of girls when they create a space where the diversity of ethnic and gender roles are modelled through the school environment (Ladda, 2015; Voelker, 2016). School leaders have the

autonomy to create an environment where diversity is a norm for sharing and understanding differences, rather than providing support for differences in the established cultures reflective of dominant group values (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 24). Identifying the low participation rates of young girls in sport focuses on the need for female and minority leadership to engage middle-school girls in these activities.

Purpose

Providing equitable opportunity for middle-school girls with specific leadership programming that is implemented by trained personnel can have a significant positive effect on girl's self-confidence, self-efficacy, and future careers (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Voelker, 2016). The purpose of this capstone is to assist principals to gain a greater understanding of the teaching and leadership practices that can be utilized to increase the participation and retention of middle-school girls in sport. The literature review focuses on the need for women in top leadership roles, specifically women of colour who are overlooked due to belonging to a minority group within a minority (Fitzgerald, 2006; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Ways that sport and physical activity are tools that can demonstrate the importance of women being represented in leadership roles are presented as are the ways that sport and physical activity have a positive impact on physical and cognitive wellness that correlates to academic performance and long-term healthy lifestyles (Doolittle, 2016; Gerlich, 2018; Intrator & Siegel, 2008). Additionally, women in sport leadership roles can normalize social gender stigmas by accepting equitable gender opportunities (Ladda, 2015), implementing the ideals, and bridging the gaps to embrace women in leadership as a strength.

Statement of Research Questions

This capstone project addresses the following research questions:

1. How can principals improve the opportunity for middle-school girls in sport?
2. What instructional leadership practices have been found to support the development of programming for middle-school girls?

Definition of Terms

Cultural Intelligence: The ability to function in a culturally diverse environment.

Intercultural Skills: Learning and using skills and tools specifically designed for intercultural settings that promote equity. These skills are developed over time through observation, reflection, learning, and practice (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010).

Diversity: Population differences in a school community, including and not limited to, ethnicity, gender, language, ability, age, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status are well represented.

Dysconscious Racism: A form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges (Lumby & Coleman, 2007).

Instructional Leadership: Leadership skills and tasks principals and teachers use to improve the academic achievement of students through ensuring access to equity for equality (Alberta Education, 2018b).

Inclusion: A way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, people from the diverse communities listed under *Diversity* (Alberta Education, 2016).

Learning Community: The elements of the learning environment, including school districts and staff employed by schools, classrooms, and areas where students are instructed or supervised by certified teachers.

School Leadership: The people who engage followers by influencing those around them, whether teacher leaders, heads of departments, faculty or service support teams, bursars, members of a senior leadership team, principals, or vice chancellors (Lumby & Coleman, 2007, p. 1).

Physical Education: An activity-based curriculum regulated by the provincial government that is implemented by certified teachers.

Physical Literacy: The motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding that helps people value and take responsibility for engaging in physical activities for life (Tremblay, et al., 2018).

Physical Activity: Includes physical education, physical fitness, and extra-curricular sport activities.

Principal: The leader of a school as assigned by the school board. As designates of the principal, assistant principals and other members of the administration team are included in this definition.

Social Cognitive Career Theory: The theory that influences the career development based on environmental factors as interpreted by the individual. Personal factors can include sex or ethnicity, while environmental factors like parental advice and media messages are external factors (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Okely, et al., 2017; Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015).

Social Role Theory: The theory that explains the pressure that a man or a woman experiences to act consistently with traditionally developed and held social roles (e.g., male doctor or female nurse) and the conflict, discomfort, and confusion that happens when

individuals do not conform to those roles (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006).

Sport: In a school setting, sport is an extra-curricular activity under the direct supervision of a certified teacher. Sport increases the physical, mental and emotional competence of student athletes to develop the leadership capacities and team-building skills required for future success.

Scope of Study

This study is a discussion for school principals about their influence on the leadership development of middle-school girls through sport. Leadership is further examined in the context of women in sport, physical education, diversity, gender, and ethnicity. Additionally, although stakeholders such as district office administration, parents, community members, and educational assistants (EAs) perform fundamental roles within diversity in education (Alberta Education, 2010), their contributions were not considered in this research.

Significance of Study

The study highlights the impact school principals have using sport as a tool to influence middle-school girls to develop the self-efficacy and confidence required for academic and future success. Middle school is the prime age (10-14) to influence the development for long-term engagement in physical activity (Doolittle, 2016). Furthermore, the academic achievement and career aspirations of middle-school girls can be enhanced based on two theories that provide insight into middle schoolers' career choice development: social role theory and social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Okely, et al., 2017; Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015). Sport and physical activities are favorable settings in which to support these efforts (Voelker, 2016).

As student diversity rises in classrooms, education institutions must take initiative to actively support and reflect diversity in school environments. In Canada, multiculturalism has been an official federal policy since 1985. However, predominantly white academic institutions still have not increased racial diversity among their faculty: racial diversity among students has increased, faculty diversity has not (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). This is a result of prejudices in the hiring process acquired very early in life that interfere with attempts to alter perceptions because people use selective methods to avoid the discomfort of modifying their belief systems (Leh, Grau & Guiseppe, 2015). By introducing diversity in leadership to students at earlier stages in life, women and minority women in leadership become mentors to female students, which correlates to improved academic and career success (Fonts, 2018).

Educational institutions are one of the best learning environments in which to teach young students that strength lies in diversity (Alberta Teachers Association, 2010). This project provides research that demonstrates the importance of school principals and their influence on women in leadership roles associated with the engagement and retention of female youth participation in sport. There is supporting evidence for same-gender programming environments that can be used to create spaces necessary for middle-school girls to build the leadership capacities for future career ambitions available to them (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015). Focusing on how middle-school curricula, programs, and educators are empowered with specific knowledge to counteract or mitigate gender stereotypes (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015). The research study and recommendations emphasize the critical role school principals play in ensuring that equitable opportunities are available for all students (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). As noted in Chapter 3, the resulting recommendations will enable school

principals to extend the lens of their practice in leadership diversity and to use sport as a tool for social change (Ladda, 2014; Voelker, 2016).

Chapter Summary

This capstone focuses on how school principals impact curricular programs that help middle-school girls develop their self-efficacy and confidence leading to academic and career success. Research demonstrates that girl-centered sport and physical activities (PA) are effective tools for developing the confidence and leadership capacities of middle-school girls (Rauscher & Cooky, 2016; Voelker, 2016). These skills are transferrable to other domains corresponding to the academic success and career options for middle-school girls as they move through their teen and young adult years (Faight, Gleddie, Storey, Davison, & Veugelers, 2017; Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015). Providing same-gendered programs benefits the personal and social development of middle-school girls (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015, p. 12). Participating in same-gendered programs in sport and PA enhances the soft and hard skills also described as supercognitives² by Intrator & Siegel (2008). Additional results are consistent with other school-based PA interventions among adolescent girls that have found positive effects on self-efficacy (Okely et al., 2017).

Principals are accountable for the quality of education provided to their students (Alberta Education, 2009). Thus, principals must have a comprehensive understanding between the relationship of effective instructional practices of sport and PA programming and pro-social inclusive ideologies to support equitable gender opportunities (Rauscher & Cooky, 2016, p. 292).

² There is a connection between sports involvement, the development of achievement values and skills, and success in extra-sport endeavors. These attributes include attitudes, skills, and behaviors such as (1) the ability to work with a team, (2) time management and punctuality, (3) the capacity to avoid or manage conflict, (4) resilience, (5) tolerance, (6) self-discipline, (7) self-direction, (8) industriousness, (9) communication, (10) problem recognition and resolution, (11) integrity, and (12) competitiveness (Intrator & Siegel, 2008, p. 19).

Providing adequate same-gendered middle-school girl programs is complicated because principals are responsible for supervising effective instructional practices in physical education. However, many schools do not have enough certified physical education teachers, especially women and minority teachers (Spence et al., 2004). There is also a shortage of female and minority representation in sport head coaching and athletic director positions (Ladda, 2015).

Principals have an impact on the development of the social, psychological, and physical well-being of girls. There is a correlation between females acting as role models through sport leadership and the retention of girls' participation in sport (Ladda, 2015). It is the principals' responsibility to provide access for same-gender sport programming for girls and create opportunities for women in sport leadership roles, which contribute to promote pro-social behaviours (Rauscher & Cooky, 2016).

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature that demonstrates how principals can improve the opportunity for middle-school girls in sport and the instructional leadership practices that support the development of relevant programming for middle-school girls. Chapter 3 provides recommendations on how principals can support leadership diversity and capacities in sport and physical activities to increase the participation of middle-school girls in sport. Additionally, Chapter 3 has information on how school leadership can enhance their school's cultural intelligence of knowledge and skills in an effort to support middle-school girls to become agents of social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Principals are responsible for implementing effective diverse programming in physical activities (Alberta Education, 2006; Atkinson, 2015). Principals need to be aware that it is essential that teachers are diverse and qualified to deliver the physical education curriculum (Law et al., 2018; Voelker, 2016). Many principals, however, lack diverse instructional staff who are qualified to teach physical education (Law et al., 2018). For middle-school girls to feel competent in sport and physical activities, principals must recognize that it is their responsibility to provide a physical education program that meets with the provincial education standards (Alberta Education, 2006). Effective school principals are mindful of the positive impact that participating in sport has on the affective, cognitive, and behavioural development of middle-school girls (Casey, et al., 2014; Doolittle, 2016; Jenkinson, Naughton, & Benson, 2012; Kyles & Lounsbery, 2004; Rauscher & Cooky, 2016; Volker, 2016). Additionally, it was found that principals must recognize the impact of diversity of women and women minorities in sport leadership that contribute to the engagement and retention of middle-school girls in sport and PA (Doolittle, 2016; Ladda, 2015).

Through a review of current literature, this capstone project reviews how targeting middle-school girls at this critical stage fosters long-term sport and physical activity engagement (Doolittle, 2016). Using sport, teachers can change gender career stereotypes and choices (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Voelker, 2016). Effective principals can encourage equitable practices for students by modelling pro-social attitudes through diverse school leadership (Ladda, 2015; Voelker, 2016).

This literature review, therefore, is divided into two parts. The first reviews teaching practices under the direct supervision of school principals that have been found to improve the

opportunity for middle-school girls' participation in sport and PA (Doolittle, 2016; Kyles, & Lounsbery, 2004). The second part reviews instructional leadership practices that have been found to support program development for middle-school girls through mentoring by women in sport leadership and what has been found to increase the number of women in leadership roles that contribute to the academic success of middle-school girls using sport as a means for social change (Ladda, 2014).

Components of Effective Physical Education

To effectively provide middle-school girls with equitable opportunities to participate in and appreciate sport and PA, principals must understand that schools are prime facilitators in cultivating the desire for lifelong participation in physical activity (Alberta Education, 2006; Alberta Learning, 2000). There are four general outcomes that physical education strives for: “(1) activity, (2) benefits health, (3) cooperation, and (4) Do it Daily for Life” (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 4). Physical education plays a crucial role in introducing and engaging children in sport and PA (Gerlich, 2018). Sport increases the leadership capacities among those who participate in them and has an unquestionable effect on communities (Voelker, 2016). Scholars have also promoted the proactive development of leadership skills through sport and PA (as cited in Gould & Voelker, 2012; Martinek & Hellison, 2009).

Middle-school girls who participate in sport develop the leadership attributes required to take on top career leadership roles. These attributes include attitudes, skills, and behaviors such as the ability to work with a team, time management and punctuality, the capacity to avoid or manage conflict, resilience, tolerance, self-discipline, self-direction, industriousness, communication, problem recognition and resolution, integrity, and competitiveness (Intrator & Siegel, 2008, p. 19).

The components of effective instructional practices in physical education are complicated by social and cultural traditions that shape and reshape gender stereotypes (Shen, 2015; Williams and Bedward, 2001). The first section of this literature review focuses on four areas that impact middle-school girls' participation in sport and PA: (1) teachers' knowledge of physical literacy, (2) teachers' knowledge of students, (3) the learning environment, and (4) approach to instruction.

Teachers' knowledge of physical literacy.

To effectively supervise and support physical education, principals must recognize the deep understanding teachers require to effectively teach the concepts and skills students are expected to know in PE. A majority of PE specialists are found to instruct in junior high and secondary school levels (Spence et al., 2004). Non-physical education specialists commonly instruct at the elementary level, which has significant impact on the physical literacy development of students. Non-physical education specialists report lower levels of confidence, enjoyment, preparation, knowledge and fewer professional development opportunities that correlate to the lack of physical literacy development in students by the time they reach junior high and secondary school (Spence et al., 2004, p. 13).

There are two specific areas that impact the effectiveness of a successful physical education program. First, researchers have found that trained physical education specialists allow students to gain the substantial knowledge and skill sets in physical literacy to be confident in challenging their physical ambitions through sport and PA (Gerlich, 2018; Law et al., 2018). This is not always available as some institutions would rather hire educational generalists due to budget costs and too few specialists in the hiring pool (Kell, 2017). Second, providing students with optimal physical education opportunities requires teachers to continually enhance their

teaching pedagogy through professional development opportunities and professional collaboration (Alberta Education, 1997).

According to Law et al., (2018), data from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) shows 62% of schools in Canada have a policy to hire teachers with qualifications to teach PE and promote physical activity (PA). Of those schools, only 42% fully implemented the policy. Evidence shows that students who receive quality daily physical education programming score higher on measure of enjoyment, attitude, and knowledge toward healthy lifestyles; they are more likely to maintain or even improve their academic performance, and they are more likely to be active during their leisure time later in life (Gerlich, 2018). Understanding the complex influences on children's physical education experiences is a first step toward ensuring all children have access to high-quality PE that facilitates their physical literacy (Law et al., 2018).

Additionally, PE specialists teaching grades four to six devoted more time to PE in their timetables than did generalists who do not prioritize PE in their schedules even when they are expected to be instructing PE at the elementary levels (Law et al., 2018). Extending beyond this depth of understanding of the curriculum, PE specialists have significantly higher levels of knowledge, confidence, and enjoyment in teaching PE that positively correlates to students' academic achievement and enjoyment to participate in physical activities; yet school boards do not prioritize hiring PE specialists to save on budget costs (Law et al., 2018). Schools are disserving their students' development in physical literacy by having generalist instruct PE, which has made a significant negative impact on the enjoyment and participation levels in physical education for many students (Gerlich, 2018; Law et al., 2018; Spence et al., 2004).

Furthermore, teachers' content knowledge in physical education is a significant predictor in students' physical literacy (Law et al., 2018).

To increase teachers' knowledge in physical literacy, school principals should encourage professional development (PD) in physical education as an essential learning tool for effective instruction (Alberta Education, 1997). O'Neil & Boyce (2018) argue that teachers who continue to improve their pedagogical skills over time are teaching professionals who achieve expertise in their field. Therefore, through additional professional development, generalists can improve their knowledge and instruction in physical literacy to become competent in facilitating a substantial physical education program that benefits all students (Law et al., 2018). To be effective, school principals must support physical education professional practices that engage in the career-long learning and collaboration that are essential components of effective instruction (Alberta Education, 2018d). Studies also show that increased professional development opportunities for elementary school teachers result in enhanced PE class outcomes (Law et al., 2018). In most cases school budgets do not put enough focus on elementary teachers' professional development in physical education (Kell, 2017). However, Law et al., (2018) argue that the benefits of providing generalists with PE education go beyond physical education classes. "If children can use movement and sport skills to become more educated and confident, then this confidence can transfer to other areas of learning that keep children active for life" (Stevens-Smith, 2016, p. 8). Nonetheless, effective instruction is based on more than content knowledge; teachers must also have an inclusive practice and adapt to the diverse population of their students (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010).

Teachers' knowledge of students.

To effectively supervise and support physical education teachers, principals must distinguish teachers' competencies for fostering effective relationships for student engagement in sport and PA (Alberta Learning, 2000; Doolittle, 2016; O'Neil & Boyce, 2018). To initiate engagement, Shen (2015) states gender differences should be identified and instructionally addressed on how differences are unique to their strengths. Modelling appreciation for student diversity is foundational for teachers to design and deliver inclusive programs to engage middle-school girls' participation in sport and PA (Alberta Education, 1997; Doolittle, 2016, Voelker, 2016).

Doolittle (2016) uses three dimensions to describe student engagement in sport and PA: affective/emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. In the context of engaging middle-school girls, affective/emotional engagement focuses on observing the reactions of students towards teachers, classmates, and physical activity, as well as expressing feelings of enjoyment, boredom, and anxiety (Doolittle, 2016). Behavioral engagement examines the voluntary participation of middle-school girls in sport and their effort or willingness to comply with rules and expectations (Doolittle, 2016). Cognitive engagement includes middle-school girls' prior knowledge of the activities and tasks, as well as their levels of effort and commitment to the learning process (Doolittle, 2016; Mahatmya, Lohman, Matjasko & Farb, 2012). Teachers' instructional practices that incorporate the three dimensions of engagement suggested by Doolittle increase the learning capacities of middle-school girls' participation and enjoyment in physical education, sport, and PA (Doolittle, 2016; Voelker, 2016).

Teachers who are aware of the affective/emotional dimension of engagement are cognizant of middle-school girls' feelings and recognize that emotional attachments are

important (Doolittle, 2016). Teachers motivate and influence middle-school girls' positive and negative reactions to specific individuals (Doolittle, 2016). Shen (2015) says that motivational disparities between boys and girls in exercise and physical activity contexts mostly stem from gender socialization as opposed to biological differences. Effective instructional practices build a trusting relationship and accurately observe each student's strengths and vulnerabilities rather than rely on stereotypes (Doolittle, 2016). Effective teachers have the capacity to identify who works well individually, in pairs, or in groups to benefit student participation (Alberta Education, 2006; Alberta Learning, 2000).

Teachers who demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes towards diversity among students positively influence how students interact with each other. Effective teachers use diverse instructional strategies in sports and PA by connecting class activities and extracurricular opportunities to the preference of their students (Alberta Learning, 2000; Doolittle 2016).

Teachers who reward positive behavior and full participation in class are attentive to behavioral patterns (Doolittle, 2016). Teachers in physical education are in a position to mentor and impact the lives of youth who will carry adopted behaviours and attitudes that they model into the future (Guagliano, Lonsdale, Rosenkranz, Kolt, & George, 2014a). The team-building capacities developed in sport and PA can have a lasting impact in life skills, building accountability, confidence, respect, and social skills (Guagliano et al., 2014a; Intrator & Siegel, 2008).

Teachers with effective inclusive instructional practices recognize that everyone learns at different rates and in different ways (Alberta Learning 2000, Doolittle, 2016). The third dimension in which teachers foster effective relationships focuses on cognitive engagement and how teachers build instruction based on prior knowledge, experience, and interests (Doolittle, 2016). Shen (2015) emphasizes that girls are struggling to negotiate their gender positions in

sports and PA where their roles are ambiguous or contradict social and cultural expectations (as cited in Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Exploring and implementing what instructional methods work and what modifications to consider (Doolittle, 2016) is essential for a quality sport and PA program.

Learning environment.

To provide physical education teachers with effective supervision and support, principals must give teachers the tools they need to ensure safe, caring, inclusive learning environments that deconstruct gender stereotypes and embrace leadership diversity (Voelker, 2016; Alberta Education, 2006; Alberta Learning, 2000). Given the importance of physical education on later life choices, Voelker (2016) acknowledges that girls can become great leaders (p. 11).

Traditionally, leadership development efforts have focused on males in the context of a white, upper-middle-class culture, also defined as dysconscious racism (Boske & Elue, 2018; Cox, Bledsoe, & Bowens, 2017; Cherkowski, 2010; Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Voelker, as cited in Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). More specifically, Rauscher & Cooky (2016) advocate structured activity and learning for positive youth development in safe, empowering environments that foster leadership development and that involve supportive relationships with both adults and peers. Notably, focusing on the leadership development of girls does not mean that the leadership development of boys should be ignored (Voelker, 2016). Exposing students to a physical education program by providing a variety of learning methods that emphasises individual strengths rather than labelling dominance towards specific genders reinforces that all can learn and grow given the time and support (Alberta Learning, 2000; Doolittle, 2016).

Approach to instruction.

Principals who provide teachers with effective supervision and support are knowledgeable about the importance of girl-centered programs for middle-school girls that benefit the development of their leadership self-identity (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). There are two methods of effective instructional practices for implementing girl-centered programs found in the literature. The first method of effective instructional practices introduces reflective leadership practices for middle-school girls' participation in physical activity programming (Doolittle, 2016). Second, teachers need to reflect on personal biases about girls and their leadership capacities (Voelker, 2016).

Teachers can create opportunities for middle-school girls to exercise reflective leadership practices by discovering how they conceptualize their potential as leaders (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). The purpose of this reflective practice is to discover where the points of identification and "dis-identification" exist, and what middle-school girls construe as barriers to leadership and action (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). By developing a framework to build the capacity of teachers and coaches to deliver programs within schools and communities, school leaders can incorporate training in self-management strategies for sport and PA to encourage adolescent girls to be independently active (Casey et al., 2014). Rauscher & Cooky (2016) claim that "sport-based positive youth development in particular focuses on the importance of positive and informative feedback, meaningful peer interactions, supportive parental involvement, and a mastery-oriented motivational climate" (p. 290).

Secondly, Voelker (2016) suggests that teachers use reflective practices on personal biases about girls and their leadership capacities by building networking and mentorship opportunities for middle school girls (p. 11). Subtle institutionalised discrimination can impede

and even discourage the progress of girls and other minority students (Cherkowski, 2010). Reflective practices are critical thinking about how personal biases may influence teachers' instructional approaches. When teachers recognize their biases and attitudes towards their students, they welcome growth into their instructional practices to change and address those biases (Voelker, 2016). Showing both women and men as examples of effective leadership across a range of cultural and ethnic heritages helps both girls and boys identify with leadership roles (Voelker, 2016, p. 12).

The current research and literature give evidence that teachers must address personal biases prior to implementing girl-centered physical activity programs (Voelker, 2016). It is a critical approach to instruction to acknowledge feminine characteristics as strengths in leadership roles to eliminate any preconceived feminine stereotypes that students view as weaknesses (Voelker, 2016). A solid understanding of the importance of leadership development through sport for middle-school girls allows teachers to make informed instructional decisions (Alberta Education, 1997; Guagliano et al., 2014a).

Leadership Practices That Support Diversity

The principal is the central agent in establishing a culture in which a learning community can grow and flourish; the principal is considered the “keeper of the vision” in terms of maintaining the direction of the school towards continual growth (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 25). School principals are responsible for providing teachers and students with the best possible opportunities to learn (Alberta Education, 2009; Alberta Education, 2018b). Principals evoke leadership in others in the learning community to contribute to sustaining the shared visions, goals, and purposes of the school's mission (Cherkowski, 2010). Recognising that teachers are essential learners within the community provides the space for professional communities to

collaborate where teachers can come together to learn and grow. Ecoliteracy³ shines a light on new ways of encouraging teachers in leadership for prosocial ideologies by allowing teachers the autonomy to construct social norms within their instructional environments that influence students' social interactions and identities. Principals take responsibility for ensuring conditions in which trust is high and teachers are empowered to share in leadership initiatives that train them to be supportive and caring of all individuals within the learning community (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 25).

Part two of this literature review covers three areas that impact principals' ability make space for teachers that encourage equitable practices in schools: the knowledge of principals in leadership diversity, development of the learning environment, and practices to increase teacher efficacy. Leadership in a learning community is widely distributed, but principals play an integral role in developing the conditions that can encourage the study and practice of inclusion in diversity in the school and help learning communities develop (Cherkowski, 2010).

The knowledge of principals.

Members of marginalized communities experience discrimination and oppression even in what are perceived to be inclusive school environments (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). Effective principals are conscious of the unique barriers experienced by girls and minorities in their leadership pursuits and the ways these barriers can be addressed by the professionals who work with them (Voelker, 2016). Many minority students have limited opportunities after graduating high school because of a lack of instructional support provided during their time in the K–12 school system (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the American

³ Ecoliteracy is a way of knowing about leadership and sharing commonalities with sustainable leadership. Ecoliteracy “grows out of a reflection on the way of nature and equates human actions in a community with a living systems model” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 27).

and Canadian teacher workforce has historical roots (Andrews et al., 2019). Alemanji and Dervin (2016) argue that educators “must learn to identify and deconstruct power structures in social interaction in schools; they must learn to question power structures embedded in history and they must learn to be vocal against all forms of discrimination in and out of school” (p. 210).

Effective principals in diverse school environments “promote an inclusive school culture respecting and honouring diversity” (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 4) by providing instructional, educational, and organizational leaders to advocate for girls and minorities in the school community. Constructing cultures that promote inclusion as a way of life is an essential component for creating sustainable changes in schools (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 24). Another critical component of successful sport and PA programs is tailoring approaches to meet individual and group needs (Voelker, 2016). Therefore, principals and teachers are “expected to be the culturally responsive change agents who possess cultural intelligence⁴ and have the capacity to address the achievement gaps of diverse student populations” (Collins, Duyar & Pearson, 2016, p. 467). It is critical for school leadership to be attentive to the instructional practices that support girl-specific programs in middle-school where lifelong habits and ideologies are developed (Doolittle, 2016).

Additionally, principals need to reflect on the existing biases about women who are less likely to be leaders because of “deeply held, atavistic views that unconsciously equate leadership with masculinity, compounded by the additional domestic responsibilities for home and family that are still seen as naturally accruing to women” (Lumby & Coleman, 2007, p. 5; Mazerolle, Burton & Cotrufo, 2015). Sanchez-Hucles & Davis state, “White women can afford to focus on gender differences, whereas women of colour must often focus on all of the areas of minority

⁴ "A person's capability to adapt as s/he interacts with others from different cultural regions" (Earley, 2002).

difference for them and how these sources of identity influence their struggle to achieve success and feel comfortable in majority-dominated organizations” (2010, p. 173). Similarly, Lumby and Coleman (2007) identify black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers as being subject to structural discriminatory barriers in accessing leadership positions. By identifying these barriers, effective school leadership initiates sustainable changes that involve more than simply implementing activities (Okely et al., 2017). The idea is to shift the mindsets and ideologies into recognizing teachers as leaders who can help students experience authentic democratic communities (Cherkowski, 2010). Principals can effectively shift the mind sets of the school community by modifying the school ethos or environment to raise awareness of the benefits of girl-centered physical activity and sport at the school level (Okely, et al., 2017, p. 3).

Development of the learning environment.

Principals must sustain learning communities for inclusion in diversity by focusing on the development of staff and students (Alberta Education, 2009, Alberta Education, 2018b). Students who feel like they belong in their learning community are encouraged to stay in school to learn and achieve (Alberta Education, 2018a). Leadership-focused programs for middle school girls also increase self-esteem, alleviate body image concerns, promote positive health behaviors, and boost physical activity (Voelker, 2016). Girl-centered physical education programs involve structured leadership opportunities in which girls motivate one another to maintain positive health behaviors. Sport and PA are favorable settings in which to support these efforts (Voelker, 2016).

Researchers have emphasized three key areas in which principals are able to significantly impact the learning environment. First, the cultural perspective of the principal shapes staff and students’ experiences and influences their world view and values and how those

are manifested in the classroom (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010). Second, principals who hire professionals that model inclusive gender roles in sport and PA are effective at positively influencing social norms (Voelker, 2016). Third, experienced and qualified instructional staff who implement learning outcomes help develop leadership capacities for both teachers and students in an inclusive learning environment (Spence et al., 2004).

The capacity to engage equitable opportunities developed in a learning community is determined by the strength of school leadership and the responsibility for implementing the curriculum falls directly on them (Hickson, Berg & Bradford, 2015, p. 8). The first step in Kouzes & Posner's (2002) five practices of exemplary leadership is modelling the way. Principals who demonstrate equitable opportunities in schools recruit staff in sport and PA leadership roles that model diversity in men, women, and minorities (Laura, 2018). Principals that encourage diversity, "purposefully including not only men but also women as examples of effective leadership across a range of cultural and ethnic heritages helps girls identify with leadership roles" (Voelker, 2016, p. 12). If teachers are expected to follow a culture of inclusive ideologies, school leaders are responsible for leading by example. Exemplary principals demonstrate that leadership is not telling people what to do; rather, it's about inspiring them to implement their ideas (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Principals who create effective learning environments also recognize that physical education teachers have the ability to influence the gender attitudes and behaviours that middle-school students adopt (Voelker, 2016). Physical educators and coaches promote girls' leadership development by recognizing their leadership strengths, facilitating networks and mentorship, and providing them with opportunities to lead in ways that build their confidence (Mazerolle, Burton & Cotrufo, 2015; Okely et al., 2017). When working with mixed-gender groups in particular,

physical educators and coaches make sure to select girls to demonstrate skills, lead drills, or choose teams while holding consistent expectations for leadership quality and effectiveness among all participants. Selecting girls for local leadership clinics and connecting them to leadership-related resources helps to further communicate belief in their ability to develop their own leadership skills (Voelker, 2016). Principals who support school environments that encourage teachers to create a class or team culture that supports girls, allow students to recognize that girls are models of strength (Voelker, 2016).

Students taught by PE specialists are more likely than those taught by generalists to demonstrate recommended levels of motivation and confidence and to have better movement skills, which are thought to be critical prerequisites for developing a healthy lifestyle (Law et al., 2018). Seasoned teachers are likely to have experience in making educational judgements based on professional characteristics that exemplify sensitivity and consideration when instructing in diverse learning environments (Benninga, 2013). Physical educators and coaches can demonstrate leadership themselves by challenging stereotypes and eliminating derogatory phrases, such as "throwing like a girl," that hinder the development of female leaders (Voelker, 2016).

Practices to increase teacher efficacy.

Although the practice of welcoming diversity in classroom environments is an initiative, it may not be effective for teachers unless they accept that diversity is a reality that they must address (Cox, Bledsoe & Bowens, 2017). Students and teachers are expected to respect, celebrate, and understand diversity as a strength (Alberta Education, 2018a); therefore, "school principals must proactively bring awareness to teachers that racism and White Privilege still exist in contemporary society" (Hossain, 2015, p. 52). School principals who value teachers as

leaders are essential for developing sustainable learning cultures (Alberta Education, 2018c; Cherkowski, 2010). Principals are required to take the necessary actions to ensure that all students consistently receive inclusive instruction by providing teachers with the requisite information and training to be effective in diverse learning environments (Alberta Education, 2009). Two instructional leadership practices that enhance teacher efficacy in sport and PA are: (1) to challenge teachers on their teaching pedagogies to explore the strengths of gender roles and diversity, and (2) to enable teachers to have the autonomy to put those ideas into action (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

As lifelong learning professionals, effective school boards and principals encourage and support teachers with tools and information on gender and cultural diversity, especially when surrounded by cultures in their institution that are different than their own (Cox, Bledsoe & Bowens, 2017). Principals need to become mentors and advocates for girls and minorities in sport and PA by opting for a physically active lifestyle to convince both staff and students that physical activity is an integral part of a healthy lifestyle.

Summary

The literature review shows the important role school principals play in developing the leadership capacities of both teachers and middle-school girls for developing the skill sets, knowledge and information in diverse learning communities. School districts and principals are mandated to ensure the success of all students. Thus, it is essential they understand the relationship between effective instructional leadership practices that break gender stereotypes and the effective instructional leadership practices that encourage the participation of middle-school girls in sport and PA. (Alberta Education, 2006b; Alberta Education, 2009; Doolittle, 2016; Voelker, 2016). The first part of the literature review examined teaching practices that

improve the physical literacy of middle-school girls to increase their competencies and lifelong physical activity and to make them confident in taking on leadership roles. There was also a discussion of how school principals can provide opportunities for girl-centered physical education programs where teachers are required to have essential knowledge and skills to ensure the deconstruction of gender biases and stereotypes (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Voelker, 2016). Physical education content knowledge provides teachers with the foundation to make informed instructional decisions (Alberta Education, 1997; Guagliano et al., 2014a). When content knowledge is combined with information gathered through fostering relationships with students, teachers can meet the individual needs of students and improve their development and self-efficacy in sport and PA (Alberta Education, 1997; Doolittle, 2016) while nurturing their supercognitive skills (Intrator & Siegel, 2008).

Additionally, teachers must create learning environments where students feel secure and safe in taking the risks necessary to challenge their physical literacy and leadership capacities (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Rauscher & Cooky, 2016). In correlation with those areas, effective girl-centered programs focus on promoting girls' leadership development by recognizing their leadership strengths, facilitating networks and mentorship, and providing them with opportunities to lead in ways that build their confidence (Volker, 2016).

Many principals' lack diversity among their staff in relation to increasingly diverse school populations (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). However, there are instructional leadership practices that principals can implement that have also been shown to positively impact leadership in diversity where girls and other minority groups are supported as equitable leaders in schools and in the community (Rauscher & Cooky, 2016). Although content knowledge is beneficial, it is the leadership knowledge and skills of the principal that have the most significant impact on

encouraging diversity and inclusion in schools (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Principals are advised to develop teachers as leaders who understand their impact in reshaping school culture from individualism to an inclusive learning community (Cherkowski, 2010). Principals are then able to reinforce this culture and increase teacher efficacy through challenging the process, enabling others to act, and modelling effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on the practices of teachers and principals that have been demonstrated to increase the development of middle-school girls' self-efficacy, confidence, and leadership skills through sport and PA. The conclusion is that understanding the practices of effective sport and PA programming and implementing inclusive instructional leadership practices increases both student and teacher efficacy. Principals can influence social change using sport and PA as a tool to show teachers and middle-school girls that strength lies in diversity. Chapter 3 reviews the conclusions reached in Chapter 2 and includes recommendations intended to assist principals to increase staff diversity and develop the cultural intelligence and skills necessary to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Girl-centered leadership programs in middle schools positively impact life skills and interest in future leadership aspirations (Doolittle, 2016; Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015; Voelker, 2016). It was evident in the findings that principals are the primary school leaders to initiate cultural shifts in schools and provide teachers with the autonomy to carry and demonstrate leadership roles (Cherkowski, 2010). Schools are becoming more diverse and the majority of faculty members do not represent the ethnic, gender, racial, and cultural diversity of their students (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). This deficiency in instructional and leadership diversity is influenced by historically and predominately white, middle-class institutions in North America that tend to replicate the current demographic qualities of the teaching profession in teacher education programs (Andrews et al., 2019, p. 8). The purpose of this capstone is to assist principals in adopting effective teaching and leadership practices that have been demonstrated to increase the participation and retention of middle-school girls in sport. By implementing sport and physical activities as platforms to create safe learning environments for middle-school girls, school leaders will help students develop girls' leadership capacities and knowledge to build their skills and confidence for unlimited future career opportunities (Voelker, 2016). Further research by Voelker (2016) suggests that, in order to shift traditional gender stigmas and stereotypes, teacher leaders need to use diverse examples of women and minorities in their instruction for students to relate to and to acknowledge that girls and minorities can be great leaders.

Chapter 2 reviewed and analysed current literature related to how principals can create and implement programming to create safe learning physical education environments for middle-school girls. The chapter also provided a description of instructional leadership practices that

can improve the retention and confidence in sport and PA for middle-school girls. Lastly, the overall culture of the school is influenced by principals who create an institution where diversity and inclusion are the norm and not a separate curricular objective (Cherkowski, 2010).

The initial portion of Chapter 2 reviewed current literature regarding teaching practices that have been found to improve the physical literacy and leadership capacities of middle-school girls. It was found that trained physical education specialists help students gain the knowledge and skill sets in physical education that develop confidence in physical literacy and diminish gender stereotypes (Gerlich, 2018; Law et al., 2018). Additionally, teachers must collaborate as a learning community and enhance their teaching pedagogy by participating in lifelong professional development, specifically in physical literacy, which is essential for effective PE instruction (Alberta Education, 1997). Finally, teachers must foster effective relationships through inclusive practices for student engagement (Alberta Learning, 2000; Doolittle, 2016) and ensure that students are provided with safe, secure learning environments where they feel confident in challenging their skills in physical education, sport, and PA (Alberta Education, 2016). Based on this understanding of teaching practices that improve physical literacy in middle-school girls, principals can further enhance student engagement and participation by implementing related instructional leadership practices.

The second portion of Chapter 2 examined leadership practices that have been initiated by principals to improve the diversity that contributes to the retainment, self-efficacy, leadership development, and academic success in middle-school girls using sport as a means for social change (Ladda, 2014). The research shows that principals must recognize the historical roots of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in schools (Andrews et al., 2019) in order to address the unique barriers experienced by girls and minorities in their leadership pursuits (Voelker, 2016).

Principals can then work to increase teacher efficacy through instructional leadership practices by challenging the process of minority stereotyping and by enabling others to act and model effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Lastly, Cherkowski (2010) shows how principals can develop teachers as leaders and be aware of their impact in reshaping school culture from a focus on individualism to an inclusive learning community.

Findings and Implications of the Research

The findings of the literature review indicate that effective instructional leadership practices by principals can impact school programming to support the learning and leadership capacities of middle-school girls. Principals can initiate a cultural shift to break gender stereotypes and traditional institutional practices such as dysconscious racism (Cherkowski, 2010; Lumby & Coleman, 2007). This is significant as the Alberta Teachers Association (2010) acknowledges that schools are a critical space to teaching young Canadians that strength lies in diversity. Effective instructional leaders are cognizant that physical education and sport are favorable settings in which to support social change (Voelker, 2016). Although content knowledge of physical education is beneficial, researchers have also verified that collaboration within the learning community and other forms of professional development in physical literacy are essential for effective instruction (Alberta Education, 1997). Moreover, principals have the ability to increase middle-school girls' leadership development by understanding and encouraging diversity and inclusion training and development among staff and students (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). This initiative follows the Alberta Teachers' Association (2010) expectation that principals must consider and implement ways to support instruction that is based on culture and diversity. Therefore, using effective instructional leadership practices can increase middle-school girls' leadership capacities and breaking gender stigmas and stereotypes may help

principals understand how they can fulfill the role of instructional leaders in a growing and diverse student population. The ability of principals to acknowledge the lack of staff diversity for support and content knowledge to increase the cultural intelligence of faculty, highlights the core problem for the deficiency of women and minority representation in school leadership roles addressed throughout this capstone.

Summary Remarks

The problem addressed in this capstone is the deficiency of women in the leadership hierarchy and the slow progress of women of colour in leadership. The research demonstrates that implementing programs and activities that demonstrate effective leadership to girls between 10 and 12 years of age positively impacts their perceptions of career opportunities, expectations by societal norms, and self-beliefs (Shapiro, Grossman, Carter & Martin, 2015). Although the impact of females modelling sport leadership roles contributes to the engagement and retention of middle-school girls in sport (Ladda, 2015), teachers who specialize in physical education further enhance the learning capacities of middle-school girls to gain the skills and confidence in other sport and physical activities (Law et al., 2018).

Ultimately, it is by understanding the relationship between quality teaching and effective instructional leadership practices that principals are able to generate learning communities that embrace diversity as a way of life (Cherkowski, 2010). Applying this knowledge will assist principals in ensuring equitable opportunities for all students. However, principals who lack cultural diversity in their institutions can still find value in the recommendations that follow.

Recommendations

The principal is a central agent in establishing a culture in which a learning community can grow and flourish. It is the principal's responsibility to maintaining the direction of the

learning community towards continual growth (Cherkowski, 2010). As principals must hold themselves accountable for their students' academic achievements, it is essential they take the necessary steps to ensure the success of all students (Alberta Education, 2009). Therefore, the recommendations that follow are designed to assist principals who lack cultural intelligence and diversity among staff, especially in an increasingly diverse school system; following these recommendations will help ensure equitable opportunities for all students. Based on an analysis of the literature, principals must focus on increasing their cultural intelligence skills and understanding in two areas: implementing effective leadership programming and recruiting diverse staff.

Cherkowski (2010) shows how principals evoke the leadership of others in the community to contribute to sustaining the shared visions, goals, and purposes of the school. This leadership courage needs to be developed in professional preparation programmes (Cherkowski, 2010). Principals can encourage teachers when using a variety forms of media to use examples of leaders from a diverse range of genders and cultures to show that strong positive leadership can be exemplified by any demographic. Schools also need to make students aware of the concept of white privilege and how it has and continues to impact their lives (Hossain, 2015).

Although leadership in a learning community is ultimately widely distributed among teachers, coaches, and administration, principals play the key role in developing the conditions by which a learning community may develop. It is imperative that principals encourage professional development days in cultural literacy (CL) that increase their instructional leadership practices for girl-centered and minority-leadership programming (Voelker, 2016). This formal training in CL provides support for equitable gender and ethnic career opportunities for all students (Rauscher & Cooky, 2016). Exposure to culturally diverse settings is greatly

limited if teacher education programs confine experiences within the boundaries of their own institutional and cultural contexts (Leh, Grau & Guiseppe, 2015) because teachers continue to feel unprepared to work in diverse classrooms (Leh, Grau & Guiseppe, 2015; as cited in Walker et al., 2004). Tuters & Portelli (2017) suggest there is a great need for leadership preparation programming that not only provides educational leaders with the knowledge and skills to support all students in their academic and social development, but also helps educational leaders understand and address the systemic nature and forms of discrimination which their students face daily.

When considering staff recruitment for diverse student populations, seasoned teachers are likely to have experience in decision making using cultural sensitivity, judgement, motivation, and character (Benninga, 2013). In similar ways, black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers are subject to structural discriminatory barriers in attaining leadership positions (Lumby & Coleman, 2007, p. 5). There is a relative lack of black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers in the western world, certainly in OECD countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Subsequently, the dominance of BME staff in subordinate roles can reinforce stereotypes that BME teachers can't be leaders in the educational and wider community (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Encouraging diversity among school leadership faculty and staff is not only beneficial for females or minority groups but for all students (Voelker, 2016). Diverse leadership can break gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes and biases. If minority ethnic principals and teachers are rarely represented or are stereotyped to be identified with language barriers with limited access to senior management teams, negative messages are given about who is valued (Lumby & Coleman, 2007).

Principals who recognize teachers as essential learners within the community provide spaces for conceiving professional communities in which teachers can collaborate and grow (Cherkowski, 2010). Learning communities that offer possibilities for achieving reform and improvement in schools through collaborative working environments and through knowledge and awareness of culture, diversity, and intercultural competence, can help school leaders promote a diverse, sustainable, and global education (Cherkowski, 2010). This work helps prepare principals and teachers for the multicultural and diverse reality of schools in the twenty-first century (Cherkowski, 2010).

In conclusion, teachers encounter many ethical decision-making processes daily, and effective teachers continually learn new information on cultural diversity, especially when surrounded by cultures in their institution that they are not part of. Embracing diversity to support girls and minorities to develop their individual identities can be a powerful mechanism to bridging the gap from discrimination and racism to inclusion. One of the roles of culturally competent leaders is to open doors where there are no gender barriers or stereotypes to help create an environment of equitable opportunity not only for students but also for staff within the institution.

Suggested research for the future

Although the findings of this capstone indicate that principals have the ability to shift their schools to being agents of social change through sport and PA, further research is needed. Physical literacy and leadership capacities of students have a significant impact on their future, so it is important that principals have efficient strategies to develop and refine their abilities to ensure that middle-school girls and minorities development physical literacy, self-efficacy, and confidence in their leadership potential. Researchers should also put a focus on the systems that

have produced hardship and discrimination for women and minority women to reach top leadership roles. Another focus to investigate is how the middle-school curriculum can improve and incorporate the history and stories of women and minorities as equitable and capable leaders in society.

Further research can focus on the subtle institutionalised racism that can impede and even discourage the academic progress of minority groups. Often, cultural values and beliefs of the dominant culture inadvertently marginalize and ostracise young generations (Cherkowski, 2010). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) state, “Whenever diversity is an add-on, we normalize Whiteness rather than diversity” (p. 563). Many school leaders are not given the information they need to encourage diversity and inclusion (Leh, Grau & Guiseppa, 2015, p. 99). As a result, enrollment and learning opportunities for minority students can decrease (Cherkowski, 2010). Therefore, a study on the district-level, central office application of strategic programs designed to prepare administrators for culturally diverse settings would be valuable in preparing principals and teachers for increasingly diverse student populations.

Finally, more research is needed on how principals can enhance their cultural intelligence by leveraging the competencies of teachers’ accountability to implement inclusion for diversity and the use of effective data-driven decision making for school improvement. This would also be of value to principals who are challenged by educational systems that cling to outdated curricula and an educational belief system that underserves all students.

Final Statements

When women and minorities are represented in leadership roles in sport and PA, gender and minority discrimination is decreased. This increases the participation of girls in sport where they can develop their leadership skills and self-efficacy. Diverse leadership is a true reflection

of inclusion in education. Teachers as leaders who model cultural and ethnic diversity break societal gender norms and racial and ethnic stereotypes within our schools and communities. Effective school leadership is also influenced from a teaching lens that focuses on how teachers can guide middle-school girls in embracing their leadership capacities and become role models that promote inclusion and diversity as a way of life. Therefore, inclusive diversity practises are not limited to students; rather, institutions themselves become agents for social change. When students have positive role models in school leadership that reflect cultural and ethnic similarities and differences, students and staff gain the cultural intelligence, respect, and knowledge of how to model inclusive cohabitation in an increasingly multicultural society.

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