

TENSIONS IN MENTORING:  
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE COACH  
MENTORING PROGRAM INSTITUTED BY HOCKEY MANITOBA

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The success of our Canadian national hockey teams in the international arena offers a platform on which to evaluate our current athlete development initiatives in hockey. Following the Molson Open Ice Summit in 1999, Hockey Canada embarked on several initiatives exploring ways to enhance player development. One of these initiatives was the National Coach Mentorship Program, which emphasizes cooperation between coaches, within a highly competitive environment. The purpose of this study was to analyze the implementation of the NCMP in Manitoba to further understand tensions between emphasis on competitive performance outcome principles in Canadian hockey and collaborative approaches to coach education. Using a community of practice model with semi-structured interviews, complemented by participant observation, this study was completed to provide a greater understanding of tensions in mentoring by analyzing the program's formal parameters and design and its' current manifestation in concrete mentoring relationships in the Manitoba hockey coaching community.

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To Sport Psych Manitoba, well it is done! Thank you for always giving me the encouragement to keep on giv'nr ...we will see you at the Burrow.

To the mentors in this study, thank you for your commitment and passion for the game of hockey. Your contributions to the youth of this great game are immeasurable. A special thank you to Bob Caldwell and Bernie Reichardt, you have had a significant impact on my own growth as a coach and as a person, I thank you.

To my Mom and Dad, simply, without you, none of this would have been possible. I am forever thankful.

## DEDICATION

To all the volunteer minor hockey league coaches who passionately dedicate their time to the betterment of youth sport in the interest of positive life experiences. Your passion is shared and appreciated. See you around the rinks...

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abbreviation or symbol</i>	<i>Term</i>
NHL	National Hockey League
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
HNIC	Hockey Night in Canada
NCMP	National Coach Mentorship Program

## COACH VIGNETTES

*So you decided to be a coach?*

*Brian hurries into the Broadside Community Centre parking lot at 9:05 a.m., already five minutes late for the coach clinic he is required to take as the new volunteer head coach of his daughter's seven and eight year olds hockey team. As he rushes into the front lobby, an older looking man with a Hockey Manitoba shirt greets him, "Don't worry we never start on time anyways." He proceeds into the community hall where there are six long folding tables with four chairs each centered in the room, facing the side wall on which an overhead projector shows a slide that reads, "So you decided to coach...now what?" Brian finds a vacant chair at the back of the room and settles in for the four hour clinic. At its conclusion he will be 'certified' as a coach and now considered competent to lead his daughter's team in the upcoming season. As the clinic coordinator (the man with the Hockey Manitoba shirt) begins to talk, the thought occurs to Brian, "How did I end up in this seat on a Saturday morning?"*

*He recalls the previous week where he also had sat at the back of this very room, during the first parent meeting of his daughter's hockey team. It was here that the conveners had asked for volunteers to fill one of the vacant head coach positions. The convener mentioned that this year they were short a head coach for one of the two seven and eight under teams, and they were taking volunteers. The room fell silent and others gave Brian an encouraging look. Sure he had played university hockey and was a teacher at the Broadside Elementary, but coaching youth hockey? Doubtful of his ability he raised his hand nonetheless...*

*So you decided to be a mentor?*

*As I drove up Provincial highway six and drew closer to Warren, Manitoba, doubt and uncertainty about my recent appointment as a Hockey Manitoba mentor crept into my mind. I was on my way to instruct my first specialty clinic, with the head of the mentoring program in Manitoba, the master mentor<sup>1</sup> himself: How would I do? Would I mess up? Would I be able to live up to the expectations? After my one-day crash course on mentoring, I was officially a Hockey Manitoba mentor. Despite my new accreditation I wondered: What if those coaches ask me questions that I do not know about? How am I supposed to act? Being a mentor is no big deal...right? Sure, I had played university hockey and was a paid coach for an elite traveling team, but mentoring coaches?*

*As we walked into the lobby of the Sun-gro center wearing our mentorship jackets, the creases of mine still showing the recentness of the fitting; all eyes focused on us with an air of inquiry. The master mentor seemed un-concerned and proceeded to interact with the regional representative. As we began to set up, the participants began to arrive and introduce themselves while entering into local anecdotes, I was clearly an outsider here, but the master mentor joined in effortlessly as he set up the equipment. There were eight coaches in attendance sitting in the make shift classroom in the aroma filled confines of a dressing room. The banter ceased as the master mentor entered into an explanation of the specialty clinic we were about to administer. I was familiar with the information package and objectives of the clinic but this was to be my first one. My 'official' training to become a mentor had begun.*

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<sup>1</sup> The master mentor is a technical term used to denote the lead individual in the mentorship in Manitoba. Their responsibility is leading the coordination and implementation of the initiatives of the National Coach Mentorship program

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTEXT OF MENTORING IN HOCKEY

### Canadian identity and hockey

In Canada the game of hockey far exceeds the realm of recreation or sport.

Hockey is a subculture, in which the National Hockey League (NHL) represents the pinnacle of success, where NHL derived customs and values remain the ones that really count (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 162). Voices and opinions coming from media such as *Hockey Night in Canada*<sup>2</sup> (HNIC) engage the nation in dialogue pertaining to what it means to be Canadian. As Gruneau and Whitson (1993) argue, “hockey has found a central place in Canada’s national popular culture through many factors, including HNIC broadcasts on the CBC; the long history and sheer numbers of community, industrial, and age-graded teams; and the collective memories of nearly a century of hockey folklore, subcultural traditions, and heroes” (p. 252).

Hockey has become a way of life, a common referent shared by many individuals, permeating our conversations and common interests. The game can be understood in a fundamental sense as part of the way in which Canadians live and make sense of their lives; “Hockey acts both as myth and allegory in Canadian culture. The game has become one of this country’s most significant collective representations – a story that Canadians tell themselves about what it means to be Canadian” (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 13).

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<sup>2</sup> *Hockey Night in Canada* (HNIC) is a television broadcast of NHL games in Canada. HNIC consistently remains one of the highest-rated Canadian programs on television. It is also the world's oldest sports related television program still on the air.

### *Importance of competition*

*Sport is a long way from being the most important cultural practice in the making of any given society. But, for Canadians, one sport – hockey – has been very important indeed. (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993, p. 30)<sup>3</sup>*

The success of Canada's national teams has become intimately linked to our sense of national identity. International competitions producing distinctive outcomes which position us against them provide fertile grounds for the promotion of national identity and pride. Athletes representing Canada in international competitions are celebrated as individuals, but what is also celebrated tacitly is the society and culture that produced them (Gruneau & Whitson, 1993). Whether people follow the game of hockey or not, it is difficult to escape hockey's influential grasp. The language of hockey situated in Canadian communities makes it hard not to identify with the success of our nation at international competitions, and such competitions become occasions for national self-examination. In Gruneau and Whitson's (1993) words, we are dealing with "a history that has allowed the game to represent something quintessentially Canadian. For better or worse, ice hockey is something 'we' invented; it is 'our' game" (p.3).

One of the best known instances demonstrating this importance occurred in the now legendary 1972 Challenge Series between Canada and the Soviet Union. Canada's last second victory, "the cause of such explosive national celebration, became the cause of unforgettable national concern" (Dryden, 1983, p. 209). As depicted by the media, the Challenge series victory "not only won the trophy for Team Canada but salvaged an entire nation's pride" (CBC, 2007).

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<sup>3</sup> The use of quotes or phrases at the beginning of a chapter or sub-heading is utilized for the purposes of highlighting and summarizing the main emphasis of the section. Italicized quotes will be indented to represent an individual paragraph preceding the main text.

*Success, identity, and the Molson Open Ice Summit*

With the importance of hockey to Canada, it is not surprising that a lack of success of our national teams leads to responses that continually explore programs for the enhancement of hockey and performance for all its participants; as Dryden (1983) noted, “we have responded – with studies and government inquiries, with clinics, books, films, seminars and symposia, hockey schools and coaching programs” (p. 209). Such responses once again emerged in light of a more recent deterioration in Canadian hockey’s international standing in 1998 and 1999, when Canada won only a single gold medal at seven international competitions.

The meager results over these two years were seen by some as an overall threat to national identity and the pride of Canadian hockey. In response, representatives from the NHL, National Hockey League Players Association, the Canadian Hockey League<sup>4</sup>, and Hockey Canada gathered in Toronto, Ontario for discussions on player development during the Molson Open Ice Summit, in August 1999. The purpose of the Summit was, “to bring together Canadian hockey constituents from all levels to examine the state of hockey in Canada and to develop concrete recommendations to enhance player development at the grassroots level” (Hockey Canada, n.d.). The format was designed to analyze how far Canadian hockey had come over the past 100 years; the main focus was on player development and future aspirations of hockey in Canada.

The outcome of the summit resulted in a unanimous agreement on 11 recommendations for hockey in Canada, and a mandate for Hockey Canada to execute a

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<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Hockey League is an amateur league governed by Hockey Canada that is comprised of three subsidiary leagues: the Western Hockey League, the Ontario Hockey League, and the Quebec Major Junior League. Players are aged 16 – 21 and compete yearly for the league championship, the Memorial Cup.



plan to address these needs. One of these recommendations was to create a system of mentors for the enhancement of coach education and player development. By July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 Hockey Canada initiated its implementation strategy, and pilot sessions of the National Coach Mentorship Program (NCMP) were held.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the implementation of the NCMP in Manitoba to further understand tensions between emphasis on competitive performance outcome driven principles in Canadian hockey and collaborative approaches to coach education. A more detailed explanation of the formal intents of this study follows in section 2.2.

### *Mentors and mentorship*

No single universally accepted definition of the terms mentor and mentorship exists. The term *mentor*<sup>5</sup> generally denotes an older experienced person working with a younger individual, with intentions of shaping the development of the *mentoree*<sup>6</sup> through practical passing of knowledge and experience. Hockey Canada (2007a) currently defines a mentor as, “a wise and trusted teacher, advisor, counselor, instructor, tutor, and trainer,” with mentoring to occur when there is, “a relationship between a guide (mentor) and a coach, which enables the coach to become more successful in all aspects of his/her coaching skills.” Traditionally a mentor relationship is formed by incidental interactions between a novice and a more experienced coach who informally assists the novice coach through their educational experience (Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995). Mentors are

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<sup>5</sup> The use of italics within the text will be used to highlight the introduction of key terms and terms which carry a variation to commonly understood definitions, after which they will not be italicized again.

<sup>6</sup> The term *mentoree* will be used to denote a less experienced coach who interacts with a mentor coach in an effort to further the mentoree’s abilities and experiences. This term will be used for economy of presentation.

commonly found in the field directing, guiding, and facilitating the process of coaching. Their efforts are directed at the practical application of coaching knowledge and can best be seen through the interactions and social processes in the field.

Mentoring has been defined as work-based training under the guidance of an experienced and expert practitioner (Lyle, 2002) with the mentor guiding the mentoree toward a deeper understanding of her or his work (Dodge, 2001). Recent literature examining reflective practice in coach development has reiterated the mentor's function in facilitating the reflective cycle, "those responsible for the provision of coach education should be urged to shape learning around practical, contextualized coaching experience and have practitioners reflect upon it" (Nelson & Cushion, 2006, p.182). The essence of a formalized coach mentorship program should be to provide the opportunity for a coach to critically reflect on experiential and subject knowledge acquired through formal processes such as coach certification courses. Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) stated that, "unless coaches reflect on and re-interpret past experiences of coaching they remain in danger of leaving their practice untouched by new knowledge and insight" (p. 224).

Mentoring relationships have the potential to play a significant role in the growth of all individuals involved. It has been suggested that mentors can assist in this development by helping mentorees to become increasingly aware of their context, current level of coaching knowledge, and individual coaching philosophy (Nelson & Cushion, 2006). In a study examining the importance of mentoring in the development of coaches Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke & Salmela (1998) found that mentor relationships offered an opportunity for developing coaches to receive applied experience within a trusted

relationship that facilitated the sharing of philosophies, beliefs, and values about coaching and human interaction.

For the purpose of this study I defined the term mentor as a practitioner who retains a greater degree of experiential and institutionalized knowledge and endeavors to pass this knowledge on to a less knowledgeable practitioner, and the concept of mentorship to denote a trusting relationship between individuals where cooperative learning takes place in an environment cultivated through rapport and support applied to concrete practical applications of coaching competencies.

#### *Coach mentoring in Manitoba hockey*

After the Molson Open Ice Summit, Hockey Manitoba was one of the first provinces to run pilot projects. Most regional associations in Manitoba have mentors who are available to help coaches at all levels of the game. Each mentor has a variety of materials (books, videos, manuals, etc.) available that he can provide on a free loan basis, to anyone who requests them. Coaches wishing to participate determine what aspect of coaching they would like assistance with, and following initial contact, mentors can facilitate a relationship to aid them. The continuing evolution of the NCMP provides coaches with the support necessary for their daily coaching and education in their respective social and cultural context.

#### The research issue

As mentioned earlier, in Canada, hockey constitutes a space that heavily emphasizes values based on performance-outcome oriented competition. Generally the hockey coach is looked upon to be the one who possesses the skills and experience required to provide players with an environment most conducive for outcome successes.

Coaches are constantly exposed to pressures from parents, athletes, and administrators to produce winning teams and often model their approach to coaching on elite professional sport where winning is emphasized (Gilbert, Trudel, & Haughian, 1999; McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000). Because of these pressures many minor hockey coaches are reluctant to share ideas with other coaches out of a fear that their team may lose the edge when competing. With this reluctance a certain isolationism can take root and coaches see other coaches as enemies, not partners (Trudel & Gilbert, 2004). Some training and mentoring programs tend to reinforce this situation because the focus is on fostering individual coach development in a competitive structure.

Despite positive enhancements to current coach training and mentoring programs, competitive pressures can make playing hockey seem too much like an obligation and not enough like play. Coaches by definition are pre-occupied with the production of successful physical performance. Galipeau and Trudel (2006) argue that because sport takes place in a performance-outcome environment where coaches are often replaced if they do not produce a successful team, coaches might make decisions that are in their own best interest, but not necessarily in the best interest of the athletes. This along with the high turnover rate of coaches in youth sport, rarely allows for collaboration within the coaching community (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2001).

Current coach mentorship programs rely on a collaborative approach to learning (Culver & Trudel, 2006), which can ultimately run counter to many coaches' deeply held acceptance of individual success. Coaches are asked to share their knowledge so that other coaches may benefit in an environment that in principle emphasizes competitive success; this can create tensions when coach education programs move towards a more

cooperative and athlete-centered paradigm. In a recent promotional video for Hockey Canada's specialty clinics, the opening quote reads: "The best coaches are also the best thieves" followed by the invitation to "steal drills and techniques from your peers" before leading into promoting the NCMP as being "designed to give coaches a practical learning experience while sharing ideas and knowledge" (Hockey Canada, 2007b). While this video can be seen as recognizing tensions in coach mentoring programs, it also reproduces tensions situated between competition and cooperation principles.

The success of coach mentorship programs depends on the ability of coaches to mediate the dominant performance-outcome related principles. The focus of such programs generally emphasizes the development of the individual coach but does not always facilitate collegiality between coaches; it can create a highly competitive field where the competition for resources and knowledge can overshadow the necessity for collaboration (Trudel & Gilbert, 2004). Coaches involved in the mentorship program are encouraged to cooperate with fellow coaches and mentors in an effort to further their coaching abilities and their team's performance, yet to do so within a system intimately structured by performance-outcome oriented principles. This emphasis on cooperation within an essentially competitive environment creates tensions that are the focal point of this study.

### *Research steps*

When asked why he or she does not share his information with a colleague, a common answer from a coach is, "Because I want to win". To be seen as a successful coach, the culture of coaching, as structured by performance-outcome oriented principles, stipulates that you must have a winning team. Sport's emphasis on winning and

reproduction of values related to competition (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004; Cushion et al., 2003; Trudel & Gilbert, 2004; Petitpas, 2002), perpetuates an environment where acts of collaboration between opposing coaches remain rare. Within this competitive culture coaches typically strive to obtain the upper hand and to know more than their fellow coach so that they may provide their team with the most promising chance of success.

Collaboration among coaches so that one coach may be victorious over a cooperating coach in a competition, produces conflicting relationships arising through the simultaneous emphasis on performance-outcome driven principles and intended cooperative effects of the mentorship program. As a result of the competitive focus, coaches can be reluctant to participate in such collaborative mentoring relationships.

The intent of this study was to analyze the implementation of the NCMP in Manitoba to further understand tensions contained in this relationship. To do so, the *community of practice* concept was utilized to analyze the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program and the experiences of active mentors in the program. The analysis focused on two aspects of the coach mentorship program: the background information on the program's formal parameters and design, as well as the program's current manifestation in concrete mentoring relationships in the Manitoba hockey coaching community.

To analyze the background information on the program's formal parameters and design, the study focused on:

1. The purpose and intent of the program.
2. The system of delivery (seminars, courses, presentations, meetings) and participation frequency of coaches.

3. Criteria of inclusion and exclusion of participating members (mentors and coaches).
4. The decision-making channels and reporting structure of the program.
5. How the mentors are chosen and how they are trained.
6. The geographical distribution of the mentors across the province.
7. Modes of publicity and promotion of the program.

The second step in the analysis focused on the program's current implementation in concrete mentoring relationships in the hockey coaching community in Manitoba, and on the lived experiences of the mentors in the program. The area of interest from this perspective was:

1. The contextual conditions under which mentoring relationships between a mentor and a mentoree can be successful or fail.
2. The experience of mentoring relationships from the point of view of the mentors.
3. Understanding the definition of criteria for success and failure from the point of view of the mentor and mentoree, and possible reasons for divergence between the two.
4. The respective experiences of individual and group mentoring relationships.
5. Experiences related to the nature and frequency of past interactions and interventions.
6. The structure and content of conversations occurring in mentoring relationships.
7. Observation of concrete mentoring situations.

8. Mentors as a community of practice with the horizontal and hierarchical working relationships between mentors.
9. Comparison of formally instituted mentoring situations to a mentor's and mentoree's understanding of meaningful mentoring.

Based on the outcomes gained from an analysis of the NCMP as implemented by Hockey Manitoba, I provided a community of practice account of the comparison of the formal intents and stated goals of Hockey Manitoba's mentorship program and the lived experiences achieved in concrete mentoring relationships with respect to tensions perceived between cooperative endeavors of the NCMP and competitive principles in Canadian hockey. Emphasis was placed on the concepts of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, with reference to the modes of belonging and boundary dimensions, as they are relevant to the research issue. This study was carried out with the intent of contributing to the understanding of experiences in an active coach mentorship program within Hockey Manitoba.



## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

### The socially educated coach

A coach's education does not occur exclusively within the confines of a classroom, provided by a single expert coach who has been assigned by the coaching association. A coach's education extends far beyond the rink; it is also shaped by the surrounding cultural contexts and social interactions that he or she engages in. The art of coaching in the coaching community is a complex union of knowledge and experience created through the interaction and integration of athletes, administrators, spectators, and coaches within the sporting culture. Salmela (1996) outlined that coaching expertise draws on several sources including both formal and informal learning opportunities that occur in interactions beyond those of structured coach education programs.

Coaches cannot be assumed to enter the educational format of coach education as a "blank slate"<sup>7</sup>; they arrive with long-standing and deep-rooted habits, and a set of beliefs tempered by years of experience in the sport (Cushion et al., 2003; Abraham & Collins, 1998). These pre-existing beliefs can act as filters, of which the coaches are not always fully aware and which strongly influence their thought processes and actions (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Gilbert & Trudel, 2006). The coaching process itself must be seen as both an individual and social process that is dependent on the causes and effects of human interaction (Bowes & Jones, 2006; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2002; Potrac, Brewer, Jones, Armour, & Hoff, 2000; Cushion et al., 2003; Wright, Trudel & Culver, 2007; Culver & Trudel, 2006; Schempp, 1998; Campbell & Crisfield, 1994). If one is to change or improve learning in an educational environment

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<sup>7</sup> The use of quotation marks within the document is to highlight a single word or phrase as an ironic comment, as slang, or as an invented or coined expression.

such as coaching, one needs to take into account such influences (Potrac et al., 2000; Potrac & Jones, 1999; Bowes & Jones, 2006; Bloom et al., 1998). Cushion et al. (2003) elaborated on how coaching knowledge cannot just be based upon procedural knowledge, skills, technique, and tactics; as this can be problematic because it assumes that knowledge exists within a vacuum, where it is passed on unhindered and unchallenged, as if it were value free. As such, coach education and coach mentorship programs must be viewed in social context to further examine the developmental aspects in coaching knowledge, since, “coaching is essentially a social practice created in the interaction of coaches, athletes and the club environment” (Jones, Armour, Potrac, 2004, p. 106). Communities of practice offers a useful concept in analyzing the social aspects of the coach mentoring community.

#### Sport as a community of practice

Our sporting lives occur within the many interconnecting communities in the space of sport in which we live, learn, and interact. Communities of practice is a term used by Wenger (1998a; 2000) to describe such spaces. Communities of practice are where we exchange knowledge, define our competencies, and participate in our various relationships. Community of practice proposes that the very reason why people engage in communities is their desire to share experience, obtain a greater understanding, and to solve problems collectively (Breu & Hemingway, 2002). In order to position this study within the community of practice concept, a more comprehensive conceptualization of this term is provided below.

As members of these communities, we define among other things what makes us competent to participate (Wenger, 2000; 1998b). These communities therefore play a

significant role in the constitution of our identity. We define who we are by what is familiar and what is foreign, by what we need to know and what we can safely ignore (Wenger, 2000). “The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing, it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do...Such a concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit” (Hung & Nichani, 2002, p. 10). Wenger’s concept of communities of practice is founded on social learning theory and is a relational conceptualization of the social networks in which knowledge and information sharing is situated. Sport, as such a community, maintains a number of functions that Wenger (1998a) stated are instrumental in a community’s existence: a node for the exchange and interpretation of information, the retaining of knowledge, stewards of competencies, and the provision of a home for identities.

Our knowledge is created, shared, organized, and revised within and among these communities (Wenger, 1998a). The socially defined competence in a sport community exists in interplay with our experience and it is in this interplay that learning takes place and is subsequently combined into a way of knowing (Wenger, 2000). It is this competence that our respective community has established over time, along with our ongoing experience that comprises our knowing and therefore participation in a community (Wenger, 2000). As Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson (2004a) stated, “it is not just that each person learns in a context, rather, each person is a reciprocal and mutually constitutive part of that context” (p. 168). Knowing and knowledge sharing are thus acts of participation (Wenger, 2000). Knowledge is produced within particular socio-cultural contexts, serves particular interests, and carries certain values (Cushion et al., 2003). Meaningful socially constructed knowledge is transferred and shared throughout the

numerous relationships and interactions that occur within a sport community of practice. We tacitly exchange this collectively constructed knowledge within the shared environments and communities in which we are involved (Breu & Hemingway, 2002).

### *Communities of practice and coaching*

Communities of practice develop around issues and objects that matter to people who are informally bound by what they do together (Wenger, 1998a). Shared interests and competencies attract individuals possessing similar interests and dispositions and, as a result, the practices of the community reflect the members' own understanding of what is important (Wenger, 1998a). The coaching community, likewise, is constituted through countless interactions and relationships situated within a wider social context that give rise to a variety of social structures, which emerge, from individual action and collective agency. The concept of community of practice offers us a lens through which to analyze narrower, more clearly defined communities within the field of sport (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004b), such as the community of coaching. It can move an understanding of coaching from an individual endeavor, for example "my team versus your team" to a joint venture, for example "communal goal of helping young people develop skills through competition" (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004) and allow us to examine an individual's alignment with the practices and interests dominant in that community.

### *Coaching and mentorship community dimensions*

Communities of practice contain formal and informal binding aspects that provide a bond between its members. Members' interactions, actions, and competencies create a fluid system of dimensions that respond and adapt to the shared practice. Three elements

comprise a community's dimensions: (a) joint enterprise, (b) mutual engagement, and (c) shared repertoire.

Joint enterprise refers to how members are bound together by their shared understanding of what their community is about (Wenger, 2000). It can be seen as a requirement that all members of the community must share a common enterprise or goal. In other words, joint enterprise simply refers to the community's shared understanding regarding the main endeavors of the community itself (Wenger, 1998a). Competency in the community is measured by the extent to which an individual, in this instance the mentor and coach, understands this collective enterprise such that they can contribute and facilitate learning. Diverging lines of enterprise can be illustrated by the actions of mentors and coaches, and the extent to which these actions are included in the collective endeavors of the community.

The second dimension, mutual engagement, accounts for the functioning of the community; it refers to the requirement that each member must actively engage with other members of the community. The term is concerned with mutuality in the interactions and establishment of norms and relationships between its members (Wenger, 1998a; 2000). The individuals must "know each other well enough to know how to interact productively and who to call for help or advice" (Wenger, 2000, p.230). The sense of community held by its members and the extent to which they interact is significantly determined within this concept of mutual engagement: "Our experience and our membership inform each other, pull each other, transform each other" (Wenger, 1998b, p. 96). The level and extent of mutual engagement an individual sustains within the community is an influential aspect of his participation in a community; as Wenger

(1998b) noted, “membership in a community of practice is therefore a matter of mutual engagement” (p. 73). Community membership and mutual engagement involve not only an individual’s competence, but also the competence of other members in the community (Wenger, 1998b). Actions within coaching, such as participation in coaching courses, attendance at seminars, presence in the hockey arena, communication with regional mentors, and participation in social activities influence the level of mutual engagement observed in a hockey coaching community.

The final dimension, shared repertoire, describes the communal ownership of resources the community has collected over time (Wenger, 1998a). Resources such as language, routines, artifacts, tools, stories, etc. are all possessions of the given community that provide its members privilege in that context. As a whole, the ability of the community to understand and be self-aware of its own state of development contributes to its ability to monitor access to, and development of, such resources. Having access to this repertoire and being able to use it appropriately is to have the necessary competencies to effectively participate in the community (Wenger, 2000). Without the ability to obtain and utilize the necessary repertoire to be an effective participating member of the community, an individual lacks the capabilities to become a member and therefore remains a spectator rather than a participating member.

#### *Belonging to a coaching community of practice*

When we generally think about a community our immediate thoughts represent a group of individuals within close proximity who share a similar geographically defined space. As Wenger (1998a) outlined, belonging to a community of practice is not purely defined by an individual’s location, there are three modes of belonging that account for

the diverse forms of belonging that a social learning system provides: (a) engagement, (b) imagination, and (c) alignment. Although each of these modes of belonging coexists in a social learning system, their respective importance varies depending on the reach of the community (Culver & Trudel, 2006). Wenger's three modes of belonging are used in this study as constructs designed to assist in outlining the three main dimensions of a community of practice as defined above.

As defined by Wenger (1998b), engagement encapsulates how we engage with each other and with our surroundings; it places emphasis squarely on participation at the local level within a community of practice. Simply, engagement refers to individuals of a shared community doing things together; it is the frequency and form of interaction that determines the level of engagement. It is how we learn what we can do and how the world responds to our actions (Wenger, 2000). Thus, any coach for example, will up to a point, influence and be influenced by the interactions they have with other members who participate in the social learning system of a particular sport (Culver & Trudel, 2006).

The second mode of belonging, imagination, addresses our constructed image of ourselves, our communities, and the world (Wenger, 2000). Imagination enables the local members, mentors, and coaches to stay connected, through their views and opinions, to those on their team as well as those situated in a broader sport community. Wenger argued that thinking of ourselves as part of a given community requires a certain level of imagination due to our potential distance from certain aspects of our communities. We acquire a level of knowledge rooted in foundational aspects of the knowledge our communities have created.

A third mode of belonging, alignment, accounts for the placement of our local activities within other processes so that they can be effective beyond our own engagement (Wenger, 2000). It ensures that coaches' activities are in line with the practices of their community and other groups in broader social learning systems (e.g., other sports, the NCMP, and other hockey teams in surrounding communities). Hence, the alignment of local individual activities with an external authority (i.e., the NCMP) is a mutual process of coordinating perspectives.

*Boundaries of a coaching community of practice*

Boundaries of communities are not always rigidly set: “communities of practice cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the world, or understood independently of other practices” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 103). Boundaries can be fluid and can represent an open system defined by knowledge, shared practice, and the value placed on participation centered upon an important belief or interest shared by its members, rather than by task (Wenger, 1998a; 2000). Boundaries offer a point at which learning takes place as well as where membership and meaning are defined. The boundary of a community often emerges at points where competencies and experiences tend to diverge; for example in coaching, age and skill levels, geographical location, cultural influences, and the extent to which coaches adhere to a cooperation or competition model. There is potential to reconfigure or structure the learning environment depending on the extent to which participants have access to, or can cross boundaries to other communities of practice (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005). Interactions between existing members and the introduction of new members articulate these boundaries. Those who can ultimately contribute to the community's overall enterprise subsequently become



accepted into the group, once again reinforcing and reproducing the structuring effects of the community. Wenger (2000) addressed three boundary dimensions for communities of practice: (a) coordination, (b) transparency, and (c) negotiability.

The dimension of coordination refers to the extent to which the community coordinates its actions and interpretations of objects and processes (Wenger, 2000). How a community of practice coordinates its competencies is often represented by the interactions the community maintains with surrounding communities. The processes and actions must be clear enough to enable communities of practice to work, but must also ensure that they are not burdened with specifics (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006). In other words coordination is the understanding of what constitutes socially acceptable competence within a given community and how that competence is then translated across boundaries to other communities of practice.

Transparency is a boundary dimension that is closely related to the aspect of coordination and refers to the sharing of knowledge across boundaries and speaks to the depth to which coordination of knowledge is shared. It is the sharing of access to the meanings behind particular processes or actions (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006). Transparency relates to the offering of insight into the logic of the acceptable competence required, whereas the term coordination is the extent to which it is shared (Wenger, 2000). An operational account of transparency can be observed in how decisions regarding aspects of coordination are made public to those participating in the community as well as those beyond the community boundaries, by methods such as public forums, announcements, bulletins, promotional material, and resource materials. Transparency

implies that boundary processes provide an understanding of the practices involved (Wenger, 2000) and the extent to which the competencies are explained and understood.

Negotiability, the third dimension, accounts for the connections that are situated within the community. Negotiation between perspectives involved and power relations evident within the community govern the level of negotiability in the community of practice. The formal parameters and decision-making channels of an organizational structure, for example the NCMP in Manitoba, orient the connections situated within the program. As Wenger (2000) noted, “boundary processes can merely reflect relations of power among practices, in which case they are likely to reinforce the boundary rather than bridge it” (p. 234). The dimension of negotiability refers to the interactions that are acceptable between members, as determined by individuals in a position of power within the organization, along differing levels of discourses and provide the nodes for knowledge exchange and boundary maintenance of coaching communities of practice.

The coach mentorship community offers a characteristic instance in the coaching community of practice as it delineates a community encouraging interactions within formally defined boundaries and competencies. Over the past five or six years, an increasing number of coaches have negotiated membership and organizational boundaries in mentoring programs as part of their own formal coaching development program. Upon entering, many coaches act according to their “feel for the game” and may contest what the coach education program is designed to accomplish. This can also manifest itself in a hesitation to become involved with other coaches in the coaching process, out of a concern that appearing incompetent or weak within a competitive coaching community will tarnish his or her status or reputation. This reluctance to participate often originates

in the acceptance of performance-outcome oriented principles, which often orient coaches towards emphasizing individual interests in competition rather than cooperation.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Participant observation

The present study analyzed the difficult relationship between the need to produce outcome-oriented success in Canadian hockey and the intent to establish a collaborative link between coaches in the NCMP. In order to understand the experiences and meanings of coaching in these ambivalent relationships, a qualitative approach was used, since, in Miller and Glassner's (2004) words, "it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds" (p. 126; see also Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The aim of qualitative research is to draw out the participants' understandings and perceptions as well as to explore contextualized social and cultural elements centered on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences (Long & Godfrey, 2004). As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) noted, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2).

To study communities of practice such as the NCMP in Manitoba, is to construct an account of the participants and the NCMP through participant observation and interviews. Addressing the research issue in relation to the program's current implementation in concrete mentoring relationships, is most effectively done by addressing mentors and coaches who are involved in the active construction of the community.

Interviews with select participants, complemented by participant observation, were used to collect data for a description of the social system of sport cultures and coaches' situated relationships (Howe, 2001). In Streat's (1998) words, "using

interviews and observational data, qualitative research can help us understand the process by which events and actions occur” (p. 335).

Participant observation and fieldwork are qualitative methods that involve spending periods of time watching people, and talking with them to understand how they view their world (Delamont, 2004). Personal engagement with the participant is the key to understanding a community of practice: “to determine whose reality is ‘correct’ is not the focus of ethnography; rather, understanding the social setting through the perspectives of the participants is the primary goal” (Krane & Baird, 2005, p. 91). The use of the qualitative methods in this study was designed to provide an account of contextually situated interactions so that a greater understanding of the inner workings of the mentorship program can be achieved. Participant observation provides an opportunity for generating understanding of the individuals’ experiences within the NCMP (Schwandt, 2001). Within the contextualized process of coaching, the use of participant observation provides a situated understanding of the environment being observed and provides a basis from which to draw meaning from the situated behaviors and attitudes expressed by the coaches (Kirby & Mckenna, 1989).

Participant observation in this study occurred at NCMP events and during a case study that provided an examination of a coach and his or her coaching community. During observations my role was that of an observer participant, where I immersed myself within the environment in an attempt to understand the context and interactions. The case study involved my observation of a currently active coach mentor (selected from the mentors chosen for an interview) during parts of the hockey season to provide an account of the mentor’s actions and experiences within the context of the program.

The individual for the case study was selected from the mentors chosen for an interview and had to be an active mentor in the program and in delivering the programs initiatives.

As the participant observer, I kept a field journal during my attendance at: seminars, courses, presentations, and mentoring interactions that the mentor encountered. Attention was paid to the language and forms of interaction used by the mentor, as it is these interactions through which the community of practice emerges. The case study was designed to complement the ethnography of the field of mentoring in the NCMP by examining the community of practice from the point of view of a mentor's practical experiences. As a complement to participant observation, the interviews served to illuminate "both the culture and the biographical particulars of members' worlds" (Warren, 2001, p. 85).

### *Interviews*

The data collection strategy included interviews with six coach mentors actively involved in the implementation of the NCMP in Hockey Manitoba. The six interviewees included: the hockey administrator responsible for the implementation of the program, who is also an active mentor; the master mentor, who is the lead mentor in addition to being intimately involved in the development and implementation of the program; and four selected mentors, who are reportedly active in the program. A more detailed rationale for the selection of the participants is provided on page 26.

The strength of qualitative interviewing is the opportunity it provides to collect and examine narrative accounts of the community of practice (Miller & Glassner, 2004) from the mentors' point of view (Kvale, 1996), in order to generate a greater understanding of the implementation of the NCMP in Manitoba. A semi-structured

interview method was utilized to allow for a flexible framework with focused and conversational two-way communication. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to obtain descriptions and narrative accounts of what it means to be a mentor in the community (Kvale, 1996). For Kvale (1996) the interview is a journey for the interviewee and researcher together, and thus the open-ended structure is designed for greater flexibility in the interview process rather than imposing a precise route for both to follow.

Two interview schedules were utilized in this study (see appendix A). Interview schedule #1 was intended for the hockey administrator and the master mentor. It addressed background information on the program's formal parameters and design in addition to questions pertaining to concrete mentoring relationships. Interview schedule #2 was designed for the four mentors. It focused on questions related to the mentors' views, opinions, and experiences of concrete mentoring relationships. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes.

### *Participant selection*

Participants were selected using a purposive oriented sampling technique. A purposive sampling technique in selecting individuals for study, is based on choosing participants for their relevance to the research question (Schwandt, 2001) and in particular their specialist knowledge of the research issue (Jupp, 2006). Participant selection in this study was based on their intimate knowledge of and active engagement in the coaching culture of Manitoba, and their very positions in the mentoring program according to the following criteria.

The selection of the hockey administrator and master mentor was indicated by their currently held formal position with Hockey Manitoba. The hockey administrator is an employee of Hockey Manitoba. As Director of hockey development, his responsibilities include the administration of the NCMP within Hockey Manitoba; he also acts as a representative on the Hockey Canada coach development committee. The master mentor is an appointed volunteer who is responsible for the maintenance of formal parameters, design, and implementation of the program. Both individuals are heavily involved in the design and implementation of the NCMP within Manitoba. They are key participants, in positions of authority, to provide an understanding of the formal parameters of the program as well as comprehensive information pertaining to the development of the program.

The four mentor participants were selected from the list of 32 known to be mentors in the program at the time of selection<sup>8</sup>. Of the 32 current mentors in the program the four mentors chosen to participate in this study represent the highest relevance to the research question based on the following criteria:

1. They must be actively engaged in the program (as determined by Hockey Manitoba).
2. They are currently in concrete mentoring relationships in the hockey coaching community in Manitoba (determined through initial correspondence with the mentors).
3. They represent varying geographical locations in Manitoba.

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<sup>8</sup> The list of 32 mentors was from a list posted on the Hockey Manitoba website at the time of selection. The hockey administrator and the master mentor confirmed this list, as individuals who have been named as mentors in the NCMP in Manitoba.



The 32 mentors are located in 15 different municipalities and locations around Manitoba with the majority of mentors being located in Winnipeg (see appendix B figure 1, for distribution of mentors). Of the six participants, four are from the southwestern regions of Manitoba, the most active regions in the mentoring program. The hockey administrator resides in Winnipeg, the master mentor in Deloraine (Westman South), and the four mentor coaches in Winnipeg, Brandon, Elkhorn (Yellowhead), and Portage La Prairie (Central Plains) (see appendix B figure 2 for the regional boundaries of Hockey Manitoba).

Considering the intimate nature of the hockey community in Manitoba confidentiality was of utmost concern during this study. Each participant did not request the use of a pseudonym, however to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants, this study used pseudonyms for all participants. The true identity of each participant was only known to me as the researcher and each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity (see table 1 for list of participants). Informed consent was obtained from all participants with full disclosure of the intent of the study as well as feedback and debriefing procedures during the transcription process.

Participant	Pseudonym	Role in NCMP	Community	Gender
1	Ray	Master mentor / Mentor	Rural	Male
2	Ted	Mentor	Urban	Male
3	Chris	Administrator / Mentor	Urban	Male
4	Don	Mentor	Urban	Male
5	Eric	Mentor	Rural	Male
6	Mike	Mentor	Rural	Male

Table 1: List of participants

### *Trustworthiness and credibility*

To ensure data trustworthiness and credibility, two types of member checks were performed on each interview, on-the-spot member checks as well as post data collection and analysis member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interview techniques such as probes, paraphrases, and follow-up questions were used as on-the-spot member checks. Following the completion of each interview and subsequent transcription, the interview transcript was submitted to each participant for confirmation. Participants were requested to provide a response to the transcription and analysis of data outlining any disagreements or amendments to the transcript and the subsequent revisions. Upon receiving the response, I then contacted the participant to review the transcript to arrive at an agreed upon transcription of his answers. The member checking was performed to ensure credibility of the data as it represents “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314; see also Seale, 2002). It provides the opportunity for cooperative efforts between the researcher and participant to arrive at an accurate transcription of their responses.

### *Thematic analysis of interviews*

Transcriptions were edited for clarity and ease of reading during post data analysis member checks. Care was taken during the transcription process as it involved my subjective opinion in making decisions about what to write down and how to represent it (Lapadat, 2000). Consideration was given to apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps, as ignoring these during the transcription process can weaken the reliability of the interpretation of the transcripts (Silverman, 2005). Decisions regarding what to write down and how to represent it, is also dependent on the context in

which the participant speaks. In Lapadat's (2000) words, "context cannot be stripped from talk, and therefore ought not to be stripped from transcripts either" (p. 209).

Grouping of recurring themes and categories that addressed the research issue was performed to identify converging lines of data. Based on questions and variations in responses from participants, narratives provided data available for interpretation. The step-by-step thematic analysis contained three levels of coding and focused on mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire with reference to the remaining concepts in the community of practice model as appropriate.

The first level of coding represented the coaching community of practice related to joint enterprise, mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and the related concepts. Each interview was reviewed and excerpts that represented the three community dimensions and related concepts were separately coded and grouped for analysis. The community dimensions of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire were coded using the marks of CD1, CD2, and CD3 respectively. The modes of belonging of engagement, alignment, and imagination were coded MB1, MB2, and MB3; while the boundary dimensions of coordination, transparency, and negotiability were coded BD1, BD2, and BD3 respectively.

A second level of coding identified responses aligned with the interview schedules, as well as the background information on the program's formal parameters and design, and the program's current manifestation in concrete mentoring relationships in the Manitoba hockey coaching community. This level of coding involved four main areas of interest with sub-themes within each that carried the coding marks (see table 2).

Area of interest	Sub-theme	Coding mark
Program formal parameters	Purpose and intent of program	1.1
	Publicity and promotion	1.2
	Delivery methods	1.3
	Decision making channels	1.4
	Program working channels	1.5
Program design	Mentor distribution	2.1
	Mentor training	2.2
	Inclusion and exclusion of mentors	2.3
	Invitation into program	2.4
Mentor involvement	Reasons for coaching	3.1
	Length of coaching	3.2
	Reasons for mentoring	3.3
	Length of mentoring	3.4
	Method of inclusion	3.5
Mentor experiences	Definition of a mentor	4.1
	Qualities of a good mentor	4.2
	Requirements for mentoring	4.3
	Challenges of mentoring	4.4
	Success and failure of mentoring	4.5
	Structure of mentoring	4.6
	Point of view from mentors	4.7
	Individual and group mentoring	4.8
	Compare formal to understanding of meaningful mentoring experiences	4.9

Table 2: Thematic analysis – second level coding marks

The third level of coding provided an interpretative thematic analysis of the community of practice model according to the relevance to the research issue. This level of coding involved my own analysis of the coaching community of practice through the lived experiences of the mentors interviewed and the research issue of this study. Following the first two levels of coding, converging lines of data were identified and grouped into thematic categories, which were then provided a coding mark (see table 3).

<b>Thematic category</b>	<b>Coding mark</b>	<b>Thematic category</b>	<b>Coding mark</b>
Isolation and validation	A	Influence of past coaches	L
Threatening and resisting	B	Gold signs and outcome	M, N, T
Hierarchy	C	Guiding from the side	O
Reciprocal learning	F	Humility	P
Artistic coaching	H	Match of ideals	R, S
Rat race	I	Critical incidents	U
Comfort coaching	J	Soft versus hard sell	V
Coaches commodity	K	Intuition	W
Coding marks of D, E, G, and Q were left out due to original themes which were later combined with the themes above.			

Table 3: Thematic analysis – third level coding marks

The interview transcripts were then reviewed once again, using the third level of coding to identify further converging lines of data. The resulting information and variations expressed through a community of practice framework provided the basis for an analysis of mentors' experiences as cooperating coaches in a program situated in a predominately competitive environment.

#### The Reflective Researcher

During the research process, as a researcher I had to confront the important task of self-reflexivity. I bring into the setting a personal history, conceptual dispositions, and my own perspectives. As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) noted, "all research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 13). Key to ethnography is the constant process of reflecting. "Reflexivity is the most important characteristic of fieldwork and of analysis" (Delamont, 2004, p. 226). As a qualitative researcher examining a context in which I am intimately involved, focused attention must be paid to "the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4).

My participation in the hockey community has spanned 26 years as a player, official, and coach. I have been involved at all levels of the game ranging from recreational to international competitions. As an active member of the Hockey Manitoba mentorship program both as mentoree and active coach, I retain the ability to access communal resources and social networking with other coaches. My intimate involvement in the community presented a challenge of removing my own philosophies and beliefs about coaching, so as to allow the data to emerge from the responses and observations. By adopting a qualitative approach, I as a researcher must remain acutely sensitive to my own identity and power, and how it impacts my research findings (Howe, 2001). I must remain reflectively aware of my personal meaning system to ensure I am seeing and understanding the coaches' meaning system (Ellen, 1984). In the words of Robidoux (2001), I strive to allow for "the displacement of experience as it presently exists in [my] mind" (p. 11). My individual investment in the Manitoba coaching community cannot be separated in totality from my interest in improving the community and relations within it. Therefore during my analysis of the research issue utmost attention was paid to remaining a reflective researcher and fully disclosing subjective interpretations of the participants' data during content analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Tensions and the NCMP community of practice

When imagining coaches in a learning environment, we might picture them, on a Saturday morning, attending a coaching clinic and listening to an expert coach talk about what it means to be a good coach. However, coaches' learning experiences extend far beyond the classroom. Their behavior and views are heavily influenced by their past experiences and their present relationships. Within a community of practice account, a coach's meaningful learning experiences are comprised within both formal and informal settings, social practice that involves the explicit and the implicit, untold rules of the thumb, embodied understandings and intuitions, and underlying assumptions. Within this composition of learning experiences, a coach's perspective on learning matters. What we think about learning influences where we recognize learning as well as what we do when we decide that we must do something about it, as individuals, organizations, and communities. For a coach to recognize learning possibilities through the NCMP, and to engage the act of inclusion is relatively simple, "phone, email, just seek someone to help them. It's really simple. That is all they have to do" (Chris, personal communication). Yet, "when the program first started we trained everybody and we published mentor's names, and we figured our phones are going to ring off the hook. Nobody's phone rang" (Ray, personal communication).

This lack of initiated contact on behalf of the mentoree represents tensions experienced between the collaborative endeavors of the NCMP and competitive principles in Canadian hockey. By examining these tensions through the qualitative methods outlined (see page 23), I was able to provide further insight of the relations of

mutual engagement, the negotiation of joint enterprise, and the shared resources for negotiating within the NCMP (see figure 1).

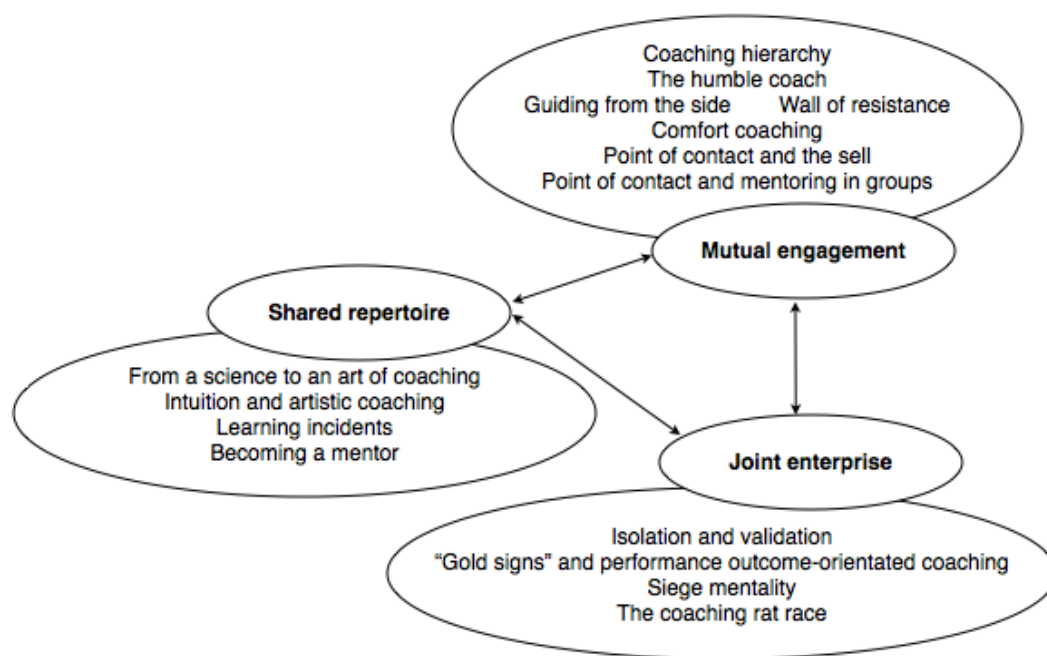


Figure 1: Community dimensions and the NCMP

#### Mutual engagement

*I am probably mentored as much as I mentor (Eric, personal communication)*

The hockey rink is a space for recreation and enjoyment, a gathering point for a network of people engaged in the shared practice of the game of hockey in urban and rural settings. Because of its social importance, it thus functions as a natural site for the establishing of mutual engagement, "In rural settings it [hockey] is a huge part of our lifestyle. Our community revolves around the rink building and if you are going to be a community person you are going to be at the rink and involved in the program" (Ray, personal communication). Mutual engagement, which accounts for the functioning of the community, refers to the requirement that each member must actively engage with other members of the community. The dominant themes emerging from the interviews with



regard to mutual engagement were: (a) coaching hierarchy, (b) the humble coach, (c) guiding from the side, (d) wall of resistance, (e) comfort coaching, and, (f) point of contact and the sell.

Ensuring that there are opportunities for mutual engagement is an essential requirement for the functioning of any practice. By going to the rink, talking in the lobby, attending coach clinics, specialty clinics, or playing beer league hockey, members are creating opportunities for engagement. As Don noted, “if I can get them to the rink I can make this work”. Parents, arena attendants, coaches, area association members, and mentors, sustain close relations of mutual engagement organized around what they are there to do; which is to provide for the game of hockey. Within these interactions coaches continually and directly influence each other’s understanding as a matter of routine.

We have one central meeting point as coaches in this community and that is the rink. We are always there. I run into them during the winter, probably each coach about six or eight times a week. Just informally. It is a good opportunity to do some mentoring there (Mike, personal communication).

As observed at a Breakfast club (see page 67), which brings parents and coaches together in a communal effort to provide players with more opportunity for development, it is possible to provide for the game of hockey within an environment that is conducive to player development and experience through mutual engagement. The informal interaction between coaches and parents observed contained discussions around specific areas of development for hockey in addition to family and social aspects. This

environment provided a fertile ground from which mutual engagement can occur for the functioning of that specific community's practice.

The community's mutual engagement is organized around what they are there to do (Wenger, 1998a); in this case contribute to the game of hockey. Simple interaction, participation, and engagement at the local community level, enable an individual to belong to the community. It is coaches, parents, and mentors doing things together on a regular basis, formally and informally creating interrelations that arise out of this engagement; not out of an idealized view of what a community should be like. The basic action of coming to the rink and engaging in dialogue and the practice of hockey results in developing intimate and shared interpersonal relationships. Relationships that are centered around a team, typically consisting of the head coach, assistant coach, team manager, parents, and players with whom they interact regularly.

For coaches they continually engage in a form of engagement that is facilitated through a nation's pride and desire for hockey supremacy. This desire and national pride connects coaches to each other in ways that are diverse and complex and includes them in what matters in a community's practice. To become engaged in the coaching community, a coach's membership is often negotiated and facilitated through a sponsor, someone who takes the initiative and invites them into the coaching circle. This sponsor into the world of coaching was a person who emulated what the participants felt was important in coaching and gave them access to the community boundaries resulting in their ability to negotiate membership through association. As they negotiated the boundaries of the coaching community of practice and engaged in practice they gained access to the community's shared repertoire, "for us who already have a connection we already have

access to information” (Ray, personal communication). The participants of this study described how their invitation was from somebody they already held a connection with, and was initially facilitated through their technical ability and playing experiences.

My brother was coaching with this gentlemen at the AA level for a couple of years while I was finishing my playing career, and I got to know the coach as well with my brother, and when I finished playing, the head coach approached me and asked me if I would be interested in helping out with the AAA team that they were going to apply for that year. I agreed and I had my certification through university so I had already been certified and agreed to do it (Chris, personal communication).

A coach’s invitation into the community does not equate directly with acceptance. They are often left to negotiate their position within the community through their demonstrated level of competency and the community’s implied perception of success as a coach. Within the coaching community of practice, the concept of mentoring implies a form of engagement that invites mutuality and sharing of ideas. However, the very competitive nature of hockey also encourages an attitude where knowledge is not always shared out of concern for competitive success. This competing attitude between coaches can create a separation that influences many of the subsequent interrelations that a coach may experience. Although a community of practice is not defined merely by who knows whom or who talks with whom in a network of interpersonal relations, the flow of information in the hockey coaching community occurs through the network of a coaching hierarchy.

### *Coaching hierarchy*

*In the hockey world there are a lot of nut bars. (Ray, personal communication)*

The coach and the mentor each occupy a place within the coaching community, which influences their level of engagement within the local practice. For both the coach and mentor, credibility is an essential element in occupying this space in practice; and the way they go about engaging with others is influenced by this attributed credibility.

*A mentor's position.* For the mentor, credibility is established through a mentor's level of skill and experience, which ultimately translates into respect and position within a coaching hierarchy.

As a mentoree, when I seek out mentors, whether on purpose or by accident I just look for someone who has, and to tell you the honest truth, I look for people who have respect. In my opinion, especially in this sport, if you have respect in this sport then you have got to be doing some pretty good things, because it is a passionate game and in our country it is woven into the fabric of our being, and for someone to have respect in the game in my opinion, means that their ideals are probably not too far off the path of respect in the game, making the right decisions, doing the right things.

(Chris, personal communication)

Even by just being named a mentor, mentors acquire a certain degree of credibility. They inherit a level of prestige and influence on their surroundings, simply through title.

So if all of a sudden you say that you are a hockey mentor, people might think that you are going to come and tell them everything about what I am

doing wrong. That is where I think our program suffers a little is that little bit of intimidation factor of asking yourself, ‘am I doing things right here?’ (Chris, personal communication).

Much of this prestige accrues to the master mentor and the administrator due to their positions of authority in the mentoring system. Being the administrator working at Hockey Manitoba provides an implicit level of credibility, “that is probably something I have not used yet, but that is another word that I should have been using, credibility, but you get some instant credibility because of where I am working [as the administrator at Hockey Manitoba]” (Ted, personal communication).

Just because a coach is named a mentor, the title cannot automatically be seen as an indicator of competence, “officially being named something and doing something, those are two different things” (Chris, personal communication). The process of becoming a mentor is something that takes time. Participants experience this as developing a sort of comfort and self-confidence, “like anything I think you have to do it before you feel confident, you just cannot jump into these situations and think you are going to be the best thing since sliced bread” (Chris, personal communication).

Observations during a specialty clinic showed that, the newly appointed mentors often acted similar to a mentoree, and even sat amongst the mentorees during the clinic itself; before gaining confidence towards the end of the year with each successive specialty clinic and eventually sitting up with the rest of the mentors at the front of the room during a specialty clinic I happened to be attending. This progression in the mentor’s comfort level demonstrates an acclimation and gaining of self-confidence.

This process of gaining self-confidence and competence is largely mentor-driven and relies on self-initiative. As a mentor's competency increases, they gain a certain comfort level when they are able to give back to the community through educating and assisting less experienced coaches, in essence having the comfort to align themselves with altruistic reasons for coaching and mentoring.

I attended the first mentorship training in 1999 in Ontario where the national training was for Hockey Canada. I would not say I felt comfortable being a mentor, probably. I was officially named a mentor because I went and got the training in 1999, I felt I was prepared as a mentor probably 2001 to 2002, where I had been in the organization for five to seven years and I gained some of the experiences in and around the game, and that is around the time when my son started playing hockey. That is when I felt comfortable as a coach and as a mentor, where I could give back to the people who were asking questions and trying to provide some real experiences. (Chris, personal communication)

As a mentor the important thing is to make sure people understand and learn from their experiences, because some of them are not going to be good experiences, let's face it, but they need to learn from them and understand how to make things better. I felt I could direct them that way probably around the same time my son started playing hockey.

Yes, in my mind, I could still help people out which I did, there are always people because of the job that I do since 1995, since I have been here, people still come to you for some direction. So, you could give

them directions and some basic understanding of things. I think I felt comfortable as a mentor. (Chris, personal communication)

*A coach's position.* For the coach, just being acquainted with a mentor, whether the mentor is aware of it or not, can enhance a coach's perceived position within the coaching hierarchy, and can produce an unsubstantiated level of competency and acquired knowledge.

Some coaches get a little heat from their parents about whether it is about the team's performance or maybe they think whether the guy knows enough. He will then say he will go and get a mentor. Well, did he go and get a mentor because he wanted to or because he felt he had to? (Eric, personal communication)

Their perceived access to the shared repertoire of the coaching community of practice is increased based on their level of engagement as well as the status of the mentor they claim to be engaged with.

Yes, it is really interesting to walk into a rink and hear someone say, "So I hear that you are mentoring, Joe" and they have a big grin on their face because they know that Joe does not want to listen and I will say "Yes" because mentorship is open to everybody, the resources are there. You say it tongue and cheek, but you know the guy is only going around and telling people he has a mentor just for himself so other people would view him in a higher setting or to just get people off his back. (Eric, personal communication)

All too often, within the hockey community, a coach's competency is determined

by the outcome of their games and not through their ability to give back to the community. Those who are most intimately tied to the enterprise of the mentorship program tend to view a coach's competency by their ability to give back, contribute to the greater knowledge base of the coaching fraternity, and the nature of their reasons for doing so. However, the coaches with whom mentors are trying to interact and influence, all too often base their own competency on their win and loss column, which runs contrary to the objectives of the NCMP.

During my attendance at a specialty clinic, the mentorees were constantly inquiring about each other's wins and losses during the season. As they introduced themselves, an introductory question would be how their respective team fared. As the responding mentoree elaborated on the shortfalls of his team they would attempt to offer explanations targeted at absolving their coaching ability as a potential factor.

So there is definitely some sort of status in coaching and unfortunately even the novice coach [coaching seven to eight year olds] sees it in wins and losses, it is unbelievable and even myself will get hung up on that and I will have to remind myself or someone else, my assistants to remind me that it is not a big deal. (Ted, personal communication)

The coaching hierarchy in the coaching community of practice influences mutual engagement by dictating the directional flow of information and the nature of relationships that occur. A mentor's position within the coaching hierarchy is linked with their status in the NCMP, which is often determined by their level of respect in the coaching community; and his or her ability to give back to the game and to contribute to



the body of knowledge within the coaching community. A coach's position within the coaching hierarchy all too often is based solely upon the outcome of competition and their level of engagement with those within the NCMP and higher coaching circles. This discrepancy in defining a coach's competency and the objectives of the NCMP, contributes to the tensions experienced between the collaborative principles of the NCMP and the habituated competitiveness of many coaches. When both parties are able to see each other as fellow coaches and resist the environmental competitive pressures of the hockey community, real sharing begins to take place.

*The humble coach*

*I need help, I am 55 years old but I learn things all the time. I learn off Joe, I learn off of other guys. (Ray, personal communication).*

As noted in the opening dialogue, the Canadian coaching community harbors many egotistical individuals who are not shy about pronouncing their prowess in the hockey community with considerable conviction. Manitoba is no different from other parts of Canada in its number of coaches and mentors wanting to be known for knowledge they possess.

I do not think as mentors, we want somebody who is going to pop up and say, "I know that". We actually know one guy who will go unnamed, who came out and said, 'this mentorship program is great, I have been wanting to tell somebody how much I know. I was wanting to tell people how much I know about hockey for years'. (Ray, personal communication)

The participants alluded to the fact that they simply remain within their own "right reasons" for being involved in the practice of hockey and continue to do what they

do unostentatiously. As the master mentor elaborated, he seeks to attract those who display a sense of humility and a willingness to learn from their own interactions.

What I look for is a guy who is knowledgeable, a guy who is going to facilitate more than dictate, somebody who is going to help them solve their problems, somebody who is going to say “I am not sure about that but I know somebody else who does”. (Ray, personal communication)

The majority of the participants described mentorship as being something whereby they just do what they do and people naturally gravitate towards their actions and knowledge about the game, not for their self-representation.

Because in my opinion, my first thought when I heard a mentor was, someone that you look up to. Now, I do not view myself that way, I just do what I do. That is what someone said to me a few times. He just does what he does and if people just automatically gravitate to him because he does not say he knows a ton, where you get some other people where they tell you how much they know. You do not have to tell me how much you know, you either do or you don't. Those are the people that I go to, the people that have enough confidence in themselves and who have people automatically gravitate towards them. Those are the people I always look to. (Chris, personal communication)

The display of a level of humility in the engagement between the mentor and mentoree was regarded as one of the most critical elements that needed to be present for the establishment of a functioning mentoring relationship. “I think the reason that I felt comfortable as a mentor was the day when I was able to say to myself that if I do not

know the answer I am going to look for it and get back to them”. (Chris, personal communication)

Mike commented on the need to show a certain degree of humility and to look beyond the tensions within the coaching hierarchy that exist in order to achieve a certain level of meaningful mutual engagement.

Him seeing me as a fellow coach and not somebody who is a mentor who is way up here and they are down there. It is more of that we are on the same playing field and I am probably going to go into the situation with a little bit more to offer but I am going to learn something from you along the way.

The ability to display a level of humility and reduce the hindering effects of a hierarchy within the coaching community of practice can be an effective technique when attempting to facilitate the opportunity for mutual engagement. As I observed during a specialty clinic the master mentor attempts to do this through anecdotes that relate to the mentorees’ situation as well as a slide (see figure 2) during his presentation that prompts him to talk about his involvement in minor hockey. This provides an opportunity for the mentorees to find ways to relate to the master mentor in the hope of reducing any tensions that may exist due to a coaching hierarchy.



## I Am One of You !!



- Volunteer coach and mentor
- I believe coaches should share and therefore improve the game for kids, that is why I am here
- I believe in skill development in a safe and fun environment



Figure 2: I am one of you

This avoidance of expression of hierarchy creates an opportunity for engagement to mutually occur with the possibility of reciprocal learning to take place. “No matter how many years experience I have and where I have been or what I have done, I am still learning and I can learn from you” (Mike, personal communication). During specialty clinics, I observed how this expression of humility facilitated a more open line of communication during the sessions, and as I noted in my field journal, “resulted in the rich exchange of information between the mentor and mentoree”. Explanations by the participants clearly indicate the importance of knowing how to maintain a level of humility within mutual engagement. “It is a learning experience for both of us and if you have a question that I do not have the answer for that is great because that is one more thing for me to have in my repertoire” (Eric, personal communication). As Wenger (1998a) stated, “because they belong to a community of practice where people help each other out, it is more important to know how to give and receive help than to try to know everything yourself” (p. 76). Humility on behalf of the coach and mentor allows an acquisition of knowledge not dictated by the hierarchy of a mentor, (see page 39), but by

the mutual engagement of the individuals involved. “You know that, for everything you give, you get about 10 things back” (Ray, personal communication). The engagement becomes more of a collaborative effort with the mentor guiding from the side rather than dictating the acquisition of knowledge.

*Guiding from the side*

*Part of the mentorship is the mentors not going in and showing how much they know, it is you helping a coach get better so his kids have a better experience or respect him a little more. (Ray, personal communication)*

The mentors interviewed engaged with coaches, negotiated the meaning of experiences and knowledge so as to open their education to new knowledge and insight, thus creating the very practice of the mentoring community of practice itself. The mentors all alluded to a style of engagement in mentoring that involved personal reflection on part of the mentoree as well as collaboration on part of the mentor in the negotiating of meaning. “I think that is what helps me in mentorship. I do not go and try to tell them how much I know, I go and try to get it out of them what they know and then we will work together on it and try and collaborate on it” (Eric, personal communication).

This approach to mentorship creates a flow of negotiation that is not to just transfer information as the mentoree requires it, but to provide a foundation from which the mentorees can reflect on their experiences through the resources that mentors are able to provide: “We want to help them drive their answers by themselves” (Chris, personal communication). The mentoree must be a willing participant to this approach and as found by the mentors interviewed, mentorees are all too often reluctant to participate in such a process. The process of facilitating the mentorees to explore their own answers

was driven by a high desire of the mentors to facilitate a process of reflection for the mentorees throughout their discussions as they thought this was the key to meaningful mentorship, “he encouraged you (as the mentoree) to reflect. He caused you to think about it. That is mentorship” (Ted, personal communication).

During my observation of a specialty clinic I noted a majority of discussions between a mentor and mentoree that involved the mentor asking more questions that he was answering. The questions were very often rhetorical in nature, and seemed to be more concerned with allowing the mentoree to arrive at their own answer, rather than the answer being provided. These specific observations occurred on more than one occasion at the specialty clinic and among various participants and mentors. By undertaking a more facilitative approach in these discussions the mentor endeavored to undertake a much more reflective approach to the mentor and mentoree interaction.

Whenever you are able to make someone reflect on their actions and decisions, even when people do not agree and they question you, it makes them think and anytime you get people thinking about hockey or what can be done, it can be said that the process of learning is being facilitated.

[O]nce in a while I will throw in some questions to them (the mentoree) about certain areas that I want to ask about the technical side, the mental side, the tactical side; and then I get them to answer back and then I prioritize the answers and responses and then plan the intervention for each practice. (Don, personal communication)

As part of this empowering approach the mentor also tends to abstain from evaluating and providing the coach with quantitative or objective feedback,

Usually you tend to have them do a self-evaluation of how do they think the practice went and then how do you think the drills went and get them to do a lot of their own critiquing. I am not there with a clipboard and saying to them that drill two was a seven because it was good and I am going to give the next drill a four because this happened. I am going to tend to let them tell me how they felt while doing the drill and again it is more of a leading process. If I notice a problem I will ask a question that will lead them to that and that is the technique that I have a bit of success with, especially with younger coaches where a lot of the time the knowledge is there but they maybe do not have the confidence in themselves to realize. (Eric, personal communication)

This facilitative and leading approach has the mentor guiding along side the mentoree, but the mentoree determining the path. This reflective process empowers the mentoree to construct a level of awareness of knowledge that promotes a more sustainable and lifelong learning than a top down acquisitional process of knowledge acquisition. It is more of a mutual respect, and within that mutual respect the mentor is not there to run things for the mentoree, the mentor is there as a resource, for guiding, and helping facilitate learning. “If you want to wrap it up into three words I think it is, ‘guiding from the side’. That is what I think good mentoring is, it is guiding from the side”. (Mike, personal communication)

A common practical application of guiding from the side depicted by the mentors was that of assisting with the creation and implementation of practice plans, a skill that is critical for a coach’s practice and provides a vantage point for determining a coach’s

level of competency. Some of the mentors interviewed preferred a passive approach, by offering reflective questioning and reassurances, as the mentoree worked through their practice objectives and implementation, with no active mentor involvement during the practice. Another mentor interviewed, preferred a more active approach, where he was an active participant during the practice and offered advice and feedback during the practice, on the ice itself. Although the mentors interviewed in this study varied in their preference of either being on or off the ice during a mentoree's practice, they all echoed each other's preference towards a more facilitative approach in assisting the mentoree in their execution of a practice plan.

I always try to help the coaches get to the right decisions themselves rather than say this is the way you should be doing it. I would rather show them some options, 'here is where you are at and here is what you can do', and then let them find their way rather than me telling them what they should do. That is one of the reasons why when asked to mentor, I will not go out and run somebody's practice for them and that is still one of my most common requests, my answer is usually no, I will come watch a practice and we will go over some plans and if you got some issues with your practice plans and your yearly plan, I am all for that, but I am not going to come and run your practice. (Eric, personal communication)

Whether the mentor described a passive or active approach to guiding from the side, their intent of mentoring is to empower coaches through mutual engagement in a non-hierarchical relationship, and to assist in self-directed development of strategies and their implementation.



To me that is it, to sit around and share ideas and empower coaches. Do not have the mentor up here and a coach down there all the time.

Empower the coach so that he is comfortable and he is going to take drills out of that and he is going to run a good practice and we helped model that. (Ray, personal communication)

However, despite the mentors' endeavors to create non-hierarchical forms of engagement, most situations that involve sustained interpersonal engagement generate their fair share of tensions and conflicts. In the hockey coaching community of practice, conflict and resistance constitute a core element even of a shared practice: disagreement, challenges, and competition are all forms of participation. As a form of participation, resistance often reveals a greater commitment to a coach's endeavors than does passive conformity. What makes engagement in practice possible and productive is as much a matter of diversity as it is a matter of homogeneity (Wenger, 1998b). Homogeneity is neither a requirement for, nor the results of, the development of a community of practice. The conflicting tendencies of the collaborative intentions of the NCMP and the competitive nature of Canadian hockey, manifesting itself in a coach's resistance to cooperative principles in coach education create tension, but also do not exclude their engagement within the community of practice.

#### *Wall of resistance*

*I think I want to make coaches feel that they are a part of it, that they are accountable to themselves in terms of growing together, it is not an us and them thing, it is a we thing. It is not us, the mentors, and them, the coaches, it's a we thing. (Don, personal communication)*

Every coach enters their practice with an understanding of how things should proceed within their given space based on the intentions and values of that space. The influential grasp of Canadian hockey and expectations of success arising from national pride, offer values focused on competition and outcome-orientated success. This focus translates into a space that lends coach's to understand their role as producing young athletes who create the best opportunity for winning. To do so, many coaches feel as though they need to protect their own interests and to be resistant to collaboration with fellow coaches and mentors. "I think, and this may not surprise you, a lot of coaches have that wall, not that open to suggestions or criticisms" (Ted, personal communication). Their imagination of their membership in the coaching community, their constructed image of themselves, of their communities, and of the world, manifests itself as a wall or a rebellious approach that projects an image of resistance towards the promise of development through the assistance of others. As Chris described:

Yes, I see that from other coaches. For sure that is there. I think the wall kind of thing is, in any sport, in hockey, there is 100 different ways to do 100 different things and none of them are wrong. What I find is that you kind of draw on what you know already. That is probably 95 percent of what you do. It is very difficult for people and especially coaches because they are competitive in nature to have someone come to them and say, 'you know what I think you would get more use out of this if you used this'.

A coach's need to feel competent and to produce forms of knowledge that are accepted and respected based on performance-outcome orientated principles,

encourages coaches to project themselves as experts, as the ones who have the answers, and who can provide the most beneficial experience for the players; “That is a challenge for our sport, that everyone is an expert” (Chris, personal communication). This pressure, to be perceived as competent, emerges from the competitiveness of the hockey coaching community and frequently results in coaches being resistant to change or alternative approaches to the game. Coaches often feel the need to defend a decision or approach that is prevalent in their coaching actions, “a lot of it comes from the history of coaches not willing to bend and not willing to listen” (Ted, personal communication), and as Chris described, “I think people don’t ever want to be perceived as not knowing anything about the game”. These environmental pressures, along with a coach’s need to be viewed as an expert, produces an obligation for the coach to be viewed as competent in the eyes of his community. When the perception of that competency has the potential to be threatened, the coach will engage in self-preservation by resisting assistance and alternatives, creating tensions between the cooperative principles of the NCMP and the competitive environmental pressures of the Canadian hockey community.

That is where a big challenge is, with people asking someone and saying that you do not know a lot about something that everyone is supposed to know a lot about. (Chris, personal communication)

They [the coaches] are intimidated by them [the mentors], automatic intimidation because they do not want to be perceived as anything other than competent. I think people don’t ever want to be perceived as not

knowing anything about the game. So instead of asking questions, coaches will often continue doing what they are doing, unless you know someone personally or you have that naturally in you, where you seek out information. (Chris, personal communication)

Participants also spoke of their own experiences as they were developing as a coach and how they encountered similar walls of resistance. They described the environmental pressures of the hockey coaching community as a newcomer and how these pressures created resistance and tension in their educational interactions. As they negotiated their membership in the community through the peripheries of practice, and gained more access to practices and members intimately tied to the NCMP, their need to feel competent diminished. They became more closely aligned with the practices of the NCMP, and reduced the walls of resistance and tensions in their own actions.

I did not ask for advice and I did not feel comfortable going to a lot of people to ask them questions. I think when I first started that was partially due to inexperience and you tend to put up a wall that you want to present, you know, 'you are in the know' and that you do not really need that help and that you want to run a good show on your own and I would find that as you become more experienced you know that you are never going to know everything and its okay to ask someone for help, that it can be beneficial. (Ted, personal communication)

Based upon this awareness and understanding, the NCMP in Manitoba acts on a premise that is based on a willing approach which was supported by participants Chris and Eric.

We do not go to guys and say that they have to do this, this and this. Our opinion is that they approach you and ask those questions. We can't start going to them and telling them what they do not know because they'll just clamp up and say nothing. (Chris, personal communication)

I think my biggest belief in the mentorship is that it has to be a willing approach and I never liked if anybody came to me when I was a mentoree, as I was learning the game and going through the process, come and tell me what is to be done. I had to be a willing participant and that is how I approach my local mentoring as well. If nobody asks questions, I do not go and tell them stuff. It has to be initiated by the recipient, the mentoree. I do not think that mentoring can be a mandatory program. It is thrown around the branch [Hockey Manitoba] on occasion about how they have to be mentored and coaches should have to be. And I have always been pretty firm on the fact that I will not be involved if it's a mandatory program. I think it has got to be initiated by the recipient. (Eric, personal communication)

For this voluntary approach to be initiated by the mentoree, there has to be a certain degree of trust and comfort for that individual in the mentoring situation. "I think it helps the coaches buy into the support side of it as opposed to they have to do this because we told them to do it. I think they feel more part of it as opposed to being forced at it" (Don, personal communication). Mentors have to be able to find ways to make the mentoree willing to come ask questions, instead of it being a required interaction, "we have to figure out what it takes to get people to come and ask a question more so than

telling them they have to come and ask the question” (Eric, personal communication). As Eric described, there are three streams of coaches: the non-willing veterans, the on the fence veterans, and the willing rookies.

I still use that there are three very distinct sets of groups of coaches in our system; there are the guys who have been there quite a while, done their thing, and they are not really willing to be mentored and not willing to do much of a change. There is group two in the middle and you are probably going to have a split of guys that are going to be career coaches and know everything already and others that are going to be in the system for a while and are very willing to learn and to be mentored and they are going to come ask for help. To me the third group of coaches are the ones that are entering the system and starting, and to me that is where the mentorship attention should rain down on and be available and be like the most common thing in their life. (Eric, personal communication)

By focusing on the third group of coaches, the NCMP may continue to create avenues for interaction between mentor and mentorees. Whether it is over the phone, face to face, or every week over coffee, the importance of establishing a comfort level and a want to become involved remains, “mentoring is basically based on the coach wanting to get involved” (Ray, personal communication).

To summarize, coaches and mentors are subject to the environmental pressures that accompany the frenzy of the Canadian hockey community of practice. These environmental pressures result in a coach feeling the need to form a wall of resistance out of the fear that their perceived level of competency will be threatened or they will not be

abiding by the competitive principles. This wall of resistance creates tensions between the cooperative principles of the NCMP and the competitive endeavors of the hockey community. To counteract this wall of resistance, mentors advocate a view towards mentoring that is reliant on establishing a comfort level between participants, with the mentoree as a willing participant in their engagement with the NCMP.

### *Comfort coaching*

*I come back to this comfort zone and it is an overlying theme, but the NCMP has to get more coaches comfortable on approaching mentors to become involved. (Mike, personal communication)*

Following the NCMP's slogan of "Coaches helping Coaches", the NCMP endeavors to provide coaches with an accessible link to resources through the mentors in the program, and access to the mentors themselves. "To me it [Coaches helping Coaches] is, if you are a coach, and you are having problems with some things it is nice to link you with a person. You can pick the phone up with somebody you trust, somebody who you can bounce ideas off of" (Ray, personal communication). However, as the mentors described, the first experiences of the NCMP in Manitoba was inactivity, this link to mentors and their resources was not utilized, "I guess the first experiences were inactivity. We came back and trained seven or eight mentors and the response was the same across the board. Nobody was doing anything" (Ray, personal communication).

We set it up and, honest, Ace and I, thought that we would put these guys' names and we would just be crazy. People would be calling us like crazy and we thought, how are we going to do this, we just have six guys, oh my god. Well it never happened. It just never did. I am sure Ace said the same

thing but it just never did. I mean we just did nothing. I mean there were a few and we had our own mentors so we were just documenting what was already happening. Our challenge was to get the information out. No one knew about it. (Ray, personal communication).

I think we just had the presumption that we can just say, “here are the mentors, phone them up” and people we found just do not do that. Most people do not. I think you have to do something to establish a connection and people are not just going to phone up to some stranger and say that they are having problems with their practice. (Ray, personal communication)

The ability of this link to become enabled in the coaching community of practice relies heavily on coaches seeking the mentor out, and the mentor presenting themselves as also willing to collaborate, with a level of humility to develop a level of comfort on behalf of the coach, “that helps in developing that real comfort zone where they are not afraid and they are not feeling intimidated of the mentors” (Mike, personal communication). A coach’s comfort zone is being able to initiate engagement with a fellow coach without the fear of their level of competency and expert knowledge being threatened.

To me that is mentorship, I do not think it can be a forced thing. You have got to want to have it. There are certain people you want to be like, right, and so you tend to gravitate to that person and tend to learn from them, or they do things that you think make sense. (Ted, personal communication)



Without a certain level of comfort and familiarity with a mentor, the mentoree will continue to resist collaboration and engagement with those whom he feels will threaten his perceived knowledge and status within the coaching community. “To do something, to engage with a mentor, there has got to be a trust and there has got to be a respect there” (Ray, personal communication).

Informally and formally as a coach negotiates seeking information from a mentor to further his or her skills in the coaching community, the participants described how coaches tended to seek out those with whom they felt this comfort level, as well as who shared similar philosophies towards the game as they did. “I think a mentor is someone who you seek information from. I think you will latch on to someone who has the same ideals as you do” (Chris, personal communication). A coach’s ideals are manifested in their coaching style and how they go about engaging with their athletes and practice. Some coaches were described as old school coaches who tend to lead more by a dictatorship style of coaching, whereas other coaches were described as player coaches where they take a more interpersonal approach to interacting with their athletes. A coach’s style often dictated the degree of comfort level a coach felt with a mentor, thus dictating the degree of possibility of forming a mentoring relationship.

I think they [coaches] look for people that they feel comfortable with. It is our job as mentors to get that relationship going in a positive way.

Because if someone is not comfortable they are not going to ask you anything. If there is one thing that I can say it is personality and a comfort level with the person to ask them something about, potentially something

that in the general public they would be mocked. (Chris, personal communication)

This gravitation towards similar personalities and coaching styles, increasing the comfort level felt by a mentoree, is the result of the establishment of a level of trust and rapport, where the mentoree can pursue advice from someone in a manner that does not provide a stigma of being perceived as not knowing something. Even during a short time period such as a specialty clinic I observed mentorees gravitate towards mentors that seemed to share similar approaches to the game. By the end of a day of specialty clinics I observed smaller discussion groups evolve between mentors and mentorees providing smaller areas of influence during their engagement. The similarity in approaches provided a connection from which they could base further conversations. A connection has to be established, people are not just going to phone up to some stranger and say that they are having problems with their practice, “to do something, there has to be a trust and there has got to be a respect there” (Ray, personal communication).

The relationship that you have with the coach is certainly the foundation of every part of communication. If you have a good relationship with a coach and you hear of a hot spot sometimes, the initiative from the mentor to the coach is probably a little more instantaneous than it would be otherwise. (Don, personal communication)

The mentors interviewed described how they had experienced an increase of questioning as a signal that a mentoree’s comfort level was increasing. As the relationship developed there were more questions from the coach to the mentor, as opposed to the questions from the mentor to the coach.

I think the healthiest relationships I have with these guys are when the questions are coming from them to me. As opposed to the other way around and that is where it gets really good in terms of the whole mentorship program when there is ‘question, question, question’ coming from coach to the mentor and that is what it is all about. (Don, personal communication)

It is knowing people well enough to ask questions about something that people think they know a lot about and admitting that you do not know as much as you think you do, “if you do not feel comfortable with someone you are probably not going to ask them about how to do things” (Chris, personal communication). By establishing a level of trust and rapport, the mentors create a comfort zone for the mentorees, giving them permission to ask how to do things, an open line of communication.

Very rarely do I follow up. For example the fellow in Eustown, when we have a discussion or an email at the end I will say to him to send me an email if he has any questions. But I do not leave him with something like, we will follow up in a month. I do not do that kind of thing where we *have* to reconnect. If he stopped and I never heard from him again that is just how it is. (Ted, personal communication)

This open line of communication, without imposing a structured process of communication and establishing an opportunity for contact between a mentor and mentoree is reported as being a significant step in the formation of mutual engagement. At a practice, during a game, at a coaching clinic, are all opportunities for engagement and represent an essential component to the establishment of a mentoring relationship.

I feel that the most value that I have provided the coaches with is during practice times. That is key because during a game I am not developing nearly as much of a relationship with coach that night sitting by myself in the stands while he is over at the bench, as opposed to coming out to coach's practice, being with coach two minutes before, on the ice with them as they are going through their hour and working tighter through the hour and debriefing after. So the relationship development was way quicker adding one practice and deleting one game in terms of the overall development of the mentorship program. (Don, personal communication)

Comfort coaching represents a key component in the existence of mutual engagement within the coaching community of practice. The concepts of: humility, familiarity, trust and rapport, matching of coaching styles, and open lines of communication were all described as concepts that assist in creating a comfort zone and reducing tensions between the cooperative endeavors of the NCMP and the competitive environmental pressures of Canadian hockey. The availability of opportunities for the mentor and mentoree to align their endeavors represents what the participants described as the point of contact.

#### *Point of contact and the sell*

*If you are a coach, and you are having problems with some things it is nice to link you with a person. You can bounce some ideas off of somebody. (Ray, personal communication)*

The point of contact and the sell refers to where the coach interacts with the boundaries of the mentor community of practice, the point at which the coach begins to

negotiate their own meaning within the community. As the mentoree begins to engage with the boundaries of the mentor community of practice, the negotiation of the program at respective points of contact becomes a key initiating element in the engagement and facilitating of a mentoring relationship. The mentors in this study described a soft sell approach in their negotiation at the peripheries of the community of practice in attempts to initiate mutual engagement.

In mentorship I [the mentor], have always taken a soft sell approach to the sell of the mentorship program. I do not throw it down their throats and say they have to do this. I have never done that in terms of my philosophy and that is Hockey Canada's philosophy too. It has always been like [as a mentor], this is what is out there for you, call us, email us, bring us out if you like. If you do not want to bring us out that is fine too. That is the sell that I think is way more palpable to the coaches who are sitting in that room hearing what is being offered to them. It is not them being told what they have to comply with. (Don, personal communication)

Within rural communities mentors reported this point of contact and relationship facilitation to be more natural because of the opportunity for engagement, with the rink being the common focal point, therefore facilitating informal mentoring.

In the city you have a lot of other options. You can go bowling, you can go to the mall, you can go to the arcades, you can do whatever. In a small town those options are not there. The options are public skating and shinny and your hockey program. I think that is the benefit of the smaller community. I have not done a lot of mentoring in the larger centers, but in

the small community when you are going to a program on a regular basis you develop more of an opportunity to mentor than possibly in a building where you go in and do your thing and then get out. We are all volunteers in the building, we all work at the lunch counter, we will referee and help do that sort of stuff, or any hockey schools or any extra activity the coaches are all called upon and that is your volunteer base for a lot of stuff. Definitely a lot of it is working together in different aspects, not strictly the coaching part. (Eric, personal communication)

Once the mentor is able to communicate with them through a wall of resistance (see page 52) and on a level of trust and rapport, then the act of engagement in what the coaching practice is all about becomes more fluid.

The soft sell approach is in terms of trying to get them hooked initially, once I get them there, I can sell it. If I can get them there to this rink in the first month, it's over, cause now we are at the rink and we are running the show together and now we are having some laughs and developing a relationship. My first point of contact in terms of relationship building is critical for the success of what I do and I am sure it would be critical for the success of what any mentor does. (Don, personal communication)

Considering not all coaches share the same coaching philosophy and are not all impacted in the same way by environmental pressures, the ability of the mentor to read the mentoree and determine whether or not the soft-sell approach will be effective was also described as an important factor during the initial point of contact and future interactions.

I tried to give him some soft suggestions, and it never worked, he never changed. He could not read that I was suggesting to him to change a little bit and by giving him positives I fed his fuel to some degree so there is a disaster right there. I did not probably read him right and my approach did not work for him and I do not know if I could change my approach because my personality is part of my approach. (Ted, personal communication)

Many times these interactions give rise to a form of learning through interaction and results in “the mentoring happens without the people even realizing they are being mentored” (Eric, personal communication). The majority of mentoring that occurs, in rural and urban rinks, revolves around, “at the rink putting your skates on and exchanging ideas and views” (Eric, personal communication).

To summarize, the ability for the mentors to have these opportunities to engage in similar acts and be in a mutual environment is crucial in establishing a connection. The soft sell is an approach that attempts to counteract the tensions in mentoring experienced between the boundaries of the NCMP and the coaching community of practice. Although not always appropriate, the participants reported it as being the most effective way to establish a level of trust, “realizing that there has to be a trust, there has to be a hook, there has to be a connection before somebody is going to share things with you. So that is where we came up with the idea of specialty clinics” (Ray, personal communication).

*Point of contact and mentoring in groups*

*You can call it what you want but as I said before you are getting coaches together in a non-threatening voluntary environment teaching skills and asking questions, so it is mentorship (Eric, personal communication).*

The NCMP attempts to provide opportunities for initial points of contact to occur, and to do so they revisited coach education in groups with what they call specialty clinics, as Ray calls it, mentoring in groups.

Some people say it is not mentoring, but I think it is. You are mentoring, you are talking, you are asking for feedback, you are on the ice with them, but then we also leave cards and say that if you need help with anything please give us a call. I do not think anybody really mentors well, and I do not think you can force two people together. To do something there has got to be a trust and there has got to be a respect there. (Ray, personal communication)

*The Specialty clinic.* The event of a specialty clinic sponsored by the NCMP is a free, voluntary event that coaches can attend within their associations. The host site pays for the ice rental and classrooms if necessary, and following each on-ice session, coaches will receive a full drill package. These clinics are advertised on the website and the host centers promote it within their community. Specialty clinics offer coaches a practical session on teaching various skills, tactics, and systems. During the specialty clinics, the coaches actually performed the drills themselves. They were expected to participate (although it was mentioned it is not mandatory), so, as the master mentor mentioned during one specialty clinic I observed, “it is easier to explain it after you have done it”.



The specialty clinics offer fertile grounds for learning incidents as they bring together coaches and mentors with a willingness to discuss and be open to new concepts.

When I am putting on a clinic you will run across people in a clinic that will challenge you on certain things. But, these clinics for the most part are not required clinics by Hockey Manitoba. So these are volunteer clinics, so most people there are coming for the sake of learning and they want to learn... I can often learn from the people at these clinics and we all learn from each other. (Ted, personal communication)

This interactive approach is with the hope that it will open the lines of communication and provide a non-threatening environment for coaches to interact with a mentor. This common meeting place provides mentors and mentorees the opportunity to engage with each other in a non-threatening, voluntary environment. Ray confirms this:

We put the posters up before the specialty clinics and they really did not make a difference. We thought it would. We thought the reason people were not calling was because they did not know about it. That was partially true, but it was that comfort zone. Like I said, it is mentoring in groups. A lot of time you will get a guy who does not want to ask, you will get a group and after an hour and a half on the ice, we then go back to the classroom and kind of, shoot the shit after. That is when the guys will come talk to us and ask something that is happening with them. Even after 3 hours there is that comfort zone where the guy is going to open up to you a little bit. To me that is the hook, and we get a relationship going.

The opportunity for both mentoring in groups and one-on-one mentoring in conjunction with the mentoree's voluntary participation provides a unique scenario that reduces the threat to the mentoree's competency and perceived knowledge of the game. During one specialty, I would observe a particular mentoree move from a group discussion to a more intimate one-on-one mentoring discussion to address some of his more specific inquiries, before he returned to the larger group mentoring informal discussion. This provided the mentoree with an opportunity to embark on informal interactions on a variety of interactive levels and therefore increasing his ability to interact with his own comfort zone.

Observations during a specialty clinic exhibited a readiness in the mentoree's comfort level and an environment that was more conducive to collaboration. Mentoree's were involved in the discussions and their viewpoints were addressed and respected. During one specialty clinic I observed, the mentor administering the clinic actually had a mentoree come up to the front of the room and show a different technique that was contrary to the mentor's. The mentor acknowledged the mentoree's demonstration and asked the mentoree to then show it on the ice later. In doing so, the mentor dispelled any notion of superiority on behalf of the mentor, and following this act the level of interaction amongst the mentorees and mentors increased.

Specialty clinics began as a way to promote the program and have grown into a proven starting point for many mentoring relationships. The process is interactive and both are able to "bounce some ideas off of somebody" (Ray, personal communication) and "questions are asked, dialogue takes place and then it goes back and forth" (Don, personal communication).

It is that initial introduction to our mentorship program to our mentors and I think it directly affects players quicker than anything else. Because the information we give them at the specialty clinics, they use. That automatically and directly affects our athletes right away. That is what we want to do ultimately, we want to educate coaches to make our players better. I think they are the quickest way not only to have our mentors introduced to potential mentorees, but for a direct effect on our athletes. It permeates down to our players as fast as anything we have ever done in the mentorship program. (Chris, personal communication)

The specialty clinics have had such a positive impact on the engagement of mentoree's within the program, they have been extended into coaches days. A single coach day will consist of two NCMP specialty clinics. The emphasis during such days is on skill development and discussion revolving around the best methods of implementation in practice. Admission is once again free and voluntary to encourage maximum participation.

*The Breakfast club.* Another platform for facilitating points of contact is what the mentorship program calls breakfast clubs. Breakfast clubs are initiated and run by a mentor in a local area and are open to any child, parent, and coach. "It is kind of a two fold concept, one for the player development and the other is coach development" (Ray, personal communication). The breakfast club is an on-ice practice that runs usually twice a week from 7:30 – 8:30 am. During my observation of a breakfast club session, the on-ice session consisted of three all skill drills, no tactics, systems, or flow drills, and all independent skill drills; then at about 8:00 am the kids were given open ice to do what

they like. Other local coaches were encouraged to come on the ice and to be engaged in the practice.

The coaches thought it [the breakfast club] is great. One of the guys who comes out with me coaches the Pee wee team, what he does now is he takes what we do in the morning and that is the core of his practice. ... I think we try to model how to handle the kids, how to teach. Every drill we do we try to explain it and hopefully modeling what to do on the ice. (Ray, personal communication)

The breakfast club concept has begun to spring up in other areas of the province, moved forward by active mentors who are able to locate other support in the community from the town council, local arena, and other volunteers. They have continued to grow in popularity and significance in the development of coaches and players.

During one breakfast club session that I was able to be a part of, the informal interactions between the mentors who were running the practices and those coaches who were assisting or watching from the lobby were very evident. Conversations revolved around various team issues that the coach may have, as well as the implication of certain drills and strategies that were discussed on-ice. There was a distinct lack of competitive forces driving and influencing the interactions, coaches interacted at their own discretion, just as the players. It offered an opportunity, or as coaches may refer to it, an excuse, to come to the rink and talk hockey. This offered a very practical and applied setting for the point of contact between mentor and mentoree, within an environment conducive to mutual engagement based on humility and guiding from the side. The communal interactions, both on and off the ice, take significant strides in reducing effects of a

coaching hierarchy (with the mentor helping in the delivery) in addition to offering an environment in which the role of outcome orientated principles are diminished. This produces an environment in which coaches attend based on their own comfort level and participate with the intent of sharing concepts and ideas to better the experience for all.

Other attempts at providing a point of contact in groups for the mentor and mentoree have been hot stoves and coach pizza nights. These are occasions where the mentor initiates a gathering of interested coaches in a central locale to talk hockey, “just sit and bounce ideas off each other, whether they go on the ice and do drills or whatever” (Eric, personal communication). They are modes of interaction that attempt to bypass the, “road block of the associations” and “bypassing the bureaucracy and get to the coaches”. (Ray, personal communication)

Word of mouth within the hockey community and the lobby gossip<sup>9</sup>, the interaction in a central meeting place, goes a long way in assisting the mentorship program in its efforts, “the word is spreading, it is helping to expand the program, because I am not sure of how many coaches in Manitoba are really familiar with what it is all about” (Ted, personal communication). As more coaches have experiences tied with the NCMP, and talk about it amongst their peers, the more momentum the NCMP gathers “it is like a good sandwich so one guy is going to have it, then three guys are going to have it, then twenty people are going to have it” (Chris, personal communication). The specialty clinics and breakfast clubs are two avenues from which the NCMP is able to initiate points of contact with coaches and create more opportunities for the engagement of the boundaries of the coaching and mentoring communities of practice.

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<sup>9</sup> The term lobby gossip is a term that I use to denote the casual conversations that occur in the lobby of the arena. These conversations are usually rich in hockey gossip and folklore and are responsible for significantly influencing the beliefs and actions of the participants.

The dimension of mutual engagement in the coaching community of practice informs practice and dictates the negotiation of meaning in practice. Many of the mentors interviewed undertook the negotiation of meaning in practice in a mentoring role before they were officially named a mentor, “One of my first questions to my minor hockey when I first started coaching was, there has to be some kind of clinics that we can take and he had no idea. So I went to clinics and brought back the information and did some informal clinic work without our association” (Eric, personal communication). This in essence was his introduction to being a mentor. Mentors in this study often just acted in such a way that negotiates the boundaries of coordination and transparency to connect his community of practice with a larger community, “I would just do what I know” (Ted, personal communication).

Mutual engagement as seen in the NCMP community of practice is a diverse network of interactions, which accounts for the functioning of the community. The themes of: coaching hierarchy, the humble coach, guiding from the side, wall of resistance, comfort coaching, point of contact and the sell, and, point of contact and mentoring in groups; connects coaches and mentors in ways that are diverse and complex. The result is relationships that reflect the full complexity of the coaching community of practice and doing things together. As the boundaries of mutual engagement are continually navigated, we move towards a realization of what is required for good mentoring and meaningful learning experiences for coaches, and in doing so, their athletes.

### Joint enterprise

*Coaching is a fraternity, it is a continuum, we are all in this together, and if we can help each other out any way we can, I think that is the way you have to approach it.*  
(Mike, personal communication)

The joint enterprise of a community, (see also page 15) refers to the community's shared understanding regarding the main endeavors of the community itself (Wenger, 1998a). Based on the responses of the mentors interviewed the joint enterprise of the coaching community of practice can be analyzed through four themes: (a) isolation and validation, (b) gold signs and performance-outcome orientated coaching, (c) siege mentality, and (d) the coaching rat race. These themes offer insight and analysis into how tensions in mentoring are expressed by the extent to which an individual, in this instance the mentor and coach, understands and manipulates this collective enterprise such that they contribute to and facilitate learning.

The purpose and intent of the mentorship program itself, which also happens to be the slogan of the NCMP, is simply coaches helping coaches, "I think the better we can make everybody the better we can make hockey to be. If I help you coach and if your kids are better that is great because that is going to make my kids better" (Ray, personal communication). Within its endeavors of helping coaches, the program focuses on the coach who is coaching at the grassroots, those who have just started and most likely a rookie to coaching. One of the first measures of a competent coach is their ability to effectively run a practice; therefore this is an area that the NCMP has directed its attention towards "one of the goals of the mentorship program to me [as a mentor] is to run more effective practices" (Ray, personal communication). In doing so the program

wants to empower the coaches, enabling them to be positive contributors to the game and the collective enterprise, “trying to educate and trying to give coaches another avenue to learn to coach the game and to be positive contributors to athletes our kids and our members” (Chris, personal communication).

Empowering coaches is a considerable challenge for the NCMP as a result of the environmental pressures engrained within the joint enterprise of the hockey community. Even with many similarities in their challenges and triumphs, each coach’s story is going to be unique in its own way. The ability of a coach to mitigate the environmental pressures in the hockey community, even with support from other coaches and mentors, is a feat in itself.

There is tons of positive ones [mentoring experiences] and the biggest compliment I think is the more guys you mentor will stay coaching and the same thing with coaching yourself, you coach sometimes and your true successes are measured in how many coaches and players you produce. I think mentorship is that way, the number you maintain in the system.  
(Eric, personal communication)

However, not all mentor and coach interactions result in retaining coaches in the coaching community of practice and its joint enterprise. There have been some learning incidents where through reflection the coach has decided that it was best if he was not coaching any more, which has provided success stories for mentors as Eric described:

One of my best success stories for the year was a guy who quit coaching. That is a positive story that seems weird but that was a mentorship thing where I did not tell him to quit, but I was the guy who he would phone



after he got home from the rink and was ready to punch out another parent or do whatever he was going to do that day. I was the guy who he got to talk to all the time because I was neutral in the town, back from the situation. He came to the realization after talking lots, that he should just not be a coach.

When reminiscing why they themselves initially began coaching, the participants outlined a rationale that revolved around considerations of an obligation to the hockey community and a greater purpose to advancing knowledge in the game with fellow coaches. Working with others who share the same conditions is thus a central factor in defining the joint enterprise they engage in. The mentors all expressed a transition from their playing days to their coaching days that came with a sort of expectation that they would coach because of their experience in hockey. It was almost a requirement to return a favor. There was an obligation to contribute back to the joint enterprise of the hockey community of practice by involving themselves with coaching.

I also think I owed something back to the game which gave me so much when I was a kid. (Chris, personal communication)

When you are in a small town and you play hockey, your phone is going to ring [to be asked to coach]. My son was playing and I was asked to coach. (Ray, personal communication)

I think more than anything it has been so much of my life for me. I grew up in a really small town and it gave me opportunities that I probably would have not gotten otherwise. Just a real need to give back to it after getting so much from the game, that is what really drives me and wanting

to give back and I really love working with kids. (Mike, personal communication)

I think the love of the game and the coaching aspect of it. The satisfaction a person gets from taking a group of athletes and working with them and finding ways to make them better players and individuals. (Eric, personal communication)

The mentors' passion to be involved in the mentorship program evolved from these rationales for being involved in coaching and engaging in its joint enterprise. As noted previously the master mentor and program administrator attempt to search for mentors who possess these altruistic ideals, "I think it has got to be where we want mentors who are in it for the right reasons" (Ray, personal communication). Reasons that speak to how they are there to help coaches and give back to the coaching body of knowledge; they are not there for monetary or artificial gain.

To me, it is the guys who want to help other coaches. Hockey is a big business, I go around and read posters, goaltending clinics \$400 for three days. We could do that but I want guys who are there that want to help coaches with time and heart. I am not doing this for \$500; I am doing this to help them out. (Ray, personal communication)

Within their altruistic reasons for coaching and giving back to the game, the environmental pressures of Canadian hockey and the desire for outcome-orientated results are still present in the coaching community of practice joint enterprise. This can often result in an internal struggle for the coach as they experience tensions between competitive and cooperative principles in the coaching community of practice. As the

coach negotiates their meaning and position within the coaching community, these tensions felt between cooperative and competitive principles, can often lead to a feeling of isolation with moments of validation.

### *Isolation and validation*

As was mentioned earlier, coaches are constantly exposed to pressures from parents, athletes, and administrators to produce winning teams that shape not only what they do, but also who they are and how they interpret what they do. Because of these pressures, many minor hockey coaches are reluctant to share ideas with other coaches, out of a fear that their team may lose the edge when competing. This reluctance with a coach's wall of resistance (see page 52) produces instances of isolation resulting from coaches seeing other coaches as enemies, not partners. The mentorship program in Manitoba endeavors to counteract the emergence of isolation and strives to ensure that no coach is an island.

Current coaching education programs within the sport of hockey are often tailored to a short-term intervention of coach education, where a coach sits in on a one-day seminar and then they are sent off to fend for themselves, fostering feelings of isolation, "a lot of times coaches do not get a lot of guidance... You are gone on your own for the year and I do not think there is enough support given sometimes" (Mike, personal communication). The feeling of isolation is magnified by the environment itself, where minor hockey league coaches at the grassroots levels are volunteers who, for the most part, have taken up coaching with minimal coaching experience, and are immediately expected to be on the front line of hockey's future development; where the outcome-orientated pressures to win are most prevalent, as described by Mike:

When things start going wrong, you got parents breathing down your neck, I think that is when you start feeling isolated. You think, ‘Oh my God what have I done wrong?’ If you [as a mentor] can make them understand that it happens to a lot of people or that it has happened to me - even as a teacher you get through a bad spell, and then you get to do an in-service and you talk to a dozen other teachers and you think, okay I am good with this now, I am not a bad teacher. I just needed to get out and experience other things that teachers are experiencing and listen to a good speaker and all of a sudden you feel good about what you are doing again. I think that is isolation; I think that coaches a lot of times feel that way.

As coaches negotiate their practice, all too often, with little support and experience, they are left wondering “am I doing this right?” Isolation can lead to staleness in the creation of knowledge and perpetuates a situation where coaches are continually struggling to establish or maintain a level of competency, all the while being nervous that another coach may see what they are doing and reveal that they may not be doing it properly. With this uneasiness and feelings of isolation, coaches often look for validation and reassurance that what they are doing is right. This validation can come through the acceptance of action by someone who carries a higher designation in the coaching community or someone who they personally believe is more competent in coaching. Mentors are often viewed as those who can provide this validation of practice, either through one-on-one interaction or in mentoring in groups (see page 67).

Yes, what is neat about those situations is that we see it breaking the ice and you know I get a coach talking to me and they are describing a

situation to me and all of a sudden, a coach says “that has happened to me 12-15 times” and they are shocked and they kind of feel good. It is kind of like anything else, where they feel kind of isolated to a certain degree and you bring them into a mentorship situation where you have five or six coaches or one coach around, and they can hear that it happened to them as well, and it makes them more comfortable and draws them in. So, again it is getting rid of that feeling of isolation and that it can only be happening to me and I am such a bad coach. If you can help them realize that this happens to every coach and everyone has to experience it, it is an experiential thing, you are going to get through it and you are going to become more comfortable getting through that situation. (Mike, personal communication)

Although individual meetings were often favored, group exchanges were described as beneficial in providing mentorees with the opportunity for the feeling of validation.

I prefer one on one. Just because I think sometimes your issues can be hit and miss here, and a group of people will not be as honest or forthright as you conversing with a guy. However, we have also seen the power of validation in a group therapy type session with a group of coaches together. (Chris, personal communication)

Validation in mentoring in groups (see page 67) reaffirms that coaches are not alone with a problem, that the larger community shares them. This feeling of validation and reassurance also has the potential to bond coaches through their experiences, “after you

are done talking you visit and exchange stuff back and forth and I think it is a real positive that everybody realizes a lot of the problems are the same issues” (Eric, personal communication).

The specialty clinic setting offers an ideal locale for validation to occur. As I observed during one specialty clinic, one mentoree would ask a question or admit to having certain challenges, and after some initial discomfort and hesitation there often was a quorum that supported the comment and echoed the challenges. Following this exchange, the mentorees began to share more personal anecdotes, which lead to interaction and ultimately discussion revolving around the joint enterprise of the coaching community of practice.

One of the mentors interviewed adopted a strategy that addressed this need of validation through self-awareness, “the knowledge is there but they maybe do not have the confidence in themselves to realize it” (Eric, personal communication). His strategy was to immediately provide positive feedback while sensitizing the coaches to the fact that he as a mentor had gone through some of the same experiences.

To be exact one of the things that I try to do is to identify or give the coach some positive feedback about something they are doing right away.

Another thing that I would try and do is give an example of an unsuccessful experience. If we are talking about a coach that maybe is feeling some difficulties or some non-successes, what I would do is right away draw on examples that I have had as unsuccessful. You are trying to identify those examples, so they can identify with you. You had the same experiences, here is one of my bad experiences and one of the things that

went wrong for me, so then they are feeling, “hey that happens”, so they are now feeling more open and willing to talk. (Ted, personal communication)

Often, such positive impacts do not rely on far reaching intervention. One mentor interviewed remembered a conversation he had with one of his own mentors, it was one simple sentence that helped him feel comfortable standing on the ice, delivering a practice.

I guess it was the discussion I had with him about my plans and what I was doing. His comment to me in a nutshell was, “that is actually what you should do”. That to me was something that said to me, that yes I can stand on the ice with a bunch of young hockey players in a situation where they all come to me as a coach and run an effective, efficient practice to benefit kids. (Chris, personal communication)

The strides the NCMP undertake to reduce the feeling of isolation and increase the feelings of validation are an attempt to counteract the environmental pressures that are inherent in the coaching community of practice. By providing a coach with a variety of avenues to seek collaboration, the disparity between a coach’s perceived resources and demands decrease, allowing the coach to more effectively mitigate the monetary and performance-outcome orientated pressures of the Canadian hockey landscape.

*Gold signs and performance-outcome orientated coaching*

*Just like in coaching your by-product is winning. It should not be your focus, your goal is to win, that is why you are teaching kids to be better, you are teaching them to*

*compete and try to win games, but that should not be your focus, it should be a byproduct to what you are doing with your season. (Chris, personal communication)*

Parental pressures and the importance of success frequently constitute pressures that trump many idealistic viewpoints coaches enter the coaching community with. Eric described the importance of winning overshadowing a more long-term holistic approach to coaching.

You do different activities within minor hockey whether it is clinics or whatever and you get down to where your issues arise and unfortunately a lot of it is based on results. If you have a winning program and your community is known for being winners everybody thinks you must be doing the right thing. If you are not winning whether you are teaching skills or not, parents view it as being a failure. It is not all parents, but it is usually the vocal minority that makes that clear. (Eric, personal communication)

The competitive principles that are inherent in the coaching community can on one hand lead towards a wall of resistance (see page 52), but can also provide the NCMP and its mentors with lots of customers, mentorees looking to seek out mentors for the answers. The parental pressures coaches are subjected to is a critical element for coaches becoming involved with a mentor, “even the novice coach sees it [parental pressure] in wins and losses” (Ted, personal communication).

I do not think it hinders it. It is probably one of the best customers, the parental thing. Most of the issues that come are parental based. The sad truth is that is what probably feeds a lot of the program’s initial questions



is that pressure. If there were no parental pressure and nothing being brought forward, maybe some coaches would not even ask a question.

(Eric, personal communication)

Expectations come at coaches from all different angles. They are expected to win, they are expected to provide the players with quality experiences, they are expected to engage parents' demands, and they are expected to be competent. Although the mentors described these expectations being a main catalyst for engagement, the mentors also noted how when facing these expectations many coaches will often view mentor involvement as threatening and revert to avoidance and a siege mentality to protect themselves from possible scrutiny; once again reinforcing tensions experienced between the cooperative principles of the NCMP and competitive pressures of the hockey community.

#### *Siege mentality*

*I find that in certain areas of the province there is a siege mentality. That I am not going to tell anybody what I do, I do not want anybody knowing what I do. (Ray, personal communication)*

As a coach feels a need to protect his or her immediate area of influence and their ways of doing things, they in turn follow a mentality that harbors knowledge rather than disperses it. This mentality contributes to tensions experienced between the collaborative principles of the coach mentorship program and the competitive ideals of the hockey community. As mentioned previously this can even be seen at seven and eight year old games and practices where coaches are reluctant to share their ideas because of a need to feel a security in the fact that they have the upper hand in future competition.

I think maybe in security and competition. In rural areas we don't. When I coached the midget team it was because no one else would do it. I know that here [Winnipeg] there is continual competition for jobs so there is probably that little push here, if I have something over you, I might get the AAA job or something like that. (Ray, personal communication)

Having something over another coach usually exhibits itself in the form of team systems, tactics, and drills that can be used for an efficient winning formula, "if you are giving your stuff away someone else might catch it and have a better chance of winning" (Ted, personal communication). Most mentors are aware of this tendency to harbor ideas and commonly take action towards minimizing it.

[O]ne of my objectives within my town is to get us all helping each other instead of you taking your stuff and holding it right here [cups hands at chest]: I am never going to let anyone ever see this or I am not going to share that with anybody. (Ted, personal communication)

However, this mentality continues even at the initiation level<sup>10</sup> where it is common for teams to share the ice and run collective practices. When telling of one instance a mentor recounted how a particular coach refused to share the ice, "I [as the coach] want to have the upper hand when I play, because then I would be viewed as more competent" (Ted, personal communication). This siege mentality and guarding of their own knowledge was described by the mentors as most common amongst coaches in the same age categories.

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<sup>10</sup> The initiation level is for players six and under. The program is tailored to the needs of the players and requires a separate coaching designation and course. Games at the initiation level usually do not keep score and games are altered to maximize participation and player enjoyment.

Sure everyone will listen to Joe speak because you are not competing against him. But, the guys that are all at the same level, we are all competing, I am not sure what we are competing for [laughs], it is like someone gets the peewee team and somebody does not, like big deal.

(Ted, personal communication)

This mentor also noted how even if novice team<sup>11</sup> coaches shared information parents would not look upon this favorably if it resulted in their team losing.

I might tell you something in essence that will make my team, or me look bad to my parents. That is how I would term it from my point of view. If your novice team is struggling, you had better raw players than me and I told you a few things to do and then in a month you guys started beating me, my parents would not think that was good. (Ted, personal communication)

Ted continued to describe how this ingrained need to abide by parental expectation based on performance-outcome orientated principles affects their own mentoring efforts at times.

A lot of the mentors are volunteers just like everyone else, so why would I mentor this guy from Eustown when on Saturday I am going to go there and try to beat him? For the betterment of his kids and for my kids, right?

The siege mentality of coaches is also influenced by the lucrative world of hockey schools and camps. The possibility of considerable financial gain in a hockey school is

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<sup>11</sup> The novice age classification refers to players under the age of nine. Goals for this age category as defined by Hockey Canada are to have fun, review basic skills, and refine basic skills.

based on its' ability to attract players through the promise of superior player development.

I am very clear in my mind now with my role as a mentor and hockey schools are two different things. I think there is, if you want to call it finances or whatever, I think it comes down to some of it. In other words, if somebody knows something and they can sell it or use it in a hockey school or whatever to better their financial position, they might have trouble sharing that with another person. (Ted, personal communication)

With the lure of the possibility of financial gain, pressures to produce winning teams, and to produce superior athletes; on-ice drills and methods have become a commodity that coaches steal and manipulate for their own advantage. Whenever a coach sees another coach do something they like or agree with, but have not yet acquired, they will frequently say, "I like that, I am going to steal it" or they will even ask permission from the coach, "can I steal that from you?" The use of language in these interactions, albeit maybe not a conscious use, provides an interesting view of how the word steal is used to represent coaches sharing knowledge whether it is offered or observed. The contrasting words of, stealing and sharing are even prevalent in promotional videos for the mentorship program (see figure 3, 4, and 5). The use of which denote a coach's skills and techniques as items of commodity that are often protected by coaches in their siege mentality so that they may continue to have the upper hand.



Figure 3: Best coaches are also the best thieves

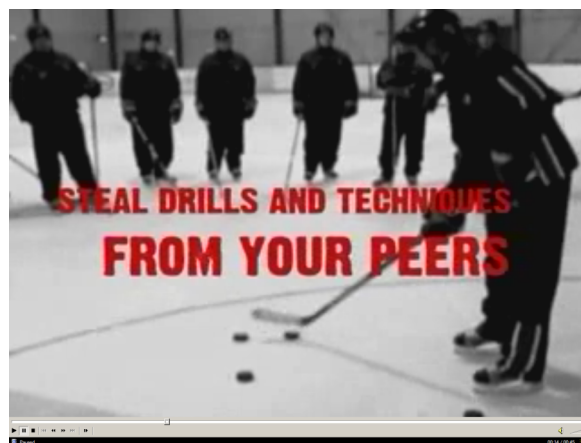


Figure 4: Steal drills and techniques

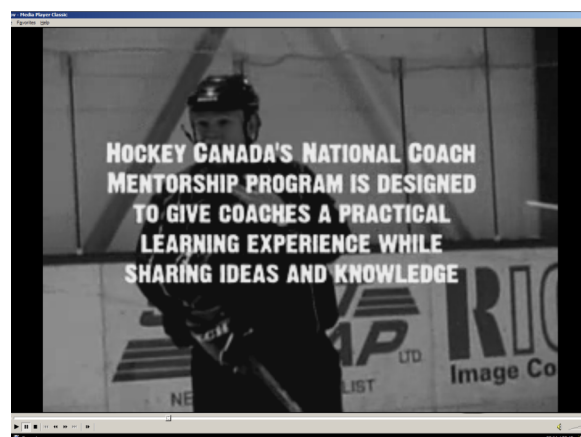


Figure 5: Sharing ideas and knowledge

Commenting on the video, Ray addressed this use of language and how in his view it implies the sharing of ideas, “I think what it is saying, you can say stealing if you want, but share. Share ideas. Coaches want drills.” They want the ability to build a

database of drills and the one who is able to compile the largest collection of drills, acquires the most commodities, and is perceived as being more competent. It is in this race to acquire drills and skills in the world of coaching education that the mentorship program attempts to take hold with the volunteer coaches at the grassroots level.

*The coaching rat race*

*That is one of the challenges of mentorship, is finding time with all these busy volunteers. Not only are they coaches, but they are probably helping to run the rink, they are probably reffing, they are probably organizing the refs, they are doing managerial stuff. It becomes a rat race and that is one of the real challenges of the mentorship program, is finding time to sit down and mentor. (Mike, personal communication)*

As indicated in coach vignette #1 the coaching community of hockey is a network of volunteers and coaches that are often sent to the races. They are set off on their own to coach within the environmental pressures of the hockey community, and not given the proper guidance and assurance by their local communities.

Unfortunately a lot of times coaches do not get a lot of guidance. Coaches come and get asked if they will coach the atom team [nine and ten year olds] and then are told, here are their sweaters and the practices are Tuesday night at six and Thursday at seven, here is your league schedule, wind up is on the eighth of April, figure out how many people eat chicken. (Eric, personal communication)

Volunteerism is the basis for Canadian hockey coaching and without it there would not be the personnel available; the foundation of this army of volunteers is the parents.

It is so many guys coaching their own kids' teams it is the norm. The freak thing is to go into a community and go watch an atom team<sup>12</sup> and ask the coach what number his boy is and the coach say that he is not out there, that he does not have a kid in the room. Because it is just the way it is with travel and commitment, it is tough to get people to do it. (Eric, personal communication)

I would guess that 98% of coaches in Manitoba have a kid on the team that they are coaching. So that is the main reason why people coach, because of their kids. (Ted, personal communication)

Those who do coach are passionate about it. They commit and rarely is there a coach who is there that did not want to be there from the start.

If you are coaching you are passionate about it. If you do not like to coach you don't coach. A very small percentage of the guys probably at the older end of it are doing it because they got roped into it, or the younger end got roped into it, there was nobody else and they figured they had to. Less than 10% of the coaches didn't want to be there from the start. That is a small number and the other 90% are the ones that really want to be there, because they are passionate about it. (Don, personal communication)

There are instances where if there is no coach for the team by the start of the season the team will have to disband and the players will not have a team to play on. This puts pressure on coaches to become involved who may not have the necessary competency required.

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<sup>12</sup> The atom age group is for players' aged 11 and under. The goals for the atom age group are fun, refine basic skills, and introduce team tactics. It is very common at this age level to have all parents on the coaching staff.

Come crunch time when nobody signs up and if no parent steps up in the next 48 hours we are going to have to disband the kids to other clubs and so as a hockey mentor in a club I have had to do that. There are no volunteers that step up and we have teams formed and we are in crunch time, we have actually registered the team formally with Winnipeg Minor, there is no coach at the bottom of the roster, it has happened. Well, you go to bed and think about it, and the Mom or Dad says, okay I have never played hockey before, but you know what, go for it, get a couple of helpers that can go on the ice and run a practice and go get certified. (Don, personal communication)

At all levels in grassroots hockey it is often at the non-elite levels where coaches are hard to come by and are thrust into the lime-light. “That age category [15-17 years old at the lower levels] for at least the males is toughest to find quality coaches. That is almost finding whoever wants to coach, you are happy to get two resumes” (Don, personal communication).

Coaches wear multiple hats in the production of a hockey season, running the canteen, sitting on the board of the association, or even driving the zamboni; especially in smaller towns “they ring you into a lot of things in small towns” (Ray, personal communication). Therefore the time commitment and the availability of the coaches becomes a significant challenge to the development of coaches because, “once you start coaching you have no time” (Ted, personal communication). This often leads to situations where coaches, who are going about their business and not getting any



complaints, although improvements can be made, do not feel the need to become involved in the mentorship program with their limited availability of time.

Automatically your first thought is, I still do what I am doing because no one around me said anything to me, the kids all seem happy so if I do not ask, I am still doing good, so I am going to stick with what I am doing and make it through the season... Yes I have my certificate to coach, and also I am a volunteer here, I am not getting paid for this anyways so why would I want someone coming to tell me that I am doing seven things wrong here when I am not getting anyone complaining. (Chris, personal communication)

Mentors also experience a time constraint in their efforts to interact with coaches on a meaningful level to assist them in their coaching development. With time constraints on both sides it results in very limited opportunities to interact.

One is my availability as a volunteer; two is the coach's availability, time, energy, and effort. You need to have a pretty committed volunteer to coach first of all, plan for practice, run a practice, analyze or self-evaluate the practice afterwards and then follow-up by contacting somebody on a constant basis. You might do that once, or you might have a real serious problem and phone somebody once. Coaches all work and they are volunteers on the side so that time availability to me both, on the side of the coach and the mentor, is a *huge* thing, it is a *huge* thing. (Ted, personal communication)

It is therefore not surprising that, there is a high turnover rate of coaches due to the time, commitment, and pressures associated with coaching minor hockey. This high turnover rate contributes to a paradox type situation where coaches are either resistant to collaboration and keep doing what they are doing and remain coaching or they do not engage with support systems and then they leave the coaching community only to have another coach fill that void. All too often this ends up being those coaches who are either resistant to change or do not have the time or commitment level to engage with a mentor to improve his or her coaching skills.

Their certification may allow them to coach but it is their applied competency that is often lacking. “To me the real focus is the guy who gets his certificate and we put him out armed and dangerous and needs some help” (Ray, personal communication). The certification provides the coach with a pass of membership into the coaching community of practice and to practice coaching and acts as a seal of his or her competency and knowledge. It is those coaches who are struggling and have found themselves on a slippery slope of volunteer coaching that the mentor wants to help most, “I have guys out with their shoes on the ice, I have seen guys run terrible practices. To me do not criticize those guys, help them” (Ray, personal communication).

That is the part where we try and plant those seeds in their brain early, that this is something good where they will benefit from, and their kids because more often than not you have the parents of the kids that are coaching. So it is an invested interest in enhancing their skill at coaching because it will parley into their kids getting better and moving their skills to a different level. (Don, personal communication)

When a mentor is able to sit down with a coach there are varying levels of commitment to the material and discussion: “Hockey is a volunteer thing for them. So some people take it more seriously and say they are going to get back to you in a month, or some guys will say, ‘thank you for the information’ and away they go” (Chris, personal communication).

Coaching program initiatives often get caught up in this rat race of time commitment. Programs attempt to gather knowledge and educate the coaches with tools that will enable them to produce meaningful experiences for the athletes, but are often left trying to play catch up.

...[Y]ou just can’t set up a program, especially something as subjective as this, where guys come to you, you are not just saying that I certified 1000 guys this year and if you do not do it there are consequences. That is not what mentorship is, it is sharing between two people or a few people about trying to make better coaches. (Chris, personal communication)

The mentorship program within Manitoba focuses its joint enterprise on the basis of quality over quantity in the interactions and education of coaches. By focusing on facilitating trust, rapport, and a sense of validation; while battling coaches’ siege mentality and performance-outcome orientated principles, the NCMP is constantly intertwined with the maintenance of the coaching community of practice and the principles of Canadian hockey. By the very act of pursuing the education of coaches and the advancement of athletes, the NCMP contributes to the full complexity of the community and contributes to the creation of resources for negotiation and interpretation in the hockey coaching community of practice.

### Shared repertoire

*The more years of experience they have, they confuse that with knowledge a lot of the time. (Eric, personal communication)*

In the hockey coaching community, coaches negotiate meaning through resources that have been ingrained into the hockey culture over many years. The shared repertoire of the coaching community comes in the form of on-ice rituals, off-ice tactics, interpersonal politicking, and in hard resources forming a wide array of coaching commandments. Resources can be found in the form of skill manuals, videos, websites, Hockey Canada and other national governing body materials, or just visiting a local rink and watching another coach's practice.

By being engaged with the mentoring community, and contributing on a meaningful level for a period of time, a mentor gains inherent access to the resources that the community has jointly created and used for negotiating meaning. The mentor is someone who has acquired and gained access to this wealth of resources with a higher degree of practical knowledge and; "are almost an oracle like type character where they know all" (Chris, personal communication). A mentor as described by the participants is someone who is a, "source of information whether it is as a sounding board or whether it is a hard resource where you come with a need and I give you a piece of paper with an answer on it" (Eric, personal communication). They act as an avenue of support for coaches, "the biggest one is the support for coaches, and someone that people can phone and get some information from or you can direct them to get some information" (Ted, personal communication).

Mentors provide some support to volunteers, some additional skills in a dynamic way to the volunteers groups. It is being there either through structure or just being there. Talking over a coffee of whatever. Then providing some direction in terms of skill development dynamically through whatever group they are involved in. (Don, personal communication)

The six mentors interviewed in this study have all formally been considered mentors since 2000, within the first year of the inception of the program. They were either handpicked by the master mentor or by the administrator. Only one of the mentors approached Hockey Manitoba to request accreditation. Each mentor interviewed had acquired his own repertoire over a minimum of 12 years coaching with the eldest coach being involved in coaching for 20 years. Based on the responses of the mentors interviewed the shared repertoire of the coaching community of practice can be analyzed through four themes: (a) becoming a mentor, (b) from a science to an art of coaching, (c) intuition and artistic coaching, and (d) learning incidents.

#### *Becoming a mentor*

*To be honest with you I had to go grab a dictionary because I was not sure I understood what mentorship was. (Ray, personal communication)*

There are formal parameters, boundary objects, to becoming a mentor and belonging to the NCMP and its community of practice. The first official Hockey Manitoba mentors were originally brokered into the NCMP by invitation and participation in the first national mentor training seminar in Orangeville, Ontario. The Original six then came back to Manitoba and began training other mentors. The master

mentor, the administrator, or the regional associations (see appendix B) can invite new members who must have a minimum designation of status within the community with at least their coach level certificate<sup>13</sup> and be in good standing with their own association. One of the mentors interviewed felt as though the prerequisites are not stringent enough, “Hockey Manitoba, I think personally has been taking everybody. At different times I don’t think the prerequisites for the mentors is as high as it needs to be” (Don, personal communication). Amidst the formal parameters to being brokered into the mentoring community of practice, the mentors also described how they thought that they had simply been in the right place at the right time. Their invitation was more of an informal process, “the informal was that they are a good guy and they know the game and we are glad to have them” (Ray, personal communication).

When selecting someone to invite him or her to become a mentor in the NCMP, the Ray outlined how it is not all about practical knowledge. Knowledge is a key element but not the exclusive factor in determining whether or not someone is suited to become a mentor, humility and the ability to facilitate learning also play a key role in the selection and appointment of a mentor.

What I look for is a guy who is knowledgeable, a guy who is going to facilitate more than dictate, somebody who is going to help them solve their problems, somebody who is going to say, “I am not sure about that but I know somebody else who does”. (Ray, personal communication)

In addition to the acquired knowledge, the mentor “should be respected people” (Chris, personal communication) and have some already acquired status in hockey to

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<sup>13</sup> The coach level certificate is the first level of coaching certification in Hockey Canada’s coach education program other than the Initiation level which is only required if coaching players at the initiation age group.

some degree through either playing or coaching experience. These people are usually the coaches who have been engaged in participation meaningful to the joint enterprise of the coaching community and the mentorship program with the best interest of the athletes in mind. A mentor must also have acquired a mastery of the shared repertoire and have a firm grasp on the routines, words, tools, and ways of doing things that the coaching community has produced or adopted.

I think you have to have an understanding of the technical aspects of the game itself, but it is the things around the game and the things that affect the game and the players that you have to have a pretty good understanding in. (Chris, personal communication)

The responses from the mentors on what they believed the qualities of a good mentor coincided with the above. They described qualities such as: patience, approachable, good listener, the willingness to educate themselves and remain competent through ongoing professional development, clear values, good observer, someone who cares about the athletes and the coaches, committed to the purpose and intent of the mentorship program, and mutual respect with a sense of humility. By bringing a sense of humility to a mentoring relationship, the mentor can assist in reducing the amount of resistance a coach may be accustomed to, “I would certainly never want to give someone the impression that I am up here and they are down here” (Ted, personal communication).

I think it is just as much of a learning process for myself as it is for the mentoree sometimes. They tend to make you think outside of what your regular experience has been and you have to put your thinking cap on and think back to your experiences and maybe you have or maybe you have

not had that particular issue. It definitely expands me as a person and a coach as well. I really enjoy the mentoring process on my side. It is all part of my development I think as a person, whether it is hockey knowledge or if it is individual personality skills and the handling of those types of situations, which is probably a large percentage of the questions that come, are parent related, as to those types of problems that come up with teams as much as anything, which is unfortunate, but that is kind of the nature of the minor hockey beast I am afraid. (Eric, personal communication)

This notion of humility and being able to direct them to get other information was an important quality that many of the mentors mentioned. They believed that it was not important that you know everything, but the ability to know when to pass on to someone else was a more valuable attribute. It is the ability of the mentor to assist the mentoree in negotiating their own meaning of their participation in the coaching community of practice. "I do not know if wisdom is that important for a mentor, but the ability to get the knowledge is probably more important than knowing everything yourself" (Eric, personal communication).

Being named a mentor is simply a designation, recognition of an ability to contribute back to the hockey coaching community. The process of becoming a mentor entails a much more elaborate progression beyond receiving the title as a mentor. For mentors there is a learning process that involves becoming comfortable with their new found status defined by the title of being a hockey mentor.

It is an intimidating thought not only for the mentoree but I think for the



mentor, because when we say after a one day course that you are now a Hockey Manitoba mentor, those guys automatically are saying to themselves, “what if those guys start firing me questions that I do not know about?” Then if the so-called mentor does not know the answers, it makes for a tough connection for both the mentor and mentoree. (Chris, personal communication)

Because of the flexibility of the program in the requirement of each mentor’s involvement, many are not actively engaged in the mentoring community, it is a position where, “whatever you put into it is kind of what you are going to get out of it. It is not like people get assigned to you or anything like that, it is a little bit of what you do with it is kind of where it goes” (Ray, personal communication). Actually becoming a mentor is as much of a process of being mentored as it is mentoring others. Through a mentor’s actions, they begin a process of negotiating and constructing their own meaning out of participation so that they in turn may contribute to the mentoree’s own negotiation within the coaching community of practice.

The mentoring process then becomes an educational process whereby the mentor begins to transfer this knowledge to the coach in a meaningful fashion, however as Wenger (1998b) described it, “histories of interpretation create shared points of reference but they do not impose meaning”. The participants spoke to how a mentor and mentoree will interpret, negotiate, and construct their own meaning out of the communal resources as part of the coaching community of practice, but not necessarily share their meaning as the coach develops from a static delivery of drills and information (the science of

coaching) to a delivery that incorporates more intuition and improvisation (the art of coaching).

*From a science to an art of coaching*

*Anyone can go to a clinic, I can go to a financial clinic tomorrow, but that does not mean that I should be investing my own money. (Ray, personal communication)*

As the knowledge of the coach manuals and drill packages becomes available and evident within a coach's repertoire and as he negotiates his membership throughout the coaching community of practice, the coach moves towards an ability to utilize the science of coaching [drill books, coaching manuals] in a fluid manner and sculpt the information into a delivery that effectively meets the needs of the players.

Yes, the other thing is that I think it is important for them to realize what their needs are and be able to develop their own resources. I think to me that is when the light bulb came on with me, as a coach is when I realized that it did not matter how many drill books I bought. It is when I looked at my team and saw what they needed and designed a drill to meet the player's needs. Then the light bulb came on and "Now I am coaching".

That is positive to see when you work with a guy too. There have been a few coaches where after a little while they turn and say; "Now I know what you mean". For example, "there is a drill that I have seen on TV and I have taken a little bit of that because we need to work on this but I have made it this, what do you think?" Perfect, it is exactly what your team needs. Call the drill what you want but you have addressed both needs for

your team as opposed to taking a drill that had a little bit of good for you but then the rest did not make sense. (Eric, personal communication)

This process of inspired learning can be seen as the act of empowering coaches to negotiate the coaching community of practice with an understanding of the diverse nature of the community's repertoire.

I want to make sure they understand the process of what their decisions are and the results of what their decisions are. It is not just me coming and telling them what to do, they did not learn anything. I am not here to solve their problems; they can do problem solving on their own. So that is again where I go back to the mentorship program, the art and the science, just like in anything with life or hockey, you take good and bad experiences and learn from them and then put your processes in place. (Chris, personal communication)

They begin to feel as though they have the knowledge base and intuition to learn from their experiences and mediate the environmental pressures. "As a mentor the important thing is to make sure people understand and learn from their experiences because some of them are not going to be good experiences" (Chris, personal communication). By striving to facilitate the coach's active manipulation of the drill so that it meets his or her needs, the mentor is moving towards a self-sufficient form of learning and coaching. The drills are what coaches' want, they want the magic solution, yet it is not always what they need, "some guys view it as the drill that they have, some fancy drill, well if I took my wife out there to run the drill, it would be a disaster, you have to have other things other than just the drill" (Ted, personal communication). The

drill itself is only lines; it is the coach and their intuition behind the drill that provides the meaningful execution of that drill.

Coaches want drills, drills, drills. The drills are great but it is not so much the drills but why you are doing them and what you are teaching them while you are doing them, is what is going to make your team better. As a coach you can take the best drill in the world, but if you do not know why you are doing it and you do not really talk to your players about why you are doing it, chances are you are not going to get the value of it. (Eric, personal communication)

The act of empowering the coaches through enlightening them to the power of intuition and creation within the community's shared practices enables them to think of the reasoning behind their actions and decisions rather than just allowing them to copy drills and processes from manuals they received at formal coach clinics. Problem solving then becomes an art of reflection rather than a science, shared points of reference, but not an imposed meaning.

So I think, as a mentor, for me a huge challenge is getting them [the coaches] to think past that drill. They go to coaching clinics and what do they want, they want drills. I want a drill, I want to be able to go write it up on the board and then let it happen. Well, that is a very small part of the equation, the drill is fine, but it is the skill correction out on the ice that has got to happen. That is not an easy thing to do as a coach. It took me a long time as a coach to get better at that. I was very happy with looking at this nice drill and all the different ways, I am a great coach, I have all

these different ways. But the most important part of it is the skill correction and the teaching, the informal teaching of the drill, while the drill is going on and helping out people. That is a real challenge for a mentor, for mentorship, is getting to that next step. (Mike, personal communication)

The understanding a coach acquires through discussion and reflection pertains to a wider situation rather than just the science of coaching. What they, as coaches, learn is not a static subject matter, it is knowledge that is defined and reified through their engagement in action. Through participation and reification the coach is able to contribute their own intuition and artistic imposition on the communities shared practice.

#### *Intuition and artistic coaching*

*Again I think the longer you are involved with things and the more you are familiar with what you are doing, the more you act intuitively. (Eric, personal communication)*

As a coach enters the coaching community of practice their knowledge and experiences represent what they have observed as coaching. They heavily rely on these past observations and concrete examples of what to do when coaching, as seen in coaching manuals. As the coach moves through their coaching experiences, they begin to obtain knowledge through reason and personal experience and move into a position where they begin to rely more heavily on the essence of art and creativity. Sometimes through their own experiences they just do not have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and accomplish this level of awareness.

Our head coach, super nice guy, very dedicated, he doesn't know what he doesn't know. He is running stuff that is not age-appropriate, and that is just the reality of it. Again a very nice guy, he is not doing it in a malicious way, he just doesn't know what he doesn't know. He has no idea that he should be teaching the basics of skating and weight transfer in shooting and passing. He has no concept of that at all. He is a very smart hockey guy, he is a very good hockey player, a decent hockey mind.

(Chris, personal communication)

Many times the coach possesses the intuition that he needs to rely on and yet it is often the factor that gets ignored as a coach moves through a more hard resource based stage in his development to a more artistic or intuitively based coaching. The environmental pressures and need to be perceived as competent often contribute to this level of ignorance and denial of intuition.

Do what makes sense. The more I think about it the more it makes sense to me when I am coaching or when I am mentoring, do not try and make the magical solution, do not try and do anything, just look at it and do what makes sense to you, and a lot of times you are going to be okay.

Sometimes the common sense goes out the window in coaching and mentorship scenarios and unfortunately when you get back to parents and emotions and all that kind of thing, common sense is the first thing to leave the room. That is what makes it a hard fix with the individual. (Eric, personal communication)

The process of discovery of a coach is not something that is linear in nature. It is a gradual process of education and interactions that takes place before a coach achieves a level of awareness that precipitates an ability to intuitively act in addressing the needs of the athletes. It is generally a gradual process with a moment of clarity in the coach's reflection that begins an awareness of the art of coaching.

It is only through experiential knowledge that a coach will move towards a more artistic practice of coaching. Yet, events truly signifying these critical incidents of experiential knowledge do not always get recognized. Establishing a level of personal reflection and awareness on behalf of the coach can be seen as one of the critical elements on the path to artistic coaching. Recognizing key learning incidents and teachable moments in the gradual process of coach education by the mentor guiding from the side (see page 48), can be seen as a key role of a mentor in a mentoring relationship.

#### *Learning incidents*

*Going into mentoring, my thing was like the preacher at the front of the church, you want to try and save them all (Eric, personal communication).*

Learning is to gain or acquire knowledge of or skill in something by study, experience, or being taught. The mentorship program strives to facilitate the study, experience, or acquiring stages of learning through discussion and knowledge acquisition for the benefit of the coaches and ultimately the athletes. Some of the first learning incidents available to coaches are when they themselves were players and were exposed to ways they would or would not coach.

In terms of a coaching philosophy it is really what you acquire and continue to acquire, as you coach and learn more from other coaches and

situations. For me, my old coaches were obviously the foundation for my philosophy as a group. (Don, personal communication)

As coaches move through their playing days and into their transition to coaching, their first experiences effect this transition and influence their future development as a coach, “I started coaching right off the bat in AAA Peewee and got involved and I had a good head coach as a mentor and learned a ton from him and got excited about the prospect of getting excited about the game” (Chris, personal communication).

The first experiences are usually those that occur by an invitation by an already established coach in the coaching community of practice, very often someone who already shares a connection with the coach. As Mike described, this invitation by someone with whom he already had an established connection, provided him with a comfortable situation to experience a variety of learning incidents.

I believe it was a Director’s cup situation and he [G.M.] brought me in and basically gave me responsibility right away, which was good, and I am sure he saw me make a few mistakes. G.M. is basically a laid back guy and a great observer of the game and he helped me out a lot that way and let me make mistakes and we talked about them and it was a really comfortable situation for me.

Other learning incidents for a given coach occur well before they are officially designated as a coach. One participant noted how he even draws upon an experience he had as a player to assist him with his own coaching and mentoring.

I always think back to when I was a kid and some of the things that happened to me and I try to translate those to my mentoring situations. I



remember playing and I had some real mean things said to me directly when I was a young kid. Some parent from my own team. So I think of that all the time. I can visually picture the lady at the arena, I can probably tell you what she was wearing, and what she said to me changed my whole hockey life. So I am always thinking of the players' point of view. (Chris, personal communication)

There was not any formal mentor I would say, no one that I would attach to or that I would have a direct connection with on a regular basis. Where I would draw most of my stuff from was previous experiences of what coaches have done. For instance if I was looking at something I would look back and say, this coach did this, I would never do that, or I remember when this coach did this. If I was trying to teach kids to skate backwards, I would try to draw on when I was taught how to skate backwards and then maybe I might think about that and when you have taught it a couple of times there might be some things you want to add or change. (Ted, personal communication)

Every coach will be subjected to a variety of experiences both positive and negative throughout a hockey season. The mentors interviewed described that it is these experiences that provide the coach with the premise of learning. These experiences allow the coach to engage in the duality of participation and reification of the shared repertoire of the coaching community of practice.

As a mentor the important thing is to make sure people understand and learn from their experiences because some of them are not going to be

good experiences, let's face it, but they need to learn from them and understand how to make them better. (Chris, personal communication)

Coaches learn through experience, they develop their own way of being through their interpretation of their experiences and learning incidents. Some experiences carry more weight than others and are often given more attention by both the mentor and coach. These situational learning incidents have sometimes been referred to as hot spots.

The delivery of it [mentoring], the different types of communication with coaches, the timing of it, which can be very important where the coaches are in a hot spot, where they are dealing with parents or some significant issues in the group. Timing is critical in terms of hoping that the coach will call you when that hot spot happens. (Don, personal communication)

Mentoring relationships and the approach during the mentor and mentoree interactions often shift to meet the demands of the situation, as varying learning incidents require varying modes of interaction. Recognizing these situations and providing the coaches with the ability to draw on a wider variety of experiences and resources is a critical process within the mentoring relationship.

If you get to the point where they cannot do that process and you realize that, then you have to become the instructor and move towards a student teacher relationship, but for the most part I try to keep it more of a facilitation for them to lead themselves through the learning process. (Eric, personal communication)

These occurrences most frequently arise when it is a situation that some mentors have called a fire situation, when more immediate attention is required.

I have always viewed a mentor as being a source of information whether it is as a sounding board or whether it is a hard resource where you come with a need and I give you a piece of paper with an answer on it. I think a lot of it is basically a resource you can use to help you in your situation. Probably the mentorship tends to be more of a fire approach where there is an issue and they need help to put out the fire. (Eric, personal communication)

This contingent reaction to a fire situation lends an opportunity for the mentor and mentoree to reflect upon the situation depending on their relationship and the extent of their previous interactions. Any occasion for the mentor and mentoree to interact is an opportune moment for reflecting for the benefit of both the mentor and mentoree in their experiences within the tensions perceived between cooperative of the NCMP and competitive principles of Canadian hockey.

The results above provide a community of practice account of the comparison of the formal intents and stated goals of Hockey Manitoba's mentorship program and the lived experiences achieved in concrete mentoring relationships with respect to these tensions. Mentoring relationships in the NCMP occur at the intersections of the coaching and mentoring communities of practice, and position cooperative and competitive principles in opposition of each other involving a wide variety of types of mentors and approaches to mentoring. The NCMP attempts to facilitate these intersections through initiating points of contact, and promoting a level of humility within mentors' actions. It is the hope that through these initiatives that a coach's resistance to collaboration can be reduced so that more meaningful mentoring relationships can be experienced.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION ON A DUALITY OF PRINCIPLES

### Revisiting the research question

The intent of this study was to examine tensions in the mentoring program as instituted by Hockey Manitoba. Hockey Manitoba's mentorship program initiatives have been on the front line in the development of the NCMP across the country. The mentors interviewed endorsed how these initiatives run contrary to environmental pressures in the coaching community emphasizing cooperation within an essentially competitive environment.

By examining the program's formal parameters and subsequent implementation in concrete mentoring situations, utilizing a community of practice model, the emergent themes provide a greater understanding of the constant interplay between cooperative and competitive tendencies of mentors and coaches. This constant interplay was evident in the language used by the participants to describe their experiences in both the mentoring and coaching communities of practice. Participants described experiences that constitute tensions in mentoring; wall of resistance, threatening and resisting, and siege mentality; while also detailing experiences of cooperative efforts; guiding from the side, comfort coaching, validation, and learning incidents. Tensions in mentoring provide the basis for negotiation of practice and represent an overlap of boundaries and duality of principles between the mentoring and coaching communities of practice (see figure 6). I believe this overlap of experiences illustrates how the separation between cooperative and competitive principles is not as divisive as first perceived and is an essential element in the functioning of each respective community.

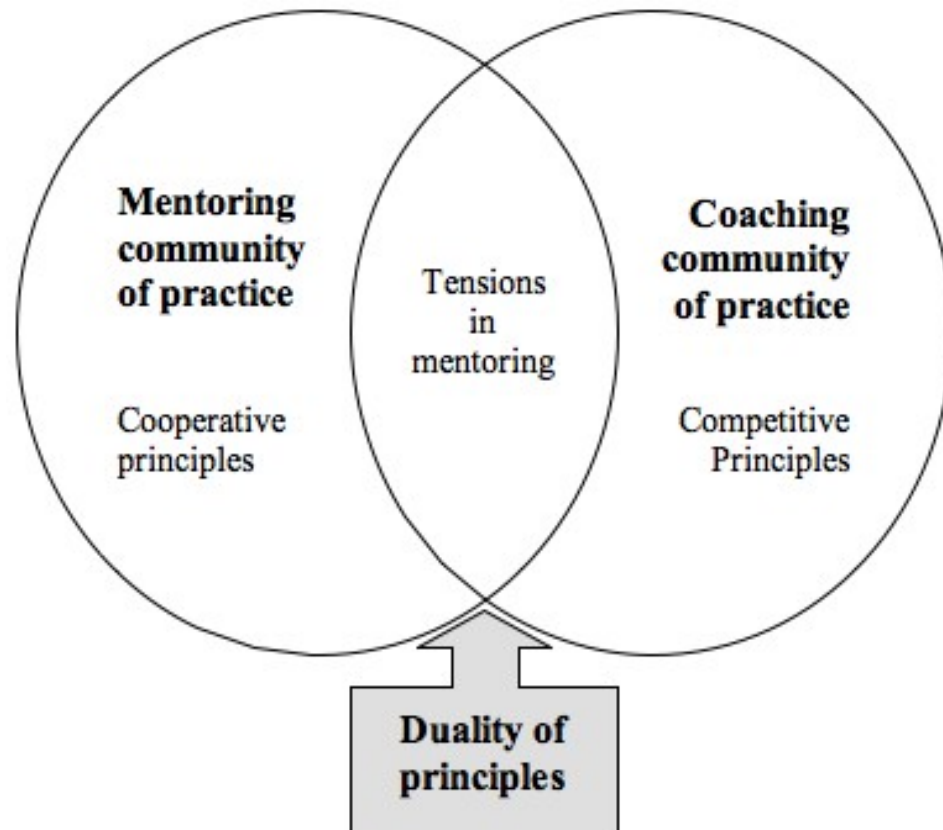


Figure 6: Tensions and a duality of principles

#### Duality of principles

The hockey community of practice is a nexus of communities, each with their own boundaries and principles in participation, with a single coach or mentor spanning many of these communities at once. Mentors maintain multi-membership in the mentoring and coaching community of practice, with their dual identity as a coach and mentor, carrying principles from each respective community. Our experience of multi-membership creates various forms of continuity and boundary negotiation providing the basis for lessons in the implementation of the NCMP, what Wenger (1998b) described as brokering, “the use of multi-membership to transfer some element of one practice into another” (pg. 109).

Mentor brokering within boundary overlap requires the ability to link practices by facilitating interactions and introducing differing elements of practice to another (i.e., cooperative and competitive elements). The participants described how they felt they had to sell the NCMP and its practices to the coaches during initial interactions, but also how coaches must be willing participants and initiators of mentoring interactions. I believe this level of shared responsibility is essential for the initiation of interaction, negotiation of meaning, and embracing the natural overlap between the two communities. To do so, there must be an active level of brokering performed by both individuals to involve processes of translation, coordination, and alignment within the duality of cooperative and competitive principles.

For the mentors, the duality of principles requires them (as brokers) to make new connections, enable coordination, and make new possibilities of meaning. Mentors carry a level of legitimacy in both communities that can influence participation within a duality of principles. However, as with many other communities, not all mentors engage in this form of participative connection. Within Hockey Manitoba's implementation of the NCMP, the responsibility of such participative connection falls on a few active mentors. This limits the extent to which negotiation of boundaries can occur and significantly reduces the ability to span various boundary intersections (points of contact and opportunities for mentors and mentorees to interact). Mentor brokering at these boundary intersections requires an ability to carefully coexist, while maintaining enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to; what participants described as being the humble coach (see page 44). Mentors must walk a fine line between, remaining tied to the coaching community and what it is all about and

adhering to cooperative principles of the mentoring community of practice. Mentors must constantly operate within the tensions in mentoring, and broker the effects of a duality of principles. They must provide a variety of experiences at boundary intersections by utilizing various forms of mentors and mentoring. The ability of the mentor to operate within the tensions of mentoring and broker the effects of a duality of principles, is a complex job, but one that is invaluable to the NCMP's implementation.

### Types of mentors

If we are to spur strategies that will assist with the implementation of the NCMP in a duality of cooperative and competitive principles, we must revisit the definition of a mentor. When defining a mentor, we remind ourselves that there is not a single universally accepted definition of the term mentor. The common thread that binds definitions follows a linear top down process that relies on a historical student-teacher relationship with an older more experienced person interacting with a younger less experienced individual with the intent of furthering the mentoree's development. Hockey Canada's definition (see page 4) begins to more closely encapsulate the diversity in the types of mentors that was evident from the interviews in this study. Five types of mentors evolved from the interviews and observations: (a) the hard resource, (b) the instructor, (c) the preacher, (d) the doer, and (e) the facilitator. Each type of mentor provides a distinct form of guidance to a mentoree resulting in a variety of educational outcomes and processes. As mentioned previously, a mentor may have to negotiate their way through a conglomerate of these types in a single mentoring relationship to effectively negotiate boundary intersections and a duality of principles.

### *The Hard Resource*

The first type of mentor that I was able to identify from the interviews is, the hard resource. The hard resource mentor does not require the development of a relationship and rapport enabling meaningful discussion and producing a transfer of knowledge. The hard resource is a mentor who provides tangible resources (e.g., videos, manuals, personal archived resources) to mentorees by request. The hard resource deals purely in the science of coaching (see page 101) with the possibility of interaction only during the exchange of the materials. The opportunity for an initial introduction of the mentor to the mentoree was noted as being an essential ingredient in establishing a link to exchange the resources. With the prevalence of Internet, email, and other electronic mediums as well as the availability of coaching resources through these mediums, the opportunity for an initial interaction becomes more accessible, but can also lead to a decrease in meaningful interpersonal interactions. This type of mentor provides negotiation of boundaries through the exchange of artifacts and practices that have evolved through the duality of principles between the mentoring and coaching community of practice.

### *The Instructor*

The second type of mentor, the instructor, is a mentor who emulates a traditional student-teacher relationship based on an acquisitional form of learning where the transfer of knowledge is linear and top-down in its original form and scripted to the mentoree. The mentor is viewed as an individual who has gained a level of legitimacy and hierarchy (see page 39) in the coaching community that enables him to supersede another coach in the level of knowledge obtained. Interaction between the mentor and mentoree is dependent on the development of a level of rapport that enables the mentoree to be open



to the acquisition of knowledge. The participants described this type of mentor most often when describing an initial meeting or the mentoree requiring specific assistance during a time of need or learning incident (see page 106). The instructor is able to provide the mentoree with information pertaining to the science of coaching (see page 101), but can also initiate more cooperative forms of mentoring, as long as future interactions are facilitated to strengthen the relationship.

### *The Preacher*

The preacher type of mentor is closely related to the instructor, however this type of mentor presents their knowledge as the only choice and communicates it with the intent of directly influencing the mentoree. As one participant described when speaking of an aspiring mentor, this type of mentor wants to ordain his or her knowledge, “this mentorship program is great, I have been wanting to tell somebody how much I know. I was wanting to tell people how much I know about hockey for years” (Ray, personal communication). The preacher does not rely on the development of a relationship, but uses his label as a mentor; as a vehicle to address his own agenda. In their descriptions the participants did not endorse individuals who embody this type of mentor, as they tended to present themselves in an egotistical fashion that is often shunned in the hockey community. However, during my observations at a specialty clinic, mentors often shifted into this type of mentor for a brief period of time when they needed to control the situation or direction of conversation.

### *The Doer*

The doer is a mentor who initiates interaction and strives for a more formal process that dictates when interactions are to take place. A more formal process assures

there is the opportunity for interaction between the mentor and mentoree, increasing the chances of establishing a mentoring relationship. These mentors are generally more involved in an organizational perspective and are most often responsible to a local association or governing body. They take an active role in producing outcomes by becoming a more visible figure in the mentoree's development, and strive to exhibit the learning produced through the mentoring relationship. They display similar traits to that of a preacher type of mentor, but with a more humble approach during a mentoring relationship.

### *The Facilitator*

The final type of mentor that evolved from the interviews and observations is the facilitator. The facilitator is a mentor that attempts to direct the mentoree's learning through reflective questioning and a non-visible role during the process. This type of mentor strives to have the mentoree find the answer, rather than the answer be given to them. They rely heavily on the establishment of a relationship built on respect, trust, mutual engagement, and an experiential transfer of knowledge. When recounting their most memorable mentoring experiences, the participants more commonly described a context and relationship that represented engagement with a facilitator type of mentor. This type of mentor allows for a greater degree of cooperation during boundary intersections and is evident in the participants' description of how they believe a mentoring relationship should proceed.

As we can see, the diversity of the types of mentors offers a wide range of interactions at differing points of contact and boundary intersections. One mentor may interchange between many types during their experiences or even in the course of a single

mentoring relationship. All of these types of mentors represent varying degrees of interaction and bring forth the potential for many different approaches to mentoring to be present.

#### Approaches to mentoring

*Good mentoring has occurred when you give coaches what they need (Ray, personal communication).*

Mentoring has been defined to occur when there is work-based training under the guidance of an experienced practitioner, with the mentor asking questions about the methods used and guiding the mentoree toward a deeper understanding of his or her work. Some literature has gone on to note that unless coaches reflect on their experiences, they run the risk of leaving their practice untouched by new knowledge and insight (Cushion, Armour, and Jones, 2003). Participants of this study described the notion of guiding from the side (see page 48) and the ability of the mentor to facilitate the mentoree's reflective processes as critical elements in the quality of a mentoring relationship. Hockey Canada (2007) adopted a more simplified definition of mentoring that focuses on the relationship between a mentor and mentoree that enables the mentoree to become more competent in their coaching abilities. Although this definition offers a more succinct definition of the term mentoring, according to the participants' responses, it falls short in its depiction of the diversity of mentoring.

One of the participants' most significant acknowledgments was the importance of responding to the needs of the mentoree, which may require interconnecting approaches to mentoring. The ability of the mentor to read the need of the mentoree and adjust the type of mentoring administered, proved to be a more accurate appraisal of the

effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. When describing their ability to read the need, the mentors discussed how they had to adjust their approach according to the situational and personal demands of a particular mentoring instance. From these descriptions I was able to identify four approaches to mentoring: (a) the fire approach, (b) the teacher-student relationship, (c) hidden mentoring, and (d) facilitated reflective mentoring.

### *The fire approach*

*Mentorship tends to be more of a fire approach where there is an issue and they need help to put out the fire (Eric, personal communication).*

The fire approach is most often employed when a mentoree is in a hot spot and they are in need of an astute solution to a pressing dilemma. One mentor reported the majority of his experiences in the NCMP, to be that of the fire approach method where he was on-call for a mentoree. The fire approach is most often dependent on an already established connection between the mentor and mentoree, but is not dependent on the strength of the relationship, nor does the mentoree always initiate the initial contact. Depending on the relationship, if a mentor becomes aware of a potential or prevailing situation they may be inclined to initiate the contact with the mentoree. However the majority of the mentors in this study reported the mentoree as the one who most often initiated the contact looking for answers, with the hope of discovering an expedited solution for the respective dilemma. These expedited solutions are not always readily shared between coaches and can give rise to the siege mentality (see page 84), where these resources are viewed as a commodity and not voluntarily parceled out. Therefore this approach does not always precede collegiality between coaches themselves, but does

provide an opportunity for the mentor and mentoree to reflect on the situation, depending on their relationship and the extent of previous interactions.

*The teacher-student approach*

*If I have done my job as a mentor, he has put a plan in place. So there is a process for what he does (Chris, personal communication).*

The teacher-student approach to mentoring is the extension of the fire approach over a long period of time, whereby the mentoree continually returns to the mentor in a systematic fashion with specific agendas related to the practice of coaching. Similar to the fire approach, it is not a type of mentoring that is dependent on the establishment of a high level of rapport. It spans a variety of experiences with a continuance between each situation, with mentors attempting to produce long-term solutions that are directed by the mentoree's issue. Through repeated interactions the process begins to produce clear outcomes. There is intent by the mentor to establish processes or safeguards that the mentoree can then follow in the future to avoid similar future dilemmas. The learning that occurs is clear and concise to the respective situation and a clear resolution is evident to both the mentor and mentoree. This type of mentoring becomes more of a one-on-one mentoring relationship with minimal cooperation between coaches. However, it requires a high level of willingness on the part of the mentoree to broker cooperative and competitive principles, as they engage with both the NCMP and the environmental pressures of Canadian hockey.

### *Hidden mentoring*

*They walk away and they may not even notice that they have been mentored. But they went through the process, got the information, exchanged the ideas and left mentored (Eric, personal communication).*

The third approach to mentoring, hidden mentoring, refers to the large contingent of informal learning that occurs amidst the interactions within the mentoring and coaching communities of practice. This type of mentoring transcends formal parameters and is nurtured in the power of discussion and debate. The use of language in the exchange of knowledge produces a form of learning that precedes any formal mentoring that may occur. Every participant in this study noted that before they were officially named a mentor, they felt as though they were already informally mentoring coaches through the interactions that occurred during their involvement in the community and it's joint enterprise.

I think the successes were, I think a lot of us were informally mentoring anyway, so especially guys like G.M., these people with respect in the game, they will go to these people, and J.T. up in McEwen, they will go to these people and ask them questions about the game, so I think our successes were things that we were already doing anyways. I am not sure if you call them successes but they were actually documented, that we were doing this and we were affecting some coaches. So some of our successes early on was that we had some guys who were informally doing it so we put them on log sheets and we were formally doing it. (Chris, personal communication)

Their engagement in the rink and its daily dialogue, simply talking hockey<sup>14</sup> a pastime for many hockey enthusiasts and critics, is one of the most critical elements of belonging to the coaching community of practice. It is here, within this idle chatter of talking hockey, that the outcome driven principles of Canadian hockey and the connection to national identity is continually reinforced and magnified. A coach and mentor must be able to interact with what it means to be a coach, and what Canadian hockey means to Canada. To enable the effects of hidden mentoring, mentors and coaches must engage in this dialogue producing a continuous loop of knowledge interpretation, creation, and alteration. They must be able to mobilize their shared repertoire in a way that mitigates both the cooperative and competitive principles evident in each interaction.

*Facilitated reflective mentoring*

*We want to help them drive their answers by themselves (Ray, personal communication).*

The fourth approach to mentoring described in the participant's responses was facilitated reflective mentoring. This approach to mentoring can be seen as the approach that is supported in the literature as being the most conducive to learning and mentoree development. It relies heavily on the establishment of a comfort zone (see page 58), a relationship built on trust, respect, rapport, and mutual interactive engagement between the mentor and mentoree. It is dependent on cooperative principles and the ability of the mentor to guide from the side (see page 48), allowing the mentoree to drive their own learning and discovering. This facilitative process of mentoring involves the mentor

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<sup>14</sup> The hockey community when referring to the informal idle chatter that occurs between individuals often uses the term, talking hockey. This idle chatter can cover a wide range of topics and is often where the majority of knowledge gets passed on.

utilizing methods that: stimulate the mentoree's reflective process, reduce feelings of isolation (see page 78), and minimize siege mentality (see page 84). The participants described how this lead to the sharing of ideas and a deeper understanding of shared practices, and ultimately an increase in their coaching competency. As Eric noted, it is a process where, "I do not go and try to tell them how much I know, I go and try to get it out of them what they know and then we will work together on it and try and collaborate on it". It is this cooperative and reflective cycle initiated by the mentor that is the essence of a meaningful facilitated reflective approach to mentoring. I believe this approach to mentoring was most often reported by the participants as leading to memorable mentoring experiences, because it is the approach that allows the greatest opportunity for each member to negotiate a duality of principles. The knowledge and experience within the relationship is constructed out of the cooperation of individuals, leading to a discussion rich in debate and progression. It provides the mentor and mentoree the ability to share in the responsibility of influencing the tensions experienced between principles, allowing each to participate within the auspices of each community with least resistance.

#### Implications: Influencing the duality of principles

The focus of the NCMP continues to be assisting with implementing best practices for coaches in their pursuit of athlete development, under the slogan, coaches helping coaches. The evolution of the program depends on its ability to continually revisit its structure and delivery so that there are meaningful experiences for the mentors and mentorees. By increasing awareness of the duality of cooperative and competitive principles, the types of mentors, and approaches to mentoring, the NCMP can provide more fertile environments for meaningful mentoring practices. The NCMP's awareness



and subsequent action can provide coaches and hockey associations' progressive insights, which can lead to assisting with the implication of best practices.

### *Implications for coaches*

On the front line of Canadian hockey, coaches are subjected to a multitude of influences that shape the way they practice and subsequently the experiences of the athletes. They are often left to negotiate their way through the muddy waters of Canadian hockey and are expected to act as the filter for the athletes in their development. The NCMP is a vehicle in which a coach can seek assistance, but as the participants described, coaches often resist the cooperative efforts of the NCMP. Coaches need to better equip themselves with the duality of cooperative and competitive principles in order to utilize the full benefits of the NCMP. Three implications that can be drawn from this study to assist coaches are: (a) expanding their learning situations, (b) becoming engaged in the community, and (c) challenging their comfort zone.

*Expanding their learning situations.* The breadth of a coach's educational experience is all too often confined to a finite set of resources consisting of one-day coach clinics, drill packages, and watching Coach's Corner<sup>15</sup> on CBC. This is in part due to the combination of current structures in coach education and environmental pressures. A coach's ability to expand their learning situations can be a crucial step in furthering their knowledge and coaching competency. Coaches will often find their comfort zone of skills and strategies, and will tend to not deviate from this pattern all too often, because they have had some success.

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<sup>15</sup> Coach's Corner is a segment during CBC Hockey Night in Canada broadcasts featuring Ron MacLean and Don Cherry. The sometimes-controversial segment focuses on game analysis and Don Cherry often provides advice to minor hockey league coaches on what to teach young hockey players and what it means to be Canadian.

Yes, they have coached for 10 years and this is the way they do it and they have probably had some success because the law of averages says that even the blind dog is going to find his food in his dish eventually. (Eric, personal communication)

A coach must be able to gain a greater appreciation for alternative avenues for learning and must embrace a level of humility that permits him to be able to adopt a life-long learning approach to coaching. By participating in specialty clinics sponsored by the NCMP, utilizing local mentors and other informal conversations, a coach can take strides to: increasing opportunities for validation and access to relevant resources, reducing feelings of isolation, and expanding their learning situations. A coach's education cannot become stagnate and dependent on formalized clinics. It must expand into the arena lobbies, electronic medium, alternative coach education clinics, and talking hockey; only then can a coach begin to fully expand their learning situations and be fully engaged in the community.

*Becoming engaged in the community.* As mentioned previously, there is a large amount of experience and knowledge that exists in a coach's immediate surroundings. A coach must endeavor to immerse themselves in the interactions and engagement that is inherent within the community. Just by being named a coach, the coach gains access to the coaching community of practice through title and position, but not necessarily full engagement with the community. The coaching community of practice carries a lot of tradition and circumstance with expectations of informal gatherings, conversation, and commitment to the game. With the volunteer nature of the coaching community (see the

coaching rat race on page 88) many coaches do not fully adhere to traditions and circumstances rooted in informal gatherings and the Canadian culture.

By becoming more engaged in their coaching community, on both an informal and formal level, a coach can create valuable connections that offer additional knowledge insights and membership in the community. For example, it can be as simple as becoming a “before and after” coach in furthering their engagement in the community. A before and after coach is one who takes the time while they are tying and untying their skates to involve themselves in the idle chatter and lobby talk that houses the traffic of conversation in the hockey world. By doing so, the coach immerses themselves in an essential informal element of coach interaction and facilitates the exchange of views and opinions amidst the hockey banter. Challenging these tendencies and engaging on a more regular and meaningful level can enhance the possibility of hidden mentoring, reduce feelings of isolation and siege mentality, heighten cooperative efforts between competing coaches, and challenge their comfort zone.

*Challenging their comfort zone.* A third implication that can be drawn from experiences of the participants to assist in a duality of principles is, coaches challenging their comfort zone. As previously mentioned, comfort coaching (see page 58) is a key element in facilitating mutual engagement. A coach’s comfort zone extends to those he is comfortable interacting with and those with whom he has established a safe connection. A safe connection is a relationship where the coach feels their status will not be threatened nor will interaction be viewed as violating performance-outcome oriented principles that plague the Canadian hockey landscape. Such connections are usually reserved for a few selective coaching colleagues with whom the coach maintains a

relationship founded on trust and respect. Coaches must reserve the ability to engage with coaches who possess conflicting philosophies, styles, and environments. When knowledge remains in isolation there is a possibility of a knowledge plateau where no new knowledge is created. By challenging each other's views and opinions and pushing the limits of engagement, they in turn influence each other's learning.

By challenging their own comfort zone and reaching out to surrounding coaches of a variety of age and skill levels, coaches establish a more diverse comfort zone in which they are able to engage. By attending specialty clinics, volunteering at events, approaching competing coaches, facilitating coaching dialogues, and initiating breakfast clubs, a coach can push the boundaries of his comfort zone. Coaches and mentors must not be content on remaining status quo in their engagement; they must challenge traditional methods of coach education and reach out to a wider network of individuals and situations. In doing so, coaches will continue to challenge their comfort zone and push the negotiation of boundaries by influencing the number of boundary intersections they encounter.

#### *Implications for mentors*

It is evident from the participants' responses that to be a mentor requires more than simply holding onto the title mentor. The progression of becoming a mentor (see page 96) involves an intricate web of experiences that transcends the one-day training course that is implemented by the NCMP. To further their progression of becoming a mentor and increase the effectiveness of their service delivery, mentors must increase their awareness of the different approaches to mentoring and their applicability.

*Awareness of different approaches to mentoring.* There are social, technical, and environmental elements that a mentor must be aware of, that diagnose the most appropriate approach to be taken in a given mentoring interaction. The ability of the mentor to become enlightened to these variables is a critical ingredient in the effectiveness of the service delivery and subsequent mentoring relationships, “mentoring is a different thing in different areas” (Ray, personal communication). Mentors must not rely on outcomes found in books, manuals, and drills. They must continue to be the individual who a coach looks to for these hard resources (see page 115), but at the same time not simply a coaching library where the mentoree checks in and checks out. The mentor must utilize these moments during the exchange of resources and realize when to move between approaches to mentoring (i.e., from an instructor to facilitated reflective mentoring) to facilitate mentoree learning.

Developing this ability must mature through experience and conversation with fellow mentors, breeding an increased awareness of the different approaches to mentoring. A mentor must be actively engaged within the mentoring community of practice by interacting with fellow mentors and coaches at the front line of Canadian hockey. By doing so, mentors volunteer themselves to become part of the mentoree’s comfort zone and offer multiple opportunities for points of contact to occur. “I think that is what our real challenge is, is to get down to the grassroots levels and really have that education for these people” (Chris, personal communication). In doing so, they in turn reduce a mentoree’s wall of resistance (see page 52) and educate themselves on the needs of a coach in today’s hockey landscape, along with educating themselves on the applicability of the types of mentoring.

The value of conversation and shared experiences cannot be underestimated in the education of a mentor. Mentors must become more fully engaged with the community and be provided with more opportunities to interact. By modeling and undertaking a life-long learning approach to their own development, I believe a mentor has the power to indirectly influence the development of our coaches. Doing so with a level of humility can counteract pre-existing tensions associated with cooperating with another coach. By influencing how coaches interact and engage with one another we can begin to embrace a duality of cooperative and competitive principles in the NCMP and in turn, continue to enhance the structure and delivery of the NCMP in Manitoba.

*Implications for the National Coach Mentorship Program*

The NCMP has taken great strides since its inception in 2000 and has found success in initiatives such as the specialty clinic. To continue to advance its' implementation, the NCMP must continue to accept the minor hockey beast and explore ways to reduce barriers to cooperation, such as a coach's wall of resistance and siege mentality. To assist in exploring these avenues we are able to identify two factors within the participants' responses that the NCMP should be aware of in its structure, delivery, and experiences as instituted by Hockey Manitoba: (a) the program is predominately based on informal interactions which can often be facilitated through formal means with the delivery being dependent on the needs of the mentoree and the ability of the mentor to recognize those needs, and (b) mentors need to be mentored.

*Informal interactions.* We must be cognizant of the provision of informal interactions and opportunities for hidden mentoring (see page 121), as it is in discussion and debate that knowledge is created, not through dictation and assimilation. The NCMP

must embrace avenues for hidden mentoring, such as the reality of lobby gossip, and utilize these culturally defined networking channels to promote coaching interaction and collaboration. These informal interactions can spawn mentoring relationships where viewpoints are challenged, critiqued, strengthened, or altered.

The program's formal initiatives provide instances for contact but not the continuance of interaction. They can play a large role in initiating the overall informal mentoring interactive process by offering up moments of boundary intersection that allow the mentor and mentoree to attempt to negotiate the duality of principles. However, formal initiatives must lead to informal opportunities. The formal initiatives provide the opportunity for intersection but the informal processes provide the interaction. The ability of the mentor to read the need of the mentoree in this negotiation and adjust the approach of mentoring administered to facilitate informal interaction, proved to be a more accurate appraisal of the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

For the NCMP to widen its influence on educating coaches, informal interactions and their role in facilitating mentoring relationships must be appreciated. By examining alternate initiatives and offering more formal entry points (i.e., specialty clinics) for mentorees, the NCMP can continue to take strides in its implementation and assisting a mentoree's needs both formally and informally

*Mentors need to be mentored.* Each mentor spoke of experiencing a progression in their emergence as a mentor and with it a confidence and ability to recognize mentoring situations. Providing opportunities for development and mentor-to-mentor interactions, can offer a boost to this emergence and can nurture their growth into a confident mentor. Due to logistical demands on mentors, further development

opportunities are not always possible, but exploring ways to initiate engagement between mentors can offer an avenue from which mentors can further their own development. Mutual support and informal story telling are often the cause of many lessons in mentoring. Mentors do not operate in isolation from their own development. Just as a coach enters the coaching community of practice with development needs, a mentor enters the mentoring community of practice. By acknowledging this through action, Hockey Manitoba and the NCMP can move towards not only helping their mentors but their coaches as well.

The game of hockey is constantly evolving and the environmental pressures coaches are subjected to mature along with it. The knowledge of coach mentoring within the auspices of Hockey Canada is a critical element in the growth of the NCMP and must continue to be strengthened. By providing a community of practice account of the comparison of the formal intents of Hockey Manitoba's mentoring program and the lived experiences of its mentors, this study has been able to bring a greater understanding of tensions between cooperative endeavors of the NCMP and competitive principles in Canadian hockey. This understanding has lead to discussions around facilitating informal interactions through formal means and recognizing the needs of the mentoree, along with mentors needing to be mentored to address these needs. It has also provided us with an understanding of the differing types of mentors and approaches to mentoring that influence the level of interaction that is experienced in any given mentoring relationship. This can provide mentors and the NCMP with valuable insight into how interaction and implementation can be influenced through careful management of a mentor's approach.



I feel as though perhaps the greatest understanding lies within the understanding of the tensions as a duality of principles. The duality of principles can be seen as an essential component of the boundary negotiation between the mentoring and coaching community of practice that begins to bridge disparities between the NCMP and coaches. Future efforts in mitigating tensions in mentoring can be seen more as a necessary brokerage of principles between the two communities of practice, allowing both the mentor and mentoree to abide by the very principles that bind their practice, while entertaining those that challenge that very same practice. I believe the tensions in mentoring, when seen as a duality of principles, can allow us as coaches and mentors alike, to move towards a level of positive rivalry within the game, that embraces both cooperative and competitive principles, and ultimately, healthier experiences for our athletes. It is my hope that Hockey Manitoba and the NCMP continue to be on the cutting edge of coach education and continue to provide positive contributions and advancements to the game and young athletes.

#### Finding meaning: Personal reflections

The process of exploring an area that is so intimately tied to my everyday life, provided a unique experience that forced me to reflect on some of my own practices and beliefs. My individual investment in the Manitoba coaching community cannot be separated in totality from the intent of the study. I have been a coach, administrator, athlete, and mentor spanning a 26-year involvement in hockey. These experiences and their influences regularly came to the forefront as I navigated through the data gathering and analysis process of this study, providing ample opportunities for reflection on my beliefs and who I am. As I ventured down this path of discovery I found myself reflecting

on the role that formal and informal mentoring played in my own coach education. I was able to reflect on: how and when mentoring happened, how it affected me, and ultimately how it contributed to my ability to operate within a duality of principles in coaching education as a coach and mentor.

To me mentoring is not a question of if it happened; it is a question of, how and when mentoring happened. We are constantly bombarded with situations and experiences involving individuals who influence the lessons we take from these experiences. In my growth as a coach and mentor, these individuals have been past coaches, coaching colleagues, and my father. They shaped my beliefs and actions by not just showing me what to do but also what not to do. Some of my biggest influences were not only those coaches who I connected with, but also those coaches who provided me with an experience that I would not want to pass on to my athletes. Together, these influences provided me with knowledge that had been passed on from coach to coach, evolving through each successive interaction.

By gaining a greater understanding of how and when mentoring shaped my coaching philosophy and practice, I am able to gain a greater appreciation of how the setting and mode of interaction play a key role in the coaches learning and engagement. This appreciation allows me to become more aware of the many contextual factors that may shape a coach's education before they even interact with me as a mentor. By becoming more in tune to the environmental factors that influence the interactions I encounter on a daily basis in the rink and surrounding community, I am better able to provide mentorees a more meaningful interaction, and shed light on how these

experiences ultimately contribute to my ability to operate within a duality of principles in coaching education as a coach and mentor.

I began my coaching career with an idealistic viewpoint on why coaches coached. I believed that all coaches carried a similar set of values and always acted in the best interest of the athletes. As I continued my analysis of the participant's responses, I looked back on many conversations I had with coaches and I began to see how there was variability in the meaning people attached to their participation, as competitive principles began to override some of their idealistic intentions. They were unable to negotiate the strong competitive principles that drive the coaching community of practice and struggled to operate with their own duality of principles.

I have succumbed to pressures in my own recent coaching career. Entering into a pressure filled environment where parents invest a significant amount of money with vicarious expectations of grandeur proportions, I stood fast in my ideals of process-orientated coaching with fair play initiatives, yet I too became prey to the environmental pressures that plague the Canadian hockey landscape. Through an awareness and acceptance of these imminent environmental pressures, I have been able to keep both in perspective and allow for principles within my coaching and mentoring endeavors to complement each other.

Although there is a common identity and enterprise in the coaching community that binds us and our actions, I believe there are often mixed and counterproductive motives behind those actions. An awareness of these varying motives and the ability to distinguish between them is vital to a mentor's ability to intervene and provide an appropriate intervention. Coaches must feel as though mentors have a connection to the

identity of Canadian hockey and carry legitimacy within the coaching community of practice. If a coach senses a mentor's motives are out of line, involve a notion of monetary profit, or are in conflict with long-standing beliefs of why people are involved in hockey, it can intensify a coach's wall of resistance. The participants of this study were all mentors who possessed an ability to operate within a duality of principles, adhering to cooperative and competitive principles, while carrying a high level of legitimacy in the coaching community of practice. They were able to minimize the resistance from mentoree's and allow for interaction within these opposing principles. As I continued to reflect on my ability to operate within a duality of principles, I began to see how, as a mentor, my role is not necessarily to pass knowledge onto others; but to act in a way that creates a relationship and environment where *they* are able to gain the knowledge.

My ability to provide this environment depends largely on who I am being. As I progressed through the interviews and data analysis, there was a certain consistency in how the mentors carried themselves and how they projected their presence within the coaching community. Each of them displayed a confidence during the interview and future correspondence, with a level of humility and eagerness to learn for the benefit of the community as a whole. They were not pursuing an individual enterprise, they were immersed in furthering the experiences of all those involved in the game of hockey. I learned that, more important than asking, "why aren't they interacting?" is to ask "who am I being that is creating that?" This brought me to question and evaluate my own level of humility and who I was being, and what type of example I was providing for others to follow. I feel it is important for mentors to ask themselves if they are contributing to tensions that hinder interaction or to a duality of principles that embraces interaction. By

doing so, mentors may be able to gain a greater understanding of their own strengths and limitations and provide a more meaningful platform for the structure, delivery, and experiences of the coach mentoring program as instituted by Hockey Manitoba.

### *Conclusion*

So you want to be a hockey coach? Our responsibilities as a coach do not merely exist within the athletic arena. We as coaches have a huge role to play in a child's upbringing. As coaches and mentors, the more we are able to collaborate and engage with each other, the more I believe we will be able to provide experiences that inspire children and coaches alike. Indeed, most young Canadian boys and girls quickly learn the implicit competitive nature of the game and the belief that it is our game, and that our existence within it connects us to a grandeur identity of being Canadian. However, I believe that an individual's identity is not created through their participation in sport, yet their participation in sport is defined by their identity. We as coaches and mentors must continually challenge the perpetual competitive performance-outcome oriented nature that has manifested itself in the modern game of hockey. These competitive pressures have resulted in playing and coaching hockey being more of an obligation and not enough like play. We must not lose sight of the role of hockey in Canada, but also not to lose sight of the role of play in hockey. Hockey is a game that carries lessons and passions that can easily go astray for children and adults. Let us hope that programs such as the NCMP are able to ensure that these lessons and passions are directed towards facilitating positive experiences in sport and in life.

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## Appendix A: Interview schedules

### Interview schedule #1 – Hockey administrator and Master Mentor

1. **What attracts you to hockey?**  
 Prompts: 1.1 When did you first get involved with the sport of hockey?  
 1.2 Why do you coach hockey?  
 1.3 How long have you been coaching?  
 1.4 Why did you begin coaching?
2. **Describe what you believe a mentor is.**  
 Prompts: 2.1 How long have you been mentoring?  
 2.2 What are some of your mentoring experiences?  
 2.3 What do you feel are the qualities of a good mentor?  
 2.4 When do you think 'good' mentoring has occurred?
3. **Describe your memorable mentoring experiences.**  
 Prompts: 3.1 What is the quality of the mentor relations you experienced?  
 3.2 What do you feel makes a memorable mentoring experience?  
 3.3 Are there challenges experienced by mentors and coaches?
4. **What is your role with Hockey Manitoba?**  
 Prompts: 4.1 Who do you oversee? Who oversees you?  
 4.2 Where do you think you contribute to the decision-making?  
 4.3 Where could you make a contribution to the program?
5. **How did you become a mentor within the Hockey MB program?**  
 Prompts: 5.1 How long have you been active in the program?  
 5.2 Who approached you to become a mentor?  
 5.3 What was your training to become a certified mentor?
6. **What are your thoughts about the Hockey Manitoba mentorship program?**  
 Prompts: 6.1 What are the declared goals/purpose of the program?  
 6.2 What delivery methods are used? What should be in place?  
 6.3 How do you promote the program? What should be in place?  
 6.4 How do you think it is most effective to promote the program?  
 6.5 What are the required qualifications to become a mentor?  
 6.6 How many mentors are there? Their Distribution?  
 6.7 What does a mentoree have to do to participate in the program?  
 6.8 How many coaches are currently mentored in program?  
 6.9 Number of seminars held & their attendance & review?
7. **Describe your experiences as a coach mentor in the program.**  
 Prompts: 7.1 How many seminars are you a mentor for?  
 7.2 Do you have preferences for who you mentor?  
 7.3 How often do you like to interact with your mentorees'?'  
 7.4 What is your preferred communication with the mentorees'?'  
 7.5 How many coaches do you prefer to meet with at one time?  
 7.6 How do you become a coach's mentor?
8. **Do you have any further comments?**

## Interview schedule #2 – Hockey Manitoba Mentors

**1. What attracts you to hockey?**

- Prompts:
- 1.1 When did you first get involved with the sport of hockey?
  - 1.2 Why do you coach hockey?
  - 1.3 How long have you been coaching?
  - 1.4 Why did you begin coaching?

**2. Describe what you believe a mentor is.**

- Prompts:
- 2.1 How long have you been mentoring?
  - 2.2 Who has mentored you?
  - 2.3 What do you feel are the qualities of a good mentor?
  - 2.4 When do you think 'good' mentoring has occurred?

**3. Describe your memorable mentoring experiences.**

- Prompts:
- 3.1 What is the quality of the mentor relations you experienced.
  - 3.2 What do you feel makes a memorable mentoring experience?
  - 3.3 Are there challenges experienced by mentors and coaches?

**4. What is your role with Hockey Manitoba?**

- Prompts:
- 4.1 Who do you oversee? Who oversees you?
  - 4.2 Where do you think you contribute to the decision making?
  - 4.3 Where could you make a contribution to the program?

**5. How did you become a mentor within the Hockey MB program?**

- Prompts:
- 5.1 How long have you been active in the program?
  - 5.2 Who approached you to become a mentor?
  - 5.3 What was your training to become a certified mentor?

**6. What are your thoughts about the Hockey Manitoba mentorship program?**

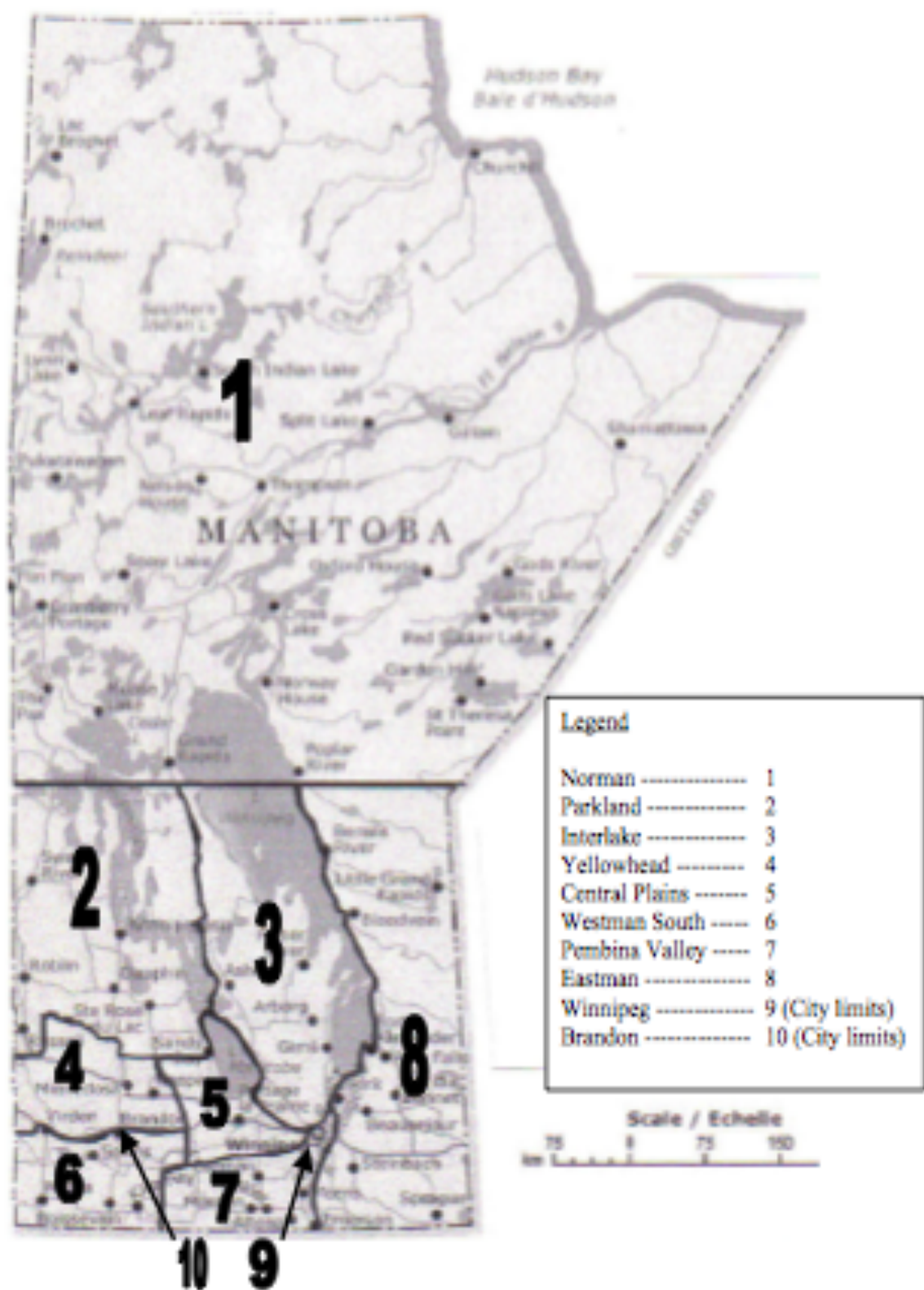
- Prompts:
- 6.1 In your experience do you feel the program meets its goals?
  - 6.2 In your experience what delivery methods are most effective?
  - 6.3 Can the program do more to promote itself?
  - 6.4 How do you think you can improve the program?
  - 6.5 In your opinion, what is the biggest obstacle to the program?

**7. Describe your experiences as a coach mentor in the program.**

- Prompts:
- 7.1 How many seminars are you a mentor for?
  - 7.2 Who do you prefer to mentor?
  - 7.3 How often do you like to interact with your mentorees'?
  - 7.4 What is your preferred communication with the mentorees'?
  - 7.5 How many coaches do you prefer to meet with at one time?
  - 7.6 How do you become a coach's mentor?

**8. Do you have any further comments?**





**Figure 2 – Hockey Manitoba regional boundaries**

Source: Hockey Manitoba: Constitution, Rules, and Regulations. Revised May 6, 2007 (p. 47-49)



## Appendix C: Consent forms

### Mentors

Research Project Title: Tensions in mentoring: A Qualitative analysis of the structure, delivery and experiences of the coach mentoring program instituted by Hockey Manitoba

Researcher: Steve Macdonald

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is to request your consent to participate in a research study that I am conducting as a requirement for my Master of Science degree in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba. The content of this letter will give you an idea of the nature of the study, and of the extent of your participation. The data from your participation will be collected for my thesis. A copy of this consent form will be left with you for your records and reference; it is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, please feel free to ask.

The purpose of this research study is to describe experiences of participants in the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program. You will be interviewed for approximately 90 minutes at a convenient time and place with the possibility of a follow up interview of no more than 30 minutes, if needed for clarification. The interview will cover your experiences as a mentor within the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program. The interview will be tape recorded, transcribed for analysis, and destroyed at the end of the study. The interview questions will focus on your views, opinions, and experiences in the mentoring program.

Participants will not benefit personally from the study. Potential program benefits can only be determined upon completion of the study. I will protect your confidentiality and anonymity by using a pseudonym for all persons as well as all locations. The pseudonym will only be known to me as the researcher. Upon completion of the study and dissemination of findings, possible identification could occur by those of your mentor peers who currently participate in the program and who have very intimate knowledge of the present condition of the program. Only myself as the researcher and my supervisor will have access to the data. All data will be stored in locked storage devices and upon completion of the study all tapes, transcripts, and computer files, will be destroyed.

The interview will be transcribed and read only by me, the principal researcher. Following my transcription of the interview, you will be invited to review the transcripts to ensure they are an accurate record of your statements. You will have the opportunity to

provide comments, corrections or alterations where needed. This review will usually not take longer than 30 minutes of your time. Upon receiving your response I will make the corrections that you provided.

The results of this study will be presented to my thesis committee at University of Manitoba. If you wish to receive a summary of this research report please respond in the space provided at the end of this letter. It is hoped that the information in the report will contribute to a deeper understanding of coaches' experiences in Hockey Manitoba's coach mentorship program.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, you may contact me, the principal researcher, in person, by phone, or email to notify me. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from your participation will be destroyed. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Should you require further information regarding this project, please contact myself or my project supervisor.

Steven Macdonald  
(204) 792-8158  
stevenmacd@gmail.com

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D.  
(204) 474-8996  
michael\_heine@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba Fort Gary Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above- named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Sincerely,

Steven Macdonald

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Participant's Signature Date

---

Researcher's Signature      Date

☐ No, I would not like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study. Please forward the summary to the following address:

---

Address

---

City, Province

---

Postal Code

### Hockey administrator and Master mentor

Research Project Title: Tensions in mentoring: A Qualitative analysis of the structure, delivery and experiences of the coach mentoring program instituted by Hockey Manitoba

Researcher: Steve Macdonald

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

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The purpose of this research study is to describe the experience of participants in the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program. You will be interviewed for approximately 90 minutes at a convenient time and place with the possibility of a follow up interview of no more than 30 minutes, if needed for clarification. The interview will cover your experiences as an administrator as well as a mentor within the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program.

The interview will be tape recorded, transcribed for analysis by me, and destroyed at the end of the study. The interview questions will focus on background information on the program's formal parameters and design, in addition to questions pertaining to the development of mentoring relationships.

Participants will not benefit personally from the study. Potential program benefits can only be determined upon completion of the study. I will protect your confidentiality and anonymity by using a pseudonym for all persons as well as all locations. The pseudonym will only be known to me as the researcher. Upon completion of the study and dissemination of findings, possible identification could occur by those of your mentor peers who currently participate in the program and who have very intimate knowledge of the present condition of the program.

Only myself as the researcher and my supervisor will have access to the data. All data will be stored in locked storage devices and upon completion of the study all tapes, transcripts, and computer files, will be destroyed.

The interview will be transcribed and read only by me, the principal researcher. Following my transcription of the interview, you will be invited to review the transcripts to ensure they are an accurate record of your statements. You will have the opportunity to provide comments, corrections or alterations where needed. This review will not take more than 30 minutes of your time. Upon receiving your response, I will make the corrections that you provided.

The results of this study will be presented to my thesis committee at University of Manitoba. If you wish to receive a summary of this research report please respond in the space provided at the end of this letter. It is hoped that the information in the report will contribute to a deeper understanding of coaches' experiences in Hockey Manitoba's coach mentorship program.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, you may contact me, the principal researcher, in person, by phone, or email to notify me. If you choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from your participation will be destroyed. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

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(204) 474-8996  
michael\_heine@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba Fort Gary Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above- named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Sincerely,

Steven Macdonald

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Participant's Signature Date

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Researcher's Signature      Date

☐ No, I would not like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study. Please forward the summary to the following address:

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Address

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City, Province

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Postal Code

## Consent Form for Mentor – Case Study

Research Project Title: Tensions in mentoring: A Qualitative analysis of the structure, delivery and experiences of the coach mentoring program instituted by Hockey Manitoba

Researcher: Steve Macdonald

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is to request your consent to participate in a research study that I am conducting as a requirement for my Master of Science degree in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba. The content of this letter will give you an idea of the nature of the study, and of the extent of your participation. The data from your participation will be collected for my thesis. A copy of this consent form will be left with you for your records and reference; it is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, please feel free to ask.

The purpose of this research study is to describe the experiences of participants in the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program. I will request your permission to participate in seminars, clinics, and mentoring situations to observe the actual process of mentoring in the program. Observations will focus exclusively on your interactions as a mentor with the coach that you mentor. I will concentrate on the following: the flow of communication between you and the mentored coach; the contents of the information exchanged between mentor and coach (coaching technique and philosophy); and the contents and form of instructions that you may give the coach. I will use a field journal to record my observations during these situations. I will also request the consent of the coach mentored by you.

Participants will not benefit personally from the study. Potential program benefits can only be determined upon completion of the study. I will protect your confidentiality and anonymity by using a pseudonym for all persons as well as for all locations. The pseudonym will only be known to me as the researcher. Following completion of the study and dissemination of findings, possible identification of you as the participating mentor may be possible, by your mentor peers who presently participate in the coach mentor program and who have very intimate knowledge of the present state of the program. Only myself as the researcher and my supervisor will have access to the data. All data will be stored in locked storage devices and upon completion of the study all field journals and computer files will be destroyed.

The results of this study will be presented to my thesis committee at University of Manitoba. If you wish to receive a summary of this research report please respond in the space provided at the end of this letter. It is hoped that the information in the report will contribute to a deeper understanding of coaches' experiences in Hockey Manitoba's coach mentorship program.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, you may contact me, the principal researcher, in person, by phone, or email and your participation will then be terminated immediately. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from your participation will be destroyed. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Should you require further information regarding this project, please contact myself or my project supervisor.

Steven Macdonald  
(204) 792-8158  
stevenmacd@gmail.com

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D.  
(204) 474-8996  
michael\_heine@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba Fort Gary Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above- named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Sincerely,

Steven Macdonald

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Participant's Signature Date

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date



- ☐ No, I would not like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study.
- ☐ Yes, I would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study. Please forward the summary to the following address:

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Address

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City, Province

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Postal Code

### Consent Form for Case Study - Mentored Coach ('Mentoree')

Research Project Title: Tensions in mentoring: A Qualitative analysis of the structure, delivery and experiences of the coach mentoring program instituted by Hockey Manitoba

Researcher: Steve Macdonald

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is to request your consent to participate in a research study that I am conducting as a requirement for my Master of Science degree in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba. The contents of this letter will give you an idea of the nature of the study, and of the extent of your participation. The data from your participation will be collected for my thesis. A copy of this consent form will be left with you for your records and reference; it is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, please feel free to ask.

The purpose of this research study is to describe the experiences of coaches that participate in the Hockey Manitoba coach mentorship program. I will request your permission to participate in seminars, clinics, and mentoring situations to observe the actual process of mentoring in the program. Observations will focus exclusively on your interactions as a coach with your mentor. I will concentrate on the following: the flow of communication between you and the mentor; the contents of the information exchanged between mentor and coach (coaching technique and philosophy); and the contents and form of instructions or advice that you may receive from the mentor. I will use a field journal to record my observations. I will also request the consent of the mentor working with you.

Participants will not benefit personally from the study. Potential program benefits can only be determined upon completion of the study. I will protect your confidentiality and anonymity by using a pseudonym for all persons as well as all locations. The pseudonym will only be known to me as the researcher. Following completion of the study and dissemination of findings, possible identification of you as the participating coach may be possible, only by your mentor and the administrator at Hockey Manitoba who initiated contact. Only myself as the researcher and my supervisor will have access to the data. All data will be stored in locked storage devices and upon completion of the study, all field journals and computer files will be destroyed.

The results of this study will be presented to my thesis committee at University of Manitoba. If you wish to receive a summary of this research report please respond in the

space provided at the end of this letter. It is hoped that the information in the report will contribute to a deeper understanding of coaches' experiences in Hockey Manitoba's coach mentorship program.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, you may contact me, the principal researcher, in person, by phone, or email and your participation will then be terminated immediately. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from your participation will be destroyed. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Should you require further information regarding this project, please feel free to contact myself or my project supervisor.

Steven Macdonald  
(204) 792-8158  
stevenmacd@gmail.com

Supervisor: Michael Heine, Ph.D.  
(204) 474-8996  
michael\_heine@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba Fort Gary Campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above- named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Sincerely,

Steven Macdonald

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Participant's Signature Date

---

Researcher's Signature

Date

☐ No, I would not like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive a copy of a summary of the results of the study. Please forward the summary to the following address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, Province

\_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code