

## AN INVESTIGATION OF INNOVATION IN COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Larena Hoeber, University of Regina  
Alison Doherty, Western University (presenter)  
Orland Hoeber, University of Regina  
Richard Wolfe, University of Victoria

### Innovation in [community] sport

- "Any idea, practice, or material artifact perceived as new by the relevant unit of adoption" (Zaltman et al., 1973, p. 10)
- Critical to organizational competitiveness, effectiveness, survival (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010)
- Community sport organizations are innovative (e.g., Franke & Shah, 2003; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Hull & Liao, 2006; McDonald, 2007)

### Objectives of our research

- (1) to investigate the nature of radical vs. incremental innovations in CSOs
- (2) to examine board culture and club culture as determinants of innovation adoption
- (3) to study the innovation adoption process in CSOs from a longitudinal perspective

### Methods

- Study 1: Semi-structured interviews with Presidents of 16 CSOs representing 12 different sports in 10 Ontario communities.
- Study 2: Planned to conduct focus groups with CSO board members, but unsuccessful in coordinating a sufficient number of groups.
- Study 3: Case studies of two CSOs (hockey, synchro) in Ontario. Conducted over an 18-month period of innovation.

### Findings (Study 1)

- Radical innovations are (1) brand new to the sport or to the club's community, (2) represent a substantial change to existing practice, and/or (3) have a wide and deep impact on the club.
- Radical innovations tends to focus on club growth and development, is led by an idea champion, and relies on a supportive board culture and financial resources to implement.
- Successful radical innovation may prompt a variety of further club opportunities.

### Findings (Study 3)

- CSOs may experience innovation in quite different ways, highlighting the potential complexity of the process.
- Different innovations, and different approaches to their adoption and implementation, can be successful in terms of achieving their intended objectives.
- Unique aspects of the innovations also contribute to whether they are sustained or not.

### Practical applications (Study 1)

- If interested in club growth and development, consider radical innovations
- If interested in athlete development, consider incremental innovations
- Before pursuing innovations, consider
  - Volunteer capacity
  - Existence of an idea champion
  - Financial resources
  - Supportiveness of the board to innovation

### Practical applications (Study 3)

- There is no standard approach to innovation
- Idea champions can come from anywhere in the club
- Pressures to innovate come from internal and external sources
- Pay attention to barriers to innovation