Undergraduate Women Learning to Do Leadership in a Business School: A Practice Perspective

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Abstract

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Business schools engaged in the development of student leadership largely continue to ignore the collective and contextual nature of leadership as approaches still focus on the individual as an entity separated from others and his or her context. Moreover, learning theories are seldom integrated into conceptual frameworks of leadership development; gender is rarely a main focus. Combining the leadership-as-practice perspective with the theory of situated learning, this research project sought to address these gaps by exploring the emergence of collective leadership in a group of undergraduate women students engaged in the practice of event organization in a business school context. With a special emphasis on learning, the author zoomed in on the accomplishment of leadership in the practice and then zoomed out to one of its related practices. Data were collected using an ethnographic approach through the observation of ten hybrid meetings, supplemented by interviews and the study of the practice's artifacts. Findings indicate that the roles and artifacts of the practice combined with the cyclical needs of event organization to augment or diminish participants' engagement in collective leadership, thus restricting or opening opportunities to learn how to do leadership. Moreover, the young women developed a sense of self as actual or potential future leader through contact with members of an associated practice. The study thus contributes to identifying potential opportunities and obstructions to young women's collective leadership learning in business schools and provides paths for universities to reflect on future strategies to enhance learning.

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Dedication

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

The promotion of leadership development is obvious across North American Business Schools. Many (if not most) business schools will profess that they are preparing their students to become future organizational leaders (Kniffin, Detert & Leroy, 2020). The confidence in business schools to deliver, however, is being questioned both by the public and members of the business school community themselves (e.g. De Rue, Sitlein & Podolny, 2011; Leroy, Anisman-Razin, Avolio, Bresman, Stuart Bunderson, Burris, Claeys, Detert, Dragoni et al., 2022; Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Discussions about the impact of business schools' efforts to develop student leadership involve debates about pedagogical practices and/or ontological beliefs underlying concepts of both leadership and leadership development, and about the schools' ability to articulate and assess learning outcomes.

As described in the literature review below, the fields of leadership research and of leadership development are vast, complex and imperfectly connected. There exists an array of ontological/epistemological differences and methodological challenges. A great majority of leadership researchers focus on transformational leadership and/or the relationships of social influence between leaders and followers within business contexts (Zhu, Song, Zhu & Johnson, 2019). Attempting to address issues related to the focus of mainstream research on unilateral social influences, a smaller group of researchers are looking at the mutual and relational processes of leadership construction, situated in historical, local, and cultural processes (Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2012). Research in this emerging field, however, faces challenges in clarifying the reasoning behind theoretical and methodological choices (Ospina, Foldy, Fairhurst, & Jackson, 2020a).

Looking at the literature about leadership development in business contexts, Day and Liu, (2019) have pointed out that little efforts have been made to understand leadership development as a separate process to leadership. Moreover, no fully accepted model or theory of leadership development currently exists. Notwithstanding a growing interest in framing leadership development as identity development, most leadership development approaches consist of choosing a particular leadership theory and training people in behaviors related to that theory. In their bibliographic review of the leadership development literature, Vogel, Reichard, Batistič, & Černe (2021) note, however, that recent emphasis has shifted to leadership development processes (e.g. contextual and personal antecedents, individual development outcomes, and detrimental aspects of leadership development) rather than leadership per se.

Vogel et al. (2021) do emphasize, however, a lack of research on under- or unrepresentative demographically diverse leaders. They found that only 3 of the top 100 documents of their co-citation analysis included gender as a focus. In a scoping review, Cotrim and Da Silva Gomes (2024) have also pointed to a historical gender imbalance in longitudinal studies of leadership development in a business context. This is unfortunate as Canadian women represent over half of the Canadian population and a large proportion of business students. Moreover, challenges still exist for women to access leadership positions. As described by the Canadian's Women Foundation (2025) (https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/women-and-leadership-in-canada/), women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles, holding only 30.9% of senior management positions, and 18,3% of board member positions in Canadian corporations. Representation of racialized women in management positions is even more disproportionate.

The main trends in the leadership and leadership literature in business contexts, can also be found in the literature about leadership development of students within business schools. Allen, Rosch and Riggio (2023) highlight the difficulty in identifying a consensus about the meaning of leadership development in business schools. Moreover, the authors point to the general lack of grounding of leadership development in adult learning theories. Most studies that have looked at leadership development in business schools, tend to concentrate on the leadership styles that are taught, the content of the courses or programs, the effectiveness of the pedagogical practices in teaching leadership, or student perception of leadership skill development (e.g. Allen et al., 2022; Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013; Johnson & Routon, 2024; Waddock & Lozano, 2013). Similar trends are also reflected in studies focusing on gender-related topics in business school leadership programmes (Schachter, 2025).

This research project aimed at contributing to the literature about the role of adult learning theories in student leadership development; the relation between gender and leadership learning within a business school context; and the field of mutual, relational processes of leadership construction. I thus explored the following within a higher education setting:

- The accomplishment of student leadership within a business school setting;
- The role of adult educational/learning theories in explaining how leadership is learned within such a setting;
- The ways in which gender intersects with leadership learning.

I define leadership using Crevani and Endrissat's (2016) definition, the "collective agency in changing and setting courses of action" (p. 42). This conceptualization of leadership is part of the leadership as practice (L-A-P) perspective, where leadership is conceived as a phenomenon, situated in time and space, taking shape through actions and interactions and focusing on the performance of leadership. The main exploratory questions that guided the project were the following:

- How does leadership take shape in a practice setting?
- How is leadership learned within a practice setting?
- In what ways do the concepts of gender and leadership intersect in a practice setting?
- How does the group comprehend leadership and gender within broader academic and professional contexts?
- In what ways do individual members understand their own leadership development through their experience in the practice?

I used a qualitative framework to investigate how leadership emerged and was learned within a business-women's student association as members engaged in the collective practice of leadership.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Leadership/leader research in the field of management

2.1.1 *A brief historical overview of mainstream perspectives*

Within the academic field of management, the great majority of authors approach leadership with an organizational psychology or social psychology orientation. As noted by Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2012), the study of leadership within the field of management is immature, and researchers are far from finding conclusive answers as to what leadership is. Although some authors (Sorrenson, Goethals & Haber, 2011) have attempted to come up with a unique, general theory of leadership, a plurality of definitions and theories currently exist, making this complex field difficult to navigate.

In their article, Zhu et al. (2019) provide a quantitative visualization of the field of leadership. By using big data gathered from 28 years of published research (1990 – 2017) in ten influential management and organizational psychology journals, the authors looked at the evolutionary patterns of leadership research and pinpointed emerging trends. They found 49 theories in the literature they reviewed. Using the method of bibliometric mapping, they carried out author co-citation analyses in seven 4-year slices. According to this method, articles with high co-citation frequencies with other documents can be considered to be at the heart of the knowledge base of a research field.

The results of their study (Zhu et al., 2019) suggest that transformational and charismatic leadership topics represent a major stream of leadership research over the past decades. The following theories or concepts, in order of importance, also represented prevalent currents of research: leader-member exchange theory (LMX), ethical leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, and collective forms of leadership (team leadership and shared leadership).

Zhu et al. (2019) found other conceptualizations to be part of the landscape, although to a much lesser extent: trait leadership, strategic leadership, empowering leadership, followership, emotions and leadership, diversity, and cross-cultural leadership. Nascent themes such as complexity, paternalistic, and paradoxical leadership were also identified. The authors concluded that five major trends could be picked out in the leadership literature: transformational leadership revisited; value-based streams of leadership and the dark side of leadership; a shift from a focus on unilateral social influence, to mutual influence; leadership in teams; and the exploration of new dependent variables. Transformational leadership, however, remains at the center of leadership research.

From an historical perspective, early research on leadership focused on personality or traits (Hughes et al., 2012). In the 1900s, the so-called heroic conceptualization of leadership assumed that leadership was a general personal trait expressed independently of the situation. As described by Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, and Wagner (2011), leaders were considered to be born rather than made (great man theories); the focus of research was on identifying key traits inherent to successful leaders. This approach assumed that certain leader traits or broadly defined behaviors were positively related to employee performance and/or satisfaction in all situations (Yukl, 2011).

From the 1950s to the 1980s behavioural theories of leadership emerged from the field of psychology (Komives et al., 2011; Avolio, Eagly, Lord, Day, & Zaccaro, 2017). Researchers' interest was shifted to the specific set of human behaviours that reflect successful leadership. The study of leadership styles emerged from this behavioural theory era. However, due to the behavioural theories' oversimplification of leadership, situational-contingency theories emerged in the 1970s (Komives et al., 2011). Combined with the lack of empirical support for universal conceptions of effective leadership, researchers attempted to develop theories that could explain why different styles of leadership were required for different situations (Yukl, 2011; Lord et al, 2017)

Contingency theories attempted to describe how aspects of the leadership situation alter a leader's influence (Yukl, 2011). They generated extensive research for two decades but lack of strong empirical support for them, and weak and inconsistent results led to researchers slowly abandoning this line of inquiry. In 1978, however, Burns' seminal work on leadership, focusing on the relationship between leader and follower, introduced a paradigmatic change in the field by introducing the idea of leadership as a process (Komives et al., 2011). Burns contrasted transactional leadership – which involved using contingent rewards – with transformational leadership, which created motivation in a charismatic-inspirational style (Diaz-Saenz, 2011).

Inspired by Burn's (1978) work, Bass published in 1985 his book describing the Full Range Theory of Leadership, considered to be the most widely researched theory of leadership today (Zhu et al., 2019). Bass expanded on Burn's work and proposed this leadership theory containing nine factors, five of which (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) characterize transformational leadership (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). Diaz-Saenz (2011) defines transformational leadership as "the process by which a leader fosters group or organizational performance beyond expectation by virtue of the strong emotional attachment with his or her followers combined with the collective commitment to a higher moral cause" (p. 299).

Although (or perhaps because) it has been so widely researched, the transformational theory of leadership has been criticized for giving too much credit to the leader and ignoring followers' contribution and situational/process factors underlying transformational effects (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). As a result, today most scholars in the field of leadership would agree that leadership is a social influence process that can be studied as an interactional framework, involving complex interactions between the leader, the followers and the situations they are in. Leadership is thus conceptualized as a function of those three elements (Hughes et al., 2012). In this tradition, research usually emphasizes individuals' characteristics and behaviours and focuses on relationships between individuals as they attempt to achieve mutually set goals (Uhl-Bien, 2006). As discussed by Uhl-Bien, this approach can be described as an "*entity* perspective" (p. 655) because it focuses on individuals as entities, whose internal selves are separated from their external environments. Thus, processes are understood as being made manifest through the interpersonal relationships among "entities". This is consistent with a post-positivist paradigm that emphasizes the existence of an objective truth, and a separation between mind and nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

A Socio-Constructivist Paradigm for Leadership Research. Attempting to address the issue of the "*individuality* of leadership" (Dennis et al., 2012 p. 254), emerging trends include a shift from a focus on unilateral social influence to relational and mutual influence aspects of leadership (Lord et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2019). There exists a body of scholarly work described by Denis et al. (2012) as being plural forms of leadership. One stream described by the authors is anchored in a socio-constructionist epistemology and conceptualizes leadership as a social phenomenon, a collective process in which leadership is produced through interaction. In this conceptualization, the place of individuals is reduced: "actors are present in leadership (enacting it, influencing it and creating it) but they are not containers of leadership" (p. 254). Leadership does not belong to individuals and is not a property of their behaviours; it is a property of relations – thus the general use of the term "relational leadership" to refer to this stream (Denis et al.). The meaning of "process" is very different from that of the above described "entity perspective". As explained by Uhl-Bien (2006), here the emphasis is on the "social construction process" (p. 655) by which leadership emerges. Thus, leadership unfolds through social interactions that are situated in a local-historical-cultural process.

Noting that this body of work is mostly at the exploratory phase, Denis et al. (2012) loosely classified publications into three groups. Although more current work exemplifies overlap between themes, the categories are still useful to describe general themes of interest:

(1) Researchers that look at practice – how leadership is done and is revealed in everyday actions and interactions. One such example is the leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) perspective, where leadership is conceived as a situated activity, taking shape through actions and interactions and focusing on the performance of leadership (Raelin, 2016). In this approach, leadership is understood as being "an ongoing collective practical accomplishment that is produced in a particular social setting" (Raelin, 2020, p. 481). Focusing on the accomplishments of L-A-P, Crevani and Endrissat (2016) describe the outcome as being: "the moment-by-moment production of *direction*, or collective agency in changing *and setting courses of action*" (p. 42). In this conceptualization of leadership, importance is accorded to the "embodiment" or materiality of leadership. According to Raelin (2016), L-A-P is embodied through language along with material resources/artifacts and processes that are utilized within the performance of leadership work.

(2) Researchers that focus on the discursive aspect of leadership - how it emerges through talk and conversation; for example, Gadelshina (2020) used a research approach informed by conversational analysis and organizational ethnography to explore and explain how shared leadership is constructed collaboratively across a project team meeting, to manage the process of sensemaking in uncertain times. The author was able to reveal conversational mechanisms that "contribute to the emergence of a variety of leadership arrangements, constructed by various actors on a turn-by-turn basis" (p. 17).

(3) Researchers that look at relations and interactions. One such example is the work of Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011). In their study, the authors used a relational ontology (i.e. that considers social experience to be intersubjective) instead of being cognitive and individual. They carried out an ethnographic study and conducted semi-structured conversations with Federal Security Directors of US airports. Using abductive methods from the field, they proposed a conceptualization of leadership "as a way of being and relating with others embedded in everyday experience" (p. 1432) and drew special emphasis on the moral nature of relationships.

In their conclusion, Denis and colleagues (2012) recommend that future work in this "relational leadership" area pay special attention to issues of power relations, dysfunctional dynamics, and making the distinction between leadership and other types of phenomena (such as teamwork or decision making) clear.

In a more recent article, Ospina, Foldy, Fairhurst, and Jackson (2020b) undertook a rapid appraisal study of the collective leadership literature using Scopus for the period of 2012-2018 (2012 being the date at which Denis and colleagues' article was published). Utilizing the terms collective leadership, distributed leadership, complexity leadership, discursive leadership, relational leadership, and network leadership, they identified a total of 937 articles in journals across a large range of disciplines. Based on their analysis of the articles, the authors propose three main guidelines for future researchers. The first is to analyze the configurations of collective leadership and how those configurations are based within relationships of power. The second is to "establish how leadership is made relevant in a collective setting" (p. 606). Finally, the third is to establish a strong process model in order to capture the features of experience, heterogeneity, and temporality.

In a discussion about the methodological challenges of collective leadership, Ospina et al. (2020b) noted a lack of consistency in theoretical and methodological choices, or at least a lack of a clear reasoning behind the choice. They offer a framework to guide the integration of theory and methods questions. This framework or map offers two axes or dimensions. The first is the locus of leadership: where does a researcher look for leadership; where is it made manifest; what is its source? Within this axis, the researcher must ask whether leadership resides within the group or within the system (network). The second dimension refers to how the researcher views collectivity: is collective leadership a type of leadership among others (an empirical reality), or is it a lens to apprehend it?

Analyzing the 'plural leadership' literature a decade later, Denis, Côté, and Côté-Boileau (2023) describe it as a perspective rather than a clearly defined approach; the authors also observe that it includes many terms such as "shared, distributed, collective, collaborative, integrative, relational, and post-heroic" (p. 3). They highlight the principal distinction between two ontological portrayals of leadership: the entitative that focuses on "the characteristics and attributes of individuals"; and the relational that focuses on "the interaction between individuals that shape leadership in organizations" (p. 5-6). Remarking on the lack of a methodological approach that completely apprehends process interactions in the development of plural leadership, Denis and colleagues do note the existence of promising new perspectives. The first explores the idea of the construction of multiple identities that includes a broad range of work on diversity, inclusivity and equity in organizations. The second analyses discourses and practices associated with plural forms of leadership as instances of control in organizations, and the third looks at the resistance of individuals in plural leadership.

As can be concluded by this brief review of the leadership literature, the field of leadership research within the domain of business and management is vast and unwieldy. Despite an emerging trend of relational or collective leadership looking at the mutual processes of leadership construction, situated in a historical, local, and cultural process, most researchers focus on transformational leadership and/or the unilateral relationships of social influence between leaders and followers. Methodological challenges remain, however, for all streams of research. In this research project, I adopted the practice perspective of leadership. Taking into consideration Ospina et al.'s (2020b) recommendations, I ensured that the theoretical and methodological choices I made were well aligned and paid attention to issues of power relations by considering how participants of a practice were provided with, or excluded from, opportunities to engage in leadership work.

The next section will look at the literature on leadership development and its connections to – or disconnection from the leadership research field in management.

2.2 Leadership/leader Development Research in the Field of Management

2.2.1 Research on Leadership/Leader Development in a Business Context

Like the research in the field of leadership, the field of leadership development within business and management is vast and fragmented (Vogel et al., 2021). There is currently no fully accepted model or theory of leadership development (Day & Liu, 2019). Vogel and colleagues carried out a comprehensive bibliometric review of the field of leadership development in business contexts. Their aim was to look at the field's underlying "intellectual structure" (p. 2), invisible networks, evolution, strengths, and gaps. Using three bibliometric approaches (historiography, document co-citation, and bibliographic coupling), they included documents spanning from 1967-2017, and for each approach focused on the 100 most important documents and how they clustered together. The authors' research clarified that knowledge about leadership development passed down through one main narrative: addressing the practical needs of organizations (e.g., how individuals learn from experience, the role of 360 feedback, skills and competencies, executive coaching), followed by a shift to theory development (especially for authentic leadership, using narrative or life-stories approaches).

Secondly, Vogel et al. (2021) identified 3 main clusters of knowledge domains, presented in order of importance:

(1) Leadership styles with a focus on how to develop leaders who enact these styles (e.g. transformational, transactional, charismatic, and authentic leadership); followed by a later shift of attention to learning development processes (mediators, moderators, outcomes, personal and contextual antecedents).

(2) Learning and the elements of the learning development process; many of these documents focused on social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura), experiential learning (Kolb), goal setting, motivation and goal orientation – the authors concluded that most references to learning came from the field of psychology.

(3) Theoretical frameworks and intra-person learning mechanisms; most studies reflected a basic research approach, looked at organizations or systems, and to leader identity development.

Lastly, the bibliographic coupling results suggested that more recently, the emphasis has shifted specifically to learning development processes (e.g., contextual and personal antecedents, individual development outcomes, and detrimental aspects of leadership development) rather than leadership per se.

In his very influential 2000 review of leadership development, Day makes the distinction between leadership development and leader development. In his discussion, leader development refers to building intrapersonal competencies. Leadership development, on the other hand, represents an investment in social capital necessitating an "interpersonal lens that is grounded in a relational model of leadership" (p. 585). He does note, however, that the development of interpersonal dimensions (e.g., trust) may depend on the development of intrapersonal characteristics.

Day and Liu (2019) later proposed that leadership development is a "complex interaction between people and environments that emerges through social systems" (p. 78) and that it should be approached "as a process that transcends but does not replace individual leader development. It is a dynamic process involving multiple interactions that persist over time" (p. 78). In their book, Day, Harrison and Halpin (2009) presented an integrative approach to leadership development. The authors took the position that leadership development encompasses the whole adult life span. They reviewed relevant theoretical perspectives from the fields of moral development, value-based leadership, critical thinking skills, self-awareness, identity development, skill acquisition and expertise, adult learning and mental models. The authors connected these fields around the overarching concept of leadership development and made thirteen theoretical propositions.

As indicated by Vogel et al.'s (2021) study, there is a growing body of literature that frames leadership development in terms of identity development (e.g. Ibarra, Wittman & Day, 2014; Lord & Hall, 2005; Miscenko, Guenter & Day, 2017). This literature focuses on the interactional basis of identity development; however, the emphasis remains on the individual leader and is cognitively oriented. Theorizing about the development of a leadership identity is based on two main theories of identity: identity theory (where leadership is understood as being a social role, associated with socially defined expectations) and social identity theory (which focuses on social categories and group level processes) (Ibarra, Wittman & Day, 2014).

The management literature continues to focus on the development of individual leaders, be it in terms of identity development, learning of leadership styles, or intra-personal learning mechanisms. Nonetheless, a discussion regarding the difference between leader development and leadership development - recognizing the role of context and interpersonal relationships - is growing.

The Development of Collective/Plural Leadership. Although Vogel et al. (2021) mentioned that research currently focuses on individual developmental outcomes of leadership development, they note that a small number of studies looked at collective developmental outcomes at a theoretical level (notably within teams) and conclude that it is an empirically neglected area of research. The authors also prone the need for alternative perspectives to leadership (such as constructivist, critical and pragmatic orientations). In this section I will concentrate on reviewing the academic literature that looks at collective or ‘plural’ leadership development with a special emphasis on the leadership-as-practice perspective.

In their recent review of team and collective leadership development, Day and Kragt (2023) point to the paucity of studies looking at how collective leadership develops and how it is sustained. One notable exception is Eva, Wolfram Cox, Tse, and Lowe’s (2021) conceptual paper presenting a multi-perspective framework for developing collective leadership. Eva and colleagues identify five key theoretical perspectives on collective leadership and theorize how these perspectives can be applied: (1) person-centered (focus on individual and team competencies); (2) social network (enhancing ties and relationships among team members); (3) social-relational (using language-based interventions); (4) sociomaterial (recognizing the importance of context and material conditions); and (5) institutional (addressing the balance between ideals and pragmatic responses). Within the multi-perspective framework, the authors compare the five theoretical perspectives using two dimensions: ideology (critical vs. normative) and centricity (context-centric vs. consultant-centric). The authors conclude that future research should focus on exploring the integration of various perspectives, and on practical applications of the perspectives in organizations.

Leadership as Practice Perspective on Developing Collective Leadership. Lehtonen and Seeck (2023) used an integrative literature review technique to analyse the literature on leadership development from the L-A-P perspective published between 2000–2020. Two main common points arose among the papers: the importance of context and a focus on building collective capacity – although some of the researchers did agree that individual-level development was also important to the perspective. Some of the aims of leadership development included: bringing “the unconscious and unspoken into a more active, conscious and explicit domain” (p. 57) at the individual, group and organizational level; providing leadership development intervention in the collective’s specific practice; having individuals reflect on their own and others’ contribution to the unfolding leadership practice. The authors propose a framework that presents how leadership development from the L-A-P perspective provides opportunities “for multisite and multilevel approaches to leadership development” (p. 58). The framework includes the location of the intervention (leadership programme vs workplace; the collective vs individual level; and the purpose and methods). The authors conclude that both theoretical and empirical work is needed to advance the field.

Specific examples of interventions are provided by Raelin (2006, 2016, 2020). He argues that because leadership is understood to be co-developed within a particular context, the focus shifts to the development and learning at both the collective and individual level within a particular environment. Within a practice perspective, the actors can grow their capacity to engage in leadership and thus strengthen their practice. As individuals engage in new practices – or move to different practices - they will have increased awareness of the processes involved in contributing to the emergence of leadership. Raelin (2020) turns to methods of ‘action learning’ defined in his earlier work as “a method to generate learning from human interaction occurring as learners engage together in real-time work problems” (2006, p. 152).

Raelin (2016) proposes action modalities or interventions, related to theories of action learning, as developmental approaches. Action modalities share the view that the unit of analysis is the practice and that the ‘learning agent’ is reflection about that practice. The interventions aim at helping groups partake in collective reflection as they strive to solve mutual problems, increase and create knowledge, and eventually improve practice (Raelin, 2009). Development –

or learning – can occur at the individual level through ‘first person inquiry’ (self-reflection), at the group level through ‘second-person inquiry’ (reflection with others about a collective enterprise), and through ‘third-person inquiry’ (as participants move beyond the immediate practice and share or disseminate knowledge with others) (Raelin, 2009).

A recent conceptual paper written by Morrow, Barnhart, Wefald and Smith (2025) explores the integration of leadership-as-practice development and improvisational theatre to enhance collective leadership capacity in organization. They propose a framework that explains how the features of leadership-as-practice development and improvisation overlap, the core concept being that learning develops through repeated cycles of sensemaking, which can lead to innovative and creative approaches to the practice involved. Specifically, improvisation allows for the simulation of a real work environment, capturing authentic organizational and human dynamics within a “somewhat controllable space where real emotional triggers can be surfaced and explored” (p. 37).

An example of a recent empirical article is Kliewer and Wefald’s (2025) description of both the conceptual underpinnings and practical implementation of leadership development through cycles of group work and coaching for leaders working in civic contexts. The cycles include work done in Collaborative Leadership Learning Groups (CLLGs) that “bring small groups of people together in real-world civic and/or organizational contexts to identify, make sense of, and act on various complex adaptive system-level leadership challenges” (p. 4) and that are typically supported by leadership-as-practice development coaches. The following weeks each participant works individually with a coach to make sense of the group dynamics and leadership learning. The cycles may last between 9 and 16 months.

Gender and Leader/leadership Development Research in Business Contexts.

Pointing to a lack of research on under- or unrepresented demographically diverse leaders, Vogel et al. (2021) found that "women were first authors on only 15 of the top 100 documents in the co-citation analysis, and only 3 of those included gender as a main focus" (p. 8). All in all, they underline the lack of both theory and research about women, minorities, LGBTQ and leadership in influential leadership discussions. The authors note that leadership development research on women is disconnected from mainstream research and relies on two main pieces of work: that of Eagly and Karau (2002) and Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011).

By way of illustration, Eagly and Karau (2002) described the mismatches between perceptions of female gender roles and leadership roles (i.e. role congruity theory). They argued that these mismatches can lead people to have (a) negative attitudes about women becoming leaders, and (b) negative perceptions of women leaders' success. Looking at gender biases, Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) discussed how these can interfere with identity work. Emphasizing the role of gender dynamics in the workplace, the authors identified the challenges that may exist for women to integrate a leader identity into their core self: difficulties to establish credibility in a culture that is conflicted about their authority, a lack of role models, gendered career paths and work, and lack of access to networks and sponsors.

Considering barriers to women's career development, and using an 'ecological systems approach', Lau, Scott, Warren, and Bligh (2022) reviewed research from the management, social, applied psychology, and feminist disciplines that focused on strengthening gender equality in the workplace. The authors provide a framework for organizing research on women's career equality interventions. Focusing on work published between 2000 and 2020, their final sample consisted of 77 articles. Their review indicated that at the individual level, three main approaches were identified to combat gender inequality at work: behavioural management, identity management, and contesting gender stereotypes. Research on the interpersonal microsystem – the immediate social environments - indicated that developmental support such as mentoring and feedback benefited women's careers in many ways. For example, feedback was found to be critical in alleviating women's insecurity regarding their performance, helping them develop a leadership identity. Lastly, research on organizational interventions was found to mainly target inequitable policies and practices influencing an organization's culture.

In another systematic review of research on approaches to gender equality in leadership from multidisciplinary fields (e.g. social, physical, health, management and business) and based on qualitative studies, Gardiner, Chur-Hansen, Turnbull, and Semmler (2023) point to a clear evolution in the academic literature that moves from a "focus on fixing the women (1967–1976), to fixing the organisation (1977–1996), to fixing the environment (1998-present)" (p. 2). The authors describe these periods as micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of research, respectively. They remark, however, that micro-level approaches are the most frequently employed. A prominent example are women's leadership programmes that encourage the development of "personal agency, self-awareness, self-confidence, and leadership skills and networks within an all-female environment" (p. 2).

Gardiner et al.'s (2023) criticisms of the research on women leadership programmes highlight a lack of leadership development frameworks specifically for women; a notable lack of research focused exclusively on women, resulting in limited empirical data to determine the optimal timing and effectiveness of women-specific leadership programmes; the lack of comprehensive evaluation, synthesis, or standardized reporting on the characteristics of these programmes or the rigor of their assessments. The authors denote that most academic work on women's leadership programmes remained “decontextualized, unreflective and pragmatic” (p. 14) and lament that programmes did not seem to be integrated with other strategies (at the meso level for example). Gardiner et al. (2023) conclude that research on the impact of women’s leadership development programmes reflects what is found in the general leadership development literature—it is overly focused on summative evaluation, demonstrates a dearth of longitudinal studies (e.g. Cotrim et al.’s, 2024 scoping review), and is excessively dependent on self-reported information and personal assessments of outcomes.

This brief overview of the field of leadership development from a management/business perspective, highlights how the literature continues to focus on the development of individual leaders despite a certain increase of conceptual work on the development of plural or collective leadership. Focusing on the L-A-P perspective, a few specific examples of developmental approaches remain centered on Raelin’s work (2006, 2016, 2020). As for literature related to gender and leadership development, it remains concentrated on the general causes hampering women’s career advancement and potential interventions to address these. Several gaps therefore exist in the conceptual and empirical work explaining the development of collective leadership, and the role that gender may play.

I therefore attempted to address several of these gaps. Firstly, by aiming to explore the role of adult educational/learning theories in explaining how leadership is developed, focusing specifically on plural leadership learning, identified as a neglected field by Day and Kragt (2023) and Vogel et al. (2021). Furthermore, considering the lack of empirical research about women and leadership development (Vogel et al., 2021), I examined the ways by which gender intersected with collective leadership learning.

In the next section, I provide an overview of the research about leadership development in business schools. Like the literature on leadership development in the business context, research seems to be fragmented, and it is possible to notice a general parallel between the evolution of managerial leadership development research and that of research on student leadership development. Similarly, the conceptual and theoretical linkages among student leadership development, leadership theories, and educational theories seem overall to be weak.

2.2.3 Research on Leadership/Leader Student Development in Business Schools

Based on a review of the literature, Allen et al. (2022) provide an overview of the state of leadership development in business schools and identify a list of varied approaches. Within the formal school curriculum, the authors report that approaches include embedding leadership growth as a core element of the students' holistic experience; at the graduate level, providing semester long courses on leadership theories and practice (categorized under organizational behavior or management expertise); at the undergraduate level, except for management majors, leadership skills are usually introduced briefly in an organizational behaviour core course. Content often explores leadership theories (such as transformational, path-goal, leadership-member exchange theories). Pedagogical methods include lectures, discussions, cases, and assessment is done via multiple-choice exams, essays, case analysis, and less often interactive exercises, or experiential skill building exercise, standardized assessments (including personality measures), or reflection exercises.

Outside of the formal curriculum, and sometimes developed by the student affairs unit, training usually targets undergraduate students, rarely awards credits, and engages self-selected participants. Focusing on self-development, the outcomes of these initiatives include personal growth, self-awareness, and the recognition of values, motivations, purpose and aspirations. Approaches include small group conversations and meaning making exercises. Numerous clubs and student organizations offer opportunities to develop leadership skills by taking on leadership roles.

The perspective of leadership development as identity development has also made its way to the business education literature. Ibarra et al. (2014, p. 289), for example, use a social constructionist lens to frame leadership as identity work where identity work is understood as: "people's engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities". The development of a leadership identity implies the existence of a continuous interaction between self and environment where the individual can explore alternative possible selves (Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2010). Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) describe how business schools can be a potential identity workspace by providing a "holding environment" for identity work (p. 44). Drawing on the fields of sociology, social psychology, organizational behaviour, and the literature on systems' psychodynamics, the authors theorize about how a social context can reduce disturbing affect and facilitate sense making for individuals engaged in the pursuit of *identity stabilization* (consolidating an existing identity) or in *identity transition* (acquiring a new one) (p. 44).

Allen and colleagues (2022) note that historical consensus about the meaning of leadership development does not seem to exist in business schools and point to the difficulty in identifying curriculum designed specifically to achieve outcomes. This is like what Sowcik and Allen had reported in 2013, writing that the objectives and ambitions of leadership education are varied and highlight both differences in the core definition of leadership, and in the educational aims of the endeavor. Terms such as *leadership development, leader development, leadership training,* *leadership learning, leadership education, leadership studies, management development* can be found and most lack definition. They also noted that many researchers neglect to explain why they choose a specific educational approach, and its underpinning assumptions. The principles underlying the choice of pedagogical processes and their connection to the definition of leadership are rarely made specific. Allen et al. (2022) propose linking adult learning theory to leadership development to guide curricular and cocurricular approaches. They propose using an overarching model of adult learning and selecting Merriam et al.'s (2007) work on adult learning, proposing that the use of its five orientations of theories can be applied to improve leadership development programmes (i.e., to inform and align instructional strategies, curricular topics, and evaluation techniques).

Looking specifically at the use of evidence-based approaches to leader development (and not leadership development) in business schools, Leroy et al. (2022) carried out a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with 60 academic directors of leadership centers in known schools, located mainly in the U.S.A., Europe and Australia. The authors identified common leadership development practices such as the use of 360-degree feedback, action learning, executive coaching, case methods, leadership expedition, mindfulness practice and concluded that there was "a clear disconnect between the current use of a certain practice and the scientific contingencies established in the literature for the use of that practice" (p. 10). Furthermore, they looked at how leadership development was evaluated and reported that 70% of the evaluations were based on Kirpatrick's level 1 evaluation (i.e., reaction to the practice or use of smiley faces). The other 30% of approaches included assessing knowledge about leadership theories and best practices (through exams, reflection); behavioural change (pre-post feedback); achievement of learning objectives; capability improvement (pre-post assessment center); follower effectiveness (multisource surveys); career success (longitudinal surveys); team outcomes (social network analysis, appreciative inquiry, Qsort methodology); and measurement of the organization's bottom line (ROI or RODI).

The main reasons identified for not using evidence-based approaches included an excessively wide interpretation of what qualifies as leadership and how it is cultivated; a lack of solid knowledge about developing leaders; organizational reasons competing with evidence-based approaches (e.g. lack of support, loss of power, competing incentives); and inadequate quality of external evaluation mechanisms for leader development. (e.g. institutional indifference; insufficient external incentives; irrelevant accreditation mechanisms). Leroy et al. (2022) concluded that leadership developers did not define themselves as being "evidence-based in what (i.e. content) and how (i.e. method) [they develop] leaders" (p.18). This further implies not being evidence-based in choosing content and methods based on the available evidence (i.e. selection), and when evaluating whether chosen interventions work as intended (i.e. evaluation)." (p. 18). The authors present a multilevel, multistakeholder approach to address issues of how to be evidence-based leader developers.

As described by Komives et al. (2011) more generally, the majority of research on college student leadership development ignores the collective and contextual nature of leadership. As definitions of leadership start to include relational and contextual perspectives, researchers realize that developing individual leaders does not ensure effective leadership (e.g. Day & Liu, 2019). The approaches to student leadership development still focus on the individual as an entity separated from others and his or her context. The outcomes of leadership development are thus centered on the individual leader, and it becomes very difficult to see whether leadership development contributes to how individuals effectively engage in leadership activities, with a broad range of people, and in a variety of contexts.

In conclusion, as described above, the fields of leadership research and leadership development research are complex and lack interconnectedness. Leadership – or rather leader development in business education – reflects to a large degree the literature on leader development in the business context but does not seem to have integrated the idea of collective leadership development. Too few studies articulate what is meant by leadership development and associated learning outcomes, and their assessment is often poorly defined. Moreover, there seem to be few attempts to incorporate ideas from the field of adult education or adult learning. The aims of this research project take into account the gaps identified in the literature and thus attend to leadership development in a business school from a collective perspective, explores how an adult learning theory can be utilized to explain leadership learning, and focus on a population that has been neglected in past research – women.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Lens

The general purpose of the study was to explore how leadership is accomplished and learned within a women's business student leadership group as members engaged in a social practice.
In this section I introduce the practice-theory perspective that frames my exploration of the phenomenon of leadership. I further describe how this perspective has been broadly used by researchers to understand and study leadership.

3.1 A Practice-Theory Perspective

Based on the definition of leadership I had chosen and to address the research questions I had identified, I selected a practice theory perspective for my project. In a brief overview of the conceptual disagreements that led to the 'turn to practice' (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Savigny, 2001) in the field of social sciences, Crevani and Lammi (2023) identify the two main approaches that have been used to study social phenomena: the structuralist approach focusing on structures (e.g., systems, class, institutions); and the functionalist approach concentrating on individual intention and experiences (driven by subjectivist and phenomenological points of view). Crevani and Lammi describe this as the classical structure/agency debate. According to the authors, classical practice theory (based principally on Bourdieu's 1977 and Gidden's 1979 work) goes beyond the system/actor dualism and provides an in-between perspective where structure and individual agency are interlinked in practice.

Today's field of practice theory is not unified (Schatzki, 2002). In fact, it is influenced by several philosophical and sociological traditions (e.g., Wittgensteinian and Heideggerian thought; ethnomethodology; phenomenology; cultural and historical activity theory; actor network theory; praxeology; pragmatism; situated learning and new materialisms) (Gherardi, 2009; Gherardi, 2019; Nicolini 2009; Nicolini 2012; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2019). Theodore Schatzki, philosopher, is recognized as having produced the most extensive – if incomplete - general theory of practice (Nicolini, 2012; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2019).

As can be imagined, there is no definitive definition of what a 'practice' is. For the purpose of this research project, I chose Schatzki's (2010) frequently adopted definition of practice: "the organized spatial-temporal manifolds of human activity" (p. 129). To understand this definition, several important points need to be highlighted. First, human activity includes both 'sayings' and 'doings' - one not having more importance than the other (Schatzki, 2002). Second, practices are recurrent, take place locally and are tied to their historical and geographical context (Nicolini, 2012, 2017). Third, practices are linked to material arrangements, including artifacts, organisms and things (Schatzki, 2002, 2010). Fourth, practices acquire normativity in terms of the proper way of carrying out activities (Nicolini, 2017). Fifth, practices have an object or direction that can be negotiated and contested (Nicolini, 2017). Finally, practices are relational; the social world is formed by a constellation of linked practices and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2017). Nicolini (2012) proposes that the practice perspective is the adoption of the idea that "practices (…) are fundamental to the production, reproduction, and transformation of social and organizational matters" (p. 14).

Orlikowski (2010) posits that adopting a practice perspective entails that the researcher grounds her understanding of the "recursive interaction among people, activities, and artifacts and contexts" within practices (pp. 26-27) and argues that this perspective is well suited to study emergent and relational phenomena. Nicolini (2017) argues that practice theory should be recognized foremost as an "orientation towards understanding and explaining social phenomena in terms of socio-material practices and their association" (p. 23). I have adopted Nicolini's view that practice theory should be taken as an orientation arising out of the shared premises of several distinct theoretical and philosophical traditions.

3.2 Leadership Within the Field of Practice Theories

Crevani and Lammi (2023) provide an overview of how practice theories have been utilized to understand and study what they call 'the phenomenon' of leadership. The authors argue that insights from practice theories have been mobilized by leadership researchers in varied ways. To aid readers in navigating the literature, the authors propose three frames (pp.19-20) to situate the insights emerging from the practice perspective that are incorporated into the study of leadership. For this research project, I have positioned myself within these three frames:

- **'Decentering leadership'**: Moving away from the study of individuals to that of practices, I look at "decentering leadership from specific individuals" (Crevani & Lammi, 2023, p. 19), or from the study of 'leaders', usually formally appointed, thus focusing on the potential role played by different persons in the production of leadership.
- **'Expanding leadership':** Concentrating on practices and taking into consideration Schatzki's (2010) idea of how practices are linked to material arrangements and tied to their historical and geographical context, I include the potential role of materiality and context in the co-constitution of the leadership phenomenon.
- **'Redefining leadership'**: Because of the two previous frames, I take into account the relational and interactional nature of the phenomenon of leadership, including interrelations among persons, material and context. This is reflected in the definition of leadership that I adopted and that guided the choice of my methodological approach.

Exploring the world in terms of practices allows researchers to focus on the performance of leadership and its ties to historical, geographical and socio-material contexts. This framework has consequences in terms of how to explore the phenomenon of leadership and its accomplishment. As described by Alvehus and Crevani (2022), this means taking into consideration "how leadership is accomplished by language *and* by space, bodies and artifacts" (p. 1), thus linking "theoretical conceptualizations to methodological concerns" (p. 1) to study leadership and pay attention to its multiple modalities. Most researchers have focused on a single modality of leadership, namely language (e.g., Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Murphy, 2025), with others exploring materiality (e.g., Carroll, 2016; Ropo & Salovaara, 2019; Sergi, 2016).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. I will describe the methodological approach I chose in the following section.

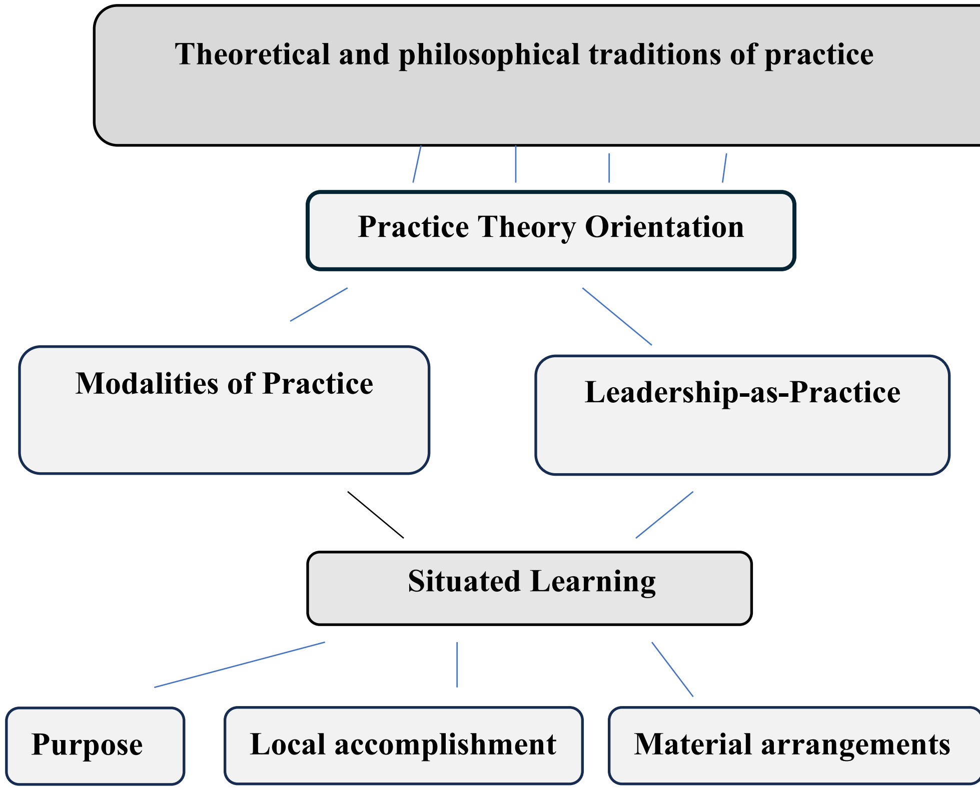

Figure 1. Theoretical underpinnings of the study

Chapter 4: Methods

In this section I describe the qualitative design of this study and the broad methodological approach I adopted based on Nicolini's (2012, 2017) work. I further specify the types of tools I employed to collect data during field observations, interviews and the study of artifacts. I then provide a high-level description of the constructivist grounded theory method I utilized to analyze the data as well as the coding methods applied to analyze interviews and field observations, and the approach used to analyze documents. Lastly, I present the criteria of 'goodness' that are used to describe the research project.

4.1 Research Design

I used a qualitative research approach for this project. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as the following:

> "*a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that 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. 3).

The approach I used reflects the definition provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and follows the main characteristics of qualitative research as listed by Creswell and Poth (pp. 43-44, 2018), a list that overlaps to some extent with Denzin and Lincoln's definition:

- The research occurred in a natural setting as I collected data 'in the field';
- I was a key 'instrument' in the collection of the data by observing behaviour, examining documents, and interviewing members;
- I used multiple methods to gather multiple forms of data;
- I used complex reasoning through inductive and deductive reasoning as I analyzed the data, working back and forth between the codes and the data;
- I kept a focus on the members' understanding of their practice;
- The research was context dependent in that it was situated within the setting of the practice;
- I used an emergent design; the initial plan changed somewhat as I conducted the research and analyzed data through the use of Nicolini's (2012) methodological orientation;
- I 'positioned myself', taking into account my status and perspectives in the research study, reflecting on my actions and demonstrating reflexivity;
- I provided what I felt to be a holistic account or a complex picture of the accomplishment and learning of leadership within a practice.

The practice-theory methodological framework that I adopted and that is described below, does not fall within a traditional interpretive research paradigm. As described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a theoretical and methodological 'perspective' is not attached to a particular world view and instead 'works within and between competing and overlapping paradigms (p. 5).

I therefore see myself as a ‘bricoleur’, defined by the authors as being a researcher who pieces together a “set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 4).

4.2 Methodological Approach

Consistent with the theoretical lens I adopted, and anchored within the practice theory perspective, I utilized Nicolini’s (2012) methodological ‘toolkit approach’ for this research project. I describe its broad movements of zooming-in to the practice, and zooming-out to other connected practices, and of capitalizing on the strengths of different practice-theory perspectives. Within this approach, I focus on the practice-theory orientation’s facet of ‘legitimacy and learning’ (p. 226), and present Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory as a theory that can be utilized to help understand how leadership is learned within a practice.

4.2.1 Nicolini’s (2012, 2017) Toolkit Approach

The general methodological framework I chose is one presented by Nicolini (2009, 2013, 2017). The author describes the practice theory approach to empirical research as a “patient, bottom-up effort of understanding practices and untangling their relationships” (p. 12). He proposes using what he calls a toolkit approach for the empirical study of practice, arguing that to mobilize the perspectives of the different theories of practice makes the outcomes of research more articulative. This is based on his recognition that the main goal of research is to “provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the world” (2012, p. 215). Nicolini (2009, 2012, 2017) proposes two basic movements in his toolkit approach:

- **Zooming-in** on the accomplishments of practice. By zooming-in, the researcher tries to make sense of the local accomplishment of the practice and other more or less distant activities. He calls this the situational approach to studying practices. The following second movement cannot be accomplished without first engaging in the ‘zooming-in’.

- **Zooming-out** to ascertain what the relationships among practices in space and time are. In this research project, I have followed what the author calls the ‘configurational strategy’ (p. 29), examining how situated practices (performances of a practice) are connected to others. By zooming out, I will avoid what Nicolini (2017) calls the problem of ‘localism’ (“reducing all phenomena to self-organizing local interactions” (p. 23).

Nicolini describes the zooming-in and -out as an iterative process; the researcher goes through different cycles of “observation, analysis and reflection” (2012, p. 238). Regarding when to stop zooming out, he proposes a sensible lower limit to be the researcher’s “capacity for providing a convincing explanation of why the practising (performance of a practice) is the way it is, and not otherwise, and to document how the local practice connects with non-local effects.” (p. 238).

Theory-method Package. Nicolini’s (2012) ‘tool kit’ approach, which he also calls a “theory-method package” (p. 218), calls for “switching between theoretical sensitivities” (p. 213) for the empirical study of practices. He proposes that researchers focus on different facets of practice using sensitizing concepts and questions which he developed based on his overview of the practice-theory field. Nicolini’s approach is consistent with Alvehus and Crevani’s call for ‘multimodal leadership studies’ (p. 231). Attending to all leadership modalities, however, would be extremely difficult. As stated by Orlikoski (2010), using a practice theory lens requires attending to certain aspects of social phenomena and putting others to the side. Moreover, as described by Charmaz (2005, p. 509), the aspects that a researcher focuses on are shaped by research interests, prior knowledge of different interpretive frames, the research context, the concrete field experience, and the methods used to generate and record material.

Based on my interest in researching the accomplishment and learning of leadership in a group of women students, I have focused on one main theoretical facet of practice, named ‘legitimacy and learning’ by Nicolini (2012, p. 226). The main tool used to analyze this facet is Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning, and more specifically its notion of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Keeping in mind Nicolini’s idea that a researcher should mobilize different facets of the practice-theory orientation, I have added to the situated learning theory by expanding certain of its dimensions and thus brought into service ideas from the ‘oriented and concerned nature’ of practice, the focus on ‘tools, artifacts and their mediation work’, and the ‘interactional order’ that is performed in a practice (Nicolini, 2012, p. 223). These additional dimensions are detailed in later sections.

Practice as Learning. I chose Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated learning, and specifically the concept of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ as one of the main conceptual tools to understand the accomplishment and learning of leadership within the practice. Situated learning, and LPP specifically, represent a process view of learning, characterized by a focus on temporality, change, and activity (Cloutier & Langley, 2020). Nonetheless where I found the theory to be incomplete or inadequate to explain certain issues, I complemented it with insights from other perspectives, thereby following Nicolini’s (2012) suggestion to use the strengths of different practice-theories and aim to make outcomes of research more articulative.

Lave and Wenger (1991) propose a theoretical perspective on learning developed from anthropological studies of apprenticeship. Moving from the view of learning as the internalization of knowledge within an individual, they understand learning as being an integral part of social practice, itself characterized by the "relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, learning, cognition and knowing" (p. 50). In fact, Although LPP is meant to be understood as an integral concept that cannot be divided into separate words, it is nonetheless helpful to know that 'participation' is defined as "the engagement in social practice" (p. 35). As for the associated word "legitimate', it refers to entry criteria that allow actors to be part of the practice, and "peripheral" refers to the different ways in which actors are "located in the field of participation as defined by the community" (p. 35) – it is thus possible to depict participation as being full or partial. LPP, as explained by the authors, "concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice" (p. 29).

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the concept of 'communities of practice' (CoPs) towards the end of their treatise, a concept they define as a "set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping CoPs" (p. 98). LPP occurs within and among communities of practice. It is within the system of relations that persons are faced with opportunities to change, to learn, and construct identities. This in turn is linked to the idea of membership, of moving towards full participation and meaning making through a person's own trajectory of participation. Within this project, I consider the term CoP, or 'social practice', to be equivalent to that of a 'practice' as I defined earlier.

Lave and Wenger (1991) put great emphasis on the idea of access to opportunities to engage in the practice – simply put, less engagement, less learning. Opportunities may depend on the social structure of the practice, internal power relations, and conditions for legitimacy. These in turn can have an effect on access to social relations, resources, and ongoing activity. As stated by the authors, "knowing is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities and it is located in relations among practitioners, their practice, the artifacts of that practice, and the social organization and political economy of the CoP" (p. 122).

As a quick note, I wish to underline that Lave and Wenger's (1991) original definition contrasts with later ideas developed by organizational scholars who understood CoPs as being tools to either manage learning and knowledge, "support and foster innovation and create value", or "defend the interests of and perpetuate control over domains of expertise" (Nicolini, Pyrko, Omidvar, & Spanellis 2022, p. 681). Cloutier and Langley (2020) note that the notion of CoPs became reified, and that the process view it exemplified through the original conception of "ongoing situated learning activity" (p. 4) was lost. Instead, they argue, it was 'redefined' as being an entity that could be described by using attributes to qualify it.

LPP has successfully been used as an analytical tool in empirical research, but some aspects of it remain under explored. For example, Eberle, Stegmann and Fischer (2014) investigated how social mechanisms could facilitate or hinder the participation of newcomers in student councils. They concluded that the idea of support structures - identified in workplace learning literature - added to the concept of LPP (which focuses more on individual pathways to participation) and that participation support structures (e.g., recruitment activities, accessibility to community knowledge) are linked to an increased level of participation in newcomers. Gardiner (2016) has used LPP to explore the entry of experienced novices into the railway industry, noting the lack of attention on the differences between novices and experienced newcomers in the situated learning literature. She concludes that "experienced newcomers undergo differing, more complex and contested legitimizing processes transitioning to full participation" (p. 114).

Konpaski, Jack and Hamilton (2015) successfully used LPP and the situated learning theory to investigate the ways in which family businesses ensure continuity and explain how LPP may span across several generations in a very specific shared social context. Butcher (2018) also found LPP helpful in investigating the learning trajectories of independent workers in shared workspaces (‘coworking’). The author highlights how, through the action of co-working, a space is created to construct meaning or purpose. He describes a “twofold situated learning process” (p. 341) where actors, through their everyday experience of co-working, appropriate the role of hosts. This in turn allows them to develop new skills in organizing and thus learn to be intentionally entrepreneurial.

4.3 Data Collection and Approaches to Analysis

Within the methodological framework I described above, I utilized specific methods to analyze and interpret the data I collected through observation, interviews and the study of artifacts. In the following sections I describe the data gathering tools and the approaches to data analysis that I adopted.

4.3.1 Data Gathering Tools

In coherence with Nicolini’s (2012) methodological orientation and Charmaz’ (2014) constructivist grounded theory methods, an ethnographic approach was used to gather data. As recommended and practiced by researchers engaged in the practice field (e.g., Nicolini, 2017; Salovaara, Savolainen, & Ropo, 2020), and the leadership-as-practice field (Alvehus & Crevani, 2022; Raelin, 2020) the researcher should be present in the field of action rather than relying only on interviews or other types of survey methods. However, interviews are also recognized as an important method of data collection in the field of ethnography (Coffey, 2018), and in the case of this study acted as valuable supplementary sources of data.

Observation of Meetings. I chose to study the activities of a student group focusing on ‘Women and Leadership’ because of my interest in student leadership, and of that of women students in particular. Access to the student group came about after a casual conversation with the Manager of Student Life of the school; he mentioned the existence of the group and suggested putting me in contact with the co-presidents. I emailed them to gauge the interest of the group in allowing me to observe their meetings over the school year and learn about leadership development. As the answer was positive, I completed all university ethical requirements before starting observations in the month of October of that year.

I took the role of observer/participant with the Executive Team, comprised of 13 young women, between the ages of 20 and 23, 10 of whom identified themselves as being part of a visible minority. The members were all undergraduate students at the business school and majoring in different disciplines including marketing, management, accounting, finance, and international business. The main data gathering tools included handwritten field notes - a method that remains a “key part of ethnographic practice” (Coffey, p. 5, 2018) - taken from the observation of ten hybrid meetings, over the duration of seven months during the COVID pandemic. Charmaz (2014, pp. 43-44) provides a helpful list of questions that I used to guide my initial observations; a sample of questions include:

- *What is happening in the setting? What are people doing? Which actions, experiences and events routinely occur within the setting?*
- *What hierarchies do you discern? Who has or takes control?*
- *What do different participants in the setting seek to accomplish?*
- *How are material resources involved?*

As I took notes, I used the method of 'bracketing' (Tufford & Newman, 2012) to separate my own feelings, assumptions, or reflections in brackets from what I considered to be purely descriptive (e.g. description of room, actions, events) or verbatim transcriptions of what was being said during the meetings. I transcribed the meeting field notes to the computer as soon as possible after the meeting. Personal reflections, thoughts or questions were further developed in memos. The notes and memos helped me develop questions, write down emerging ideas, and guided me in focusing my attention over time (Charmaz, 2014; Coffey, 2018; Tufford & Newman, 2012). I recognize that all my field notes were necessarily 'selective' and could not provide a complete record of the meetings (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001) because of both my inability to write about everything that was happening, the choice of words I used when taking notes, and the elements I chose to focus on.

In the hybrid meetings, potential data included all actions occurring in the physical meeting room and online (including the use of chats and emojis). Unfortunately, access to the digital data was sometimes hampered by technological problems. For example, connection to the WIFI was not always stable and I had problems twice connecting to internet; since I could not use my laptop, I shared with someone else. Members online often had their cameras off and those in the meeting room had their masks on, making the reading of their 'faces' sometimes impossible. There were also technical difficulties regarding sound, making it at times difficult to hear what people were saying. I must admit that my favourite meetings from a data recording point of view were the online only meetings. These were much easier to follow – I could see and hear everyone, members took turns talking, and there were no sub-groups talking amongst themselves, although a few online 'chats' occurred while others were speaking. I dealt with these challenges by speaking at the end of the meeting with the two co-presidents who were willing to answer any questions I had. Moreover, as I will detail later, the meetings almost always followed the same format which became familiar to me over time and helped me take notes despite technical difficulties. Lastly, the observation period did last over seven months which gave me the opportunity to take many notes over time.

Observation of Events. The group organized ten events over the observation period, all of them being online due to the COVID pandemic except for the final 'flagship' event when government health rules had been relaxed. There were four types of events: four bonding sessions for the team members; three 'mentorship' sessions for the executive team; two online workshops held for the whole student body, and the main flagship event, a paid event for all students and other guests. I observed all events except for the bonding sessions. Once again, I took hand notes during all the events which I later transcribed to the computer. Unfortunately, the events were not recorded.

Interviews. I interviewed 10 individuals who had consented to be interviewed out of a total of 13 group members; the interviews began three months after I had started observing the group and were held interspersed between the meetings, when members were available. By the time I started interviews, I had determined that I would use them to enhance my knowledge of the members' activities outside of the Executive Team meetings, to clarify actions that occurred during the meetings - including the use of tools and other artifacts - and to get a sense of the meaning members made of their activities. The interviews were open-ended; they included a set of common questions across interviews, but I kept the freedom to ask different questions in each interview (see Appendix 1). The types of questions depended on the answers the members themselves gave during the interview, on the latest meeting events I had observed, or on issues that had been mentioned in previous interviews. As explained by Charmaz (2014, p. 58-59), by using open-ended interviews I could combine flexibility and control over the interviews, allow "space for ideas and issues to arise", and give myself the possibility "for immediate follow-up on these ideas and issues".

In designing and carrying out the interviews, I followed Charmaz' (2014) guidelines regarding intensive interviews so as to gather rich data. Parts of the interviews were informational but otherwise were focused on the participants' understanding of their practice. While interviewing, I attempted to take into account the relative differences in power and status between myself and the students, and "take on the role of the interested learner" (Charmaz, p. 73). On average, interviews lasted one hour, they were all held online using ZOOM, transcribed by a software application called Happy Scribe, which although very helpful, often necessitated revisions.

Study of Artifacts. I took into consideration all artifacts that were utilized by the members of the group. All of these were documents that either pre-existed the group (i.e., were produced by previous group members), pre-existed the group but were modified in some way by members during their mandate, or were newly created by members during their mandate. They were all in a digital format and housed in a common shared folder. Not all artifacts were analyzed and those that were are described in the findings. Artifacts included the:

- Group's constitution
- Mission statement
- Meeting notes
- Survival guides
- Questions prepared by members for events – both for mentorship sessions and public /workshop events

4.4.1 Approaches to Data Analysis

Constructivist Grounded Theory Methods. In addition to Nicolini's (2012) high-level 'tool-kit approach' of zooming-in and -out, I also employed Charmaz' applied constructivist grounded theory methods to analyse and interpret the data that were collected (Charmaz, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2014). In the context of this research project, I did not have the goal of constructing theory, however, Charmaz' method is especially useful for analyzing actions and processes (Charmaz, 2014) – it is relevant for tapping into the processual nature of learning (or participating in a practice) and focuses on what is being done in situ over time. It involves the simultaneous collection of data and analysis, each informing the other throughout the research process. Charmaz (2014) describes it as being an "inductive, comparative, emergent and open-ended approach" (pp. 12-13).

Charmaz' (2014) tenet, that the researcher's final rendition of their work is never a mirror reflection of reality, it is rather a reflection of the researcher's interpretation of it. There is a link to be made with how practice theory views research and its renditions. Although Nicolini (2012) does not describe it as such, the third movement of the practice approach could be considered as the production of the textual rendition of practices. Gherardi (2009) explains that researchers in fact construct the social phenomena they have been studying when they represent it in a written format. This is the challenge in representing practices. The whole process of writing – indeed research itself - can itself be characterized as being a practice, itself worthy of inquiry. Similar to the idea of reflexivity, the researcher can take the 'research practice' into consideration.

Analysis of Interviews. Based on the interview transcripts, I engaged in "themeing the data" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 139). As per Saldaña's explanations, I considered that creating themes held an analytic function of helping to identify the meaning of a piece of data. According to the author, this process is appropriate to use when a researcher does not have predefined categories and wishes instead to let themes or categories emerge from the data. Saldaña defines a theme as being "a *phrase* or *sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it means" (emphasis in original, p. 39). Thus, I used themes as a way of organizing ideas that were repeated within and across interviews. I identified recurrent ideas and then named or "themed" those ideas. Having done so, I compared themes among interviews and further refined them. Further details are found in sections 5.2.2 and 5.4.1.

Analysis of Field Observations. Once I had field notes of several meetings, I started first-level coding. I decided to use "process coding" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 77). Saldaña explains that process codes connote action; actions can be directly observable or they can be what he describes as conceptual actions (e.g., encourage; suggest). The author explains that coding with gerunds is "appropriate for those searching for ongoing action and interaction taken in response to situations or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem" (p. 81). He also notes that searching for the consequence of action or interaction is also usually part of the process, and can include subprocesses such as "individual tactics, strategies, routine actions that make up the larger act" (p. 81). Both Saldaña (2009) and Charmaz (2014), propose that initial coding involve breaking down the data into discrete parts. Charmaz in fact recommends "nam[ing], each work, line or segment of data" (p. 113), and to move through the data quickly and spontaneously, comparing data items with other data items. Both authors insist on sticking closely to the data, remaining open, and remembering that initial codes are provisional.

Secondly, I engaged in what Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) describe as inductive coding, i.e., developing codes from the data. As discussed by Charmaz (2006), first-level coding involves creating codes to define action, elucidate implicit assumptions and identify processes. Once I had completed initial coding, I engaged in focused coding (or second level coding) which involves the creation of larger or major categories by comparing and choosing among the initial codes. I created higher order categories for the codes I interpreted as having a similar meaning for each meeting. Listing all the codes of one meeting under categories, I then compared categories across meetings and refined the categories to make them consistent with each other (Elliot, 2018). Further details are found in section 5.3.1.

Approach to the Study of Documents. I turned to Prior (2008) for indications on how to analyze documents. Writing from a qualitative research methods point of view, and in line with the practice view of materiality, Prior argues that "documents should not merely be regarded as containers for words, images, information, instructions, and so forth" (p. 822). Instead, she proposes that researchers move beyond analyses of content and look at the role documents play in social interaction. In particular, she stresses the importance of looking beyond the content to the function of documents in "episodes of human interaction" (p. 833).

Prior (2008) provides a table identifying existing approaches to study documents. As recommended by Prior, I analyzed meeting notes' use and function as a resource ("how documents are used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends" p. 825) before moving on to the analysis of their use and function as a topic ("how documents function in, and impact on, schemes of social interaction and social organization" p. 825). Further details are found in section 5.5.2.

4.4.2 Scientificity of the Study

The term 'scientificity' in qualitative research is discussed by Hegedus (2009), who frames it as a response to longstanding concerns about the legitimacy of non-quantitative inquiry within scientific traditions. Scientificity, in this sense, is tied to the "transparency, coherence, and reproducibility of the analytical process", including the explicit justification of interpretations (Hegedus, 2009, pp. 2910–2913). Following Hegedus' (2009) perspective, I refer to general criteria of goodness or quality for qualitative research, referring to Creswell and Poth (2018, pp. 48-50). As such, within my study there is alignment between theoretical framework, methodological approach and the use of methods; I followed rigorous data collection procedures including the gathering of multiple forms of data, gained detail about them, and spent approximately seven months in the 'field'; I detail both the methods I utilized and the analysis of the data; I analyzed the data using multiple levels of abstraction; I attempted to write in such a way that the reader could experience 'being there'; and I situated myself within the study to reflect my culture, gender, history, and experiences.

During my time in the field, collecting, analysing, and interpretating the data, I attempted to take into account my position as a researcher and reflect on how it affects my perspective and voice. I am a white, middle-class, middle-aged woman, having extensive work experience with students, faculty and administrative members within a university setting, and focusing more recently on managing change and continuous improvement. As such I have developed a sensitivity and interest for understanding processes and looking for ways to improve them.

I understand ethics in research as respecting participants and their data, protecting participants' well-being and ensuring that they are treated equitably and fairly at the different stages of the research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to beginning the study, I obtained ethics approval from the university (Appendix 2). At the beginning of the project, I contacted participants, informed them of the general purpose of the study, assured them that their participation was voluntary, and obtained written informed consent from all group members, one for the observations of the meetings, and a second one for interviews. I also offered to write a general report for the group about my findings that hopefully might contribute to their reflections about leadership. During data collection, I minimized disruptions to the group's activities and stored data in secure locations. Lastly, I have utilized fictitious names to respect the privacy of participants and avoided disclosing information that might identify individuals.

Chapter 5: Findings: Zooming-In

In this section I discuss the data I gathered and provide further details on how I analyzed and interpreted them within the framework of practice-theory perspective, and the theory of situated learning specifically. Having adopted an ethnographic approach, I first describe the field setting (Coffey, 2018) or the 'site' of the practice (Schatzki, 2002). I go on to describe the purpose of the practice, or in Lave and Wenger's (1991) words, the "concerned character of the thoughts and actions of persons-in-activity (p. 50). As suggested by Nicolini (2012), I then zoom-in or focus on the "saying and doings" to "make sense of the local accomplishment of the practice" (p. 219) and specifically that of the work of leadership. Lastly, I focus on the opportunities and limitations of actors to engage in the production of direction (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016) as explained through interrelations among group members, material arrangements, and the social structure of the practice.

5.1 The Research Setting

Sites, according to Schatzki (2002) are, in general, "*where* things exist and events happen" (p. 63, emphasis in original). Hällfren and Söderholm (2023) point out the importance of defining the concept of site when carrying out practice-oriented research and describe the research site as a "collective social arena for action" (p.107) where practice unfolds. I briefly describe both the immediate spatial-temporal location of my research site and the wider scene in which the site is located.

5.1.1 The Meetings

The research site consisted of weekly hybrid meetings of a student group, held within a meeting room (and online) in a business school during a period of seven months. The 'Women and Leadership' student group was part of a large sized business school in North America, located in the downtown part of a large multicultural city. The school itself has a culturally and racially diverse population of both students and professors, and offers undergraduate programs, research-based graduate programs and professional programs. An important part of its identity is the engagement of its students in student clubs at the undergraduate level.

The investigation took place during the COVID epidemic. All university business, including that of student associations and committees followed the directives of the university - reflecting those of the government - regarding in-person meetings, including the number of persons allowed in meeting rooms, rules about social distancing and the wearing of masks. The directives were in constant flux during the data gathering period. Over the course of the seven months, the committee's meetings were held in two different formats, i.e., hybrid or online meetings. When the hybrid option was offered, people attending in person met in one of the large meeting rooms of the business school building, surrounded by windows on two sides with a beautiful view of the city, furnished by a long table surrounded by chairs and a screen at the end of the room.

Figure 2. Meeting room

As per Coffey's (2018) remarks on ethnographic researchers who are new to a setting, I embraced my "methodological naivety" (p. 3), tried to take 'everything in' and observe without making any assumptions. When I first started my investigation, the group had been working together for a period of four months. The first meeting I attended in October was the first time the members had been able to meet in person.

> *As I entered the room people were joking and laughing, they asked me to sit right in the front and during the whole meeting the atmosphere was very friendly. People obviously liked each other a lot, were teasing each other, there were some inside jokes that I didn't get, obviously. The two co-presidents were sitting at the head of the table where they put me in between them. The rest of the members who were physically present were sitting at the other end of the table, in a cluster. There was a third cluster of online members. This was the first meeting in person, and the co-presidents were unable, or perhaps unprepared, to display the online members on the classroom screen. Basically, the online members could be seen on the screen of one of the co-president's laptop, Sophie. The online members could hear all in-person members but could only see Sophie. No other in-person members could see the screen but could hear the online members pretty well.*

Notes after meeting

The following meetings I attended included different number of members. The in-person option was always held in the same large room; several times only the co-presidents and I were physically present in the room – the other members being online. Other times, a few members joined us in person, and sometimes a large majority was physically present. A minority of meetings were held completely online, usually if the meeting had to be held on the weekend or early in the morning. In no meeting were all members physically present. The majority of meetings were scheduled in the evening during the week, for a duration of two hours; the schedule being designed to accommodate the agenda of the members. The meeting schedule also followed that of the school cycle – no meetings were scheduled around the time of mid-terms or final exams. I was to find out over time that the meeting attendance was due not only to university directives but also to the comfort level of members being physically present with other persons, their vaccination status, their personal study/work responsibilities and their geographical location. Many of the committee members were not only students but also engaged in full- or part-time work, internships and/or membership in other school committees; at one point when university classes were held online only, one member attended meetings from her home country.

The meetings I observed were those of the 'Executive Team'. The 13 members had different titles and roles within the team. In addition to the Executive Team, there were two other groups attached to the committee: the 'Ambassador Group', and the 'Collaborator Group' which I did not observe. The group was clearly structured around what were called 'departments' and each member had been assigned a title and role:

- Two co-presidents;
- One VP of Corporate Relations and one Director of Corporate Relations (CR Department);
- One VP Involvement and one Director of Involvement (Involvement Department);
- One VP Events and one Director Events (Events Department);
- One VP Marketing and one VP Design and one Director Marketing (Marketing Department);
- One VP Finance (Finance Department);
- One VP Internal (Internal Department).

My initial assumption before joining the group was that members would discuss how to develop their own leadership skills within their meetings and also help other students, particularly women, to do so. In fact, the meetings were operational, meant for the organization of events for both fellow students and the group itself. I came to qualify the meetings as a project-based setting (Packendorff, Crevani, & Lindgren, 2014). In other words, using Schatzki's (2002) explanation of the concept of 'site', the study of the phenomenon of leadership would take place within "the articulated phenomenon […] of which it is intrinsically a part" (p. 64), i.e. the organization of events.

5.1.2 The Events

I had the opportunity to attend all events except for one, which was held the month before I joined the group. Mentorship sessions were hosted and organized by the VP Internal and involved inviting women working in leadership roles to talk about their study and career paths. These were considered to be a perk to the executive team members because the sessions were closed to non-members. They were all held online and allowed participants to personally ask questions regarding the invitee's occupational field, employment opportunities that might exist for them and other tips to advance their own career.

The public online workshops were developed, organized and co-hosted with other business school student committees. Themes included negotiation and imposter syndrome respectively and followed the format of presentations and activities followed by Q&A sessions, and online networking. The final event, the flagship, was organized by the Women in Leadership committee alone and was held in person because COVID restrictions had been relaxed. This was a day-long catered event held in a local hotel. It included two parts: a panel about navigating conflict resolution in the morning, and a 'leadership in action' panel in the afternoon. Both panels were facilitated by invitees and involved Q&A sessions and in-person networking opportunities.

5.2 The Practice and its Purpose

In this section, I will discuss the importance of the concept of 'purpose' as it relates to the practice-theory perspective, and the theory of situated learning. I describe the purpose of the group based on data gathered from the observation of events, the study of artifacts and the analysis of interviews.

5.2.1 The Importance of Purpose

Writing about the oriented and concerned facet of practice-theory, Nicolini (2012) points to Heideggerian thought where "to practise means to care, or to take care of something" (p. 224). Practices, therefore, are always directed towards an objective or goal and they are performed to accomplish "the meaning and direction that they carry" (p. 224). Similarly, in the theory of situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize "the interested or concerned character of the thoughts and action of persons-in-activity" (p. 50). For the authors, the nature of the learning activity is "engaged, dilemma-driven" (p. 33). In contrast, in much of the leadership management literature, sense of purpose is something the leader communicates. For example, in the theory of transformational leadership the individual leader influences the performance of followers through the communication of a vision that serves to motivate employees and align their efforts (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011). In the practice-theory perspective and the situated learning theory, purpose is a characteristic or facet of the practice and its activities, and engagement in the practice cannot be disassociated from learning.

As proposed by Nicolini (2012), researchers can zoom-in to the practice to bring "forward and [articulate] the lived directionality and telos of the practice" (p. 224). He suggests that researchers investigate 'what matters to the actors', 'what they care about' and 'what they understand as being the main object of their activity' (p. 224). I explored these ideas both by observing events, studying related artifacts, and carrying out semi-structured interviews with participants.

5.2.2 The Purpose of the Practice

In the interviews I included questions about members' understanding of the practice (e.g. 'Could you please describe in your own words what you feel your group is about'). Having transcribed all interviews, I engaged in "themeing the data" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 139), as explained in the section above. I identified recurrent ideas related to how interviewees understood the purpose of their group and then named or "themed" those ideas. Having done so, I compared themes among interviews and further refined them. Below is an excerpt of an interview that includes examples of themes I identified.

<u>Excerpt from the interview with Claire</u>:

[I: From your point of view, what really is the purpose of the group, what are you trying to achieve?]

So, the discussion, I mean, gender equality. And if we're talking about equity in the workplace, it's not just for women and it's not just for men. It's a human right for everyone. Right. And so, I would say that's like, point 1 of what we want to do is just have that open conversation[1].	[1]Providing a space to discuss gender inequality in the workplace
On the other hand, it's allowing students also to get the experience from leaders in the industry that have gone through that process, that have seen the challenges[2] so that they can share their	[2]Providing exposure to role-models [3]Sharing stories

experiences with the [School's] body and hopefully learn from them[3] *and potentially have mentors that would guide them throughout their career*[4]	[4]Connecting students with leaders

After comparing themes among interviews, I identified the following main themes related to the idea of purpose:

I. Educating students about gender inequality in the workplace

   a. Providing facts about gender inequality

   b. Sharing stories about experience with inequality

   c. Providing a space for discussion about inequalities

   d. Identifying gender-related challenges in the workplace

II. Helping women students 'rise through the ranks'

   a. Providing exposure to role models

   b. Giving tools to help students overcome gender-related challenges

   c. Connecting students with business leaders

   d. Informing students about pathways to leadership positions

As described by Lea,

> *"So, our team, our committee, our main goals for I guess this year and the following years, is to have the student body be aware of gender issues, but also how to circumvent those issues. So how could they overcome some of the challenges they may face, specifically in the workforce because that's where 70% of your life is at work. So, we need to be able to adapt and to foresee some of these issues. […] To clarify, it's also to get promoted and to not just survive, but achieve those leadership roles, enter a more male dominated field."* (Lea, interview)

The themes that emerged are very much interconnected. Through educational activities such as workshops and panels, the group raises awareness of gender inequalities; these events are safe spaces to discuss issues, and the event and activities themselves are presented in the format of story sharing. Those who are sharing their experiences are people (mainly women) who have themselves risen through the ranks, have encountered obstacles and have learned lessons they can share. These personal stories and lessons provide concrete examples of what is possible. The lessons also include practical tips that students may use to overcome situations of gender inequality and accomplish their own career-oriented goals. Not all careers need culminate into official leadership positions, but there is an emphasis on those trajectories.

Claire explains:

"So having a group that really is open and opens the floor for both men and women to kind of come in a safe space and be able to have those discussions that might seem taboo, it's not something that we shy away from. On the other hand, it's allowing students also to get the experience from leaders in the industry that have gone through that process, that have seen the challenges so that they can share their experiences with the business school body and hopefully learn from them and potentially have mentors that would guide them throughout their career."

Questions prepared by the group members and posed during events also illustrate interest and concerns of the members. Each event was different and had a different focus and audience. The mentorship sessions, as explained above, were specifically organized for the executive team members. As explained to me by the VP Internal who coordinated these sessions, members would send in advance the types of issues they would like the invitee to address and specific example of questions that should be asked. In a few cases, members would ask follow-up questions during the sessions, but these were few and far between. For the three mentorship sessions, questions generally fell into three categories: 1) questions about educational pathway (e.g., Why did you choose to major in marketing in university? ; What aspects of the major interested you the most?); 2) questions about careers (e.g., Have you faced any challenges in your career because of your gender?; What do you like the most about your position at X and what keeps you motivated?), and 3) tips for students (e.g., Do you have any advice for students who are about to graduate?; What would you say to your younger self today?). The questions were similar across sessions but varied somewhat according to the background of the invitee.

As for the public events, the VP Events explained that she and the Director of Events had 'creative control' over the choice of topics; they chose topics that were personally important to them - linked to women and careers - and received feedback from the group on their ideas. Similarly, questions prepared for the events were discussed using collaborative communication tools (e.g., Slack) to which I did not have access. Nonetheless, I was present at the events, noted the questions and had access to the written list of questions. During all three public events, questions were very pragmatic. For the event 'Negotiate to Level Up', examples of questions included: *How do you know what a fair starting salary is? What is the first step when it comes to negotiating?* For the event 'Imposter Syndrome', examples include: *What are tips and tricks that you recommend for people who experience it? Are there moments in time when imposter syndrome typically occurs in your career?* Lastly, for the flagship event, examples of questions are: *What proactive steps can leaders take to minimize risk and avoid conflict? Many studies have found that, despite the fact that women hold the majority of bachelor's degrees in Canada, they make up a small percentage of corporate executives and have less opportunities in leadership. How have you overcome these odds and what advice could you give to aspiring leaders?* All event questions can be found in Appendix 3.

Both interview and event questions emphasize group members' concerns about the passage from education to employment, pathways to leadership positions in a business world where gender discrimination exists, and the identification of issues that might obstruct those pathways. Using Lave and Wenger's (1991) words, these illustrate the "concerned character of the *thoughts* […] of persons-in-activity" (pp. 50-51). As for the "concerned character of the […] *actions* of persons-in-activity" (pp. 50-51) it has taken the form of events the team organizes to help address the issues about which they are concerned. The purpose of the thoughts and activities of the practice is to educate the student population about the existence of gender discrimination and to help women attain leadership roles. Understanding the purpose of a practice is an important key to be able to 're-present' the practice and explain why leadership is performed in the way it is. It also contributes to describe the trajectories of participation and identities of members, as explained in later sections.

5.3 Leadership in the Practice

In this section, I zoom in to the accomplishment of the practice, describing the 'sayings and doings' of the members of the practice, as gathered through observations of the group meetings. I focus on how leadership is performed within the executive team meetings specifically and categorize leadership actions utilizing and adding to Yukl's (2012) Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors. Finally, I discuss the particularities of leadership sayings and doings within the practice of event organization.

5.3.1 The 'Sayings and Doings' of Leadership

Because practices only exist to the degree that they are performed, Nicolini (2012) argues that the first steps of inquiry must focus on the “mundane activities at hand” (p. 221). He advocates using approaches developed by the fields of ethnography, micro-ethnography and ethno-methodology to capture and communicate the activities that go into any practice, so as to ‘re-present’ the practice (p. 221). To “make sense of the local accomplishment of the practice” (p. 219), Nicolini suggests that researchers use sensitizing questions such as: *What are people doing and saying? How do the patterns of doing and saying flow in time? What temporal sequences do they conjure?* (p. 220). This also aligns with Charmaz’ (2006) recommendations to pay attention “to actions, processes as well as to words” (p. 221) when carrying out field observations. While observing the meetings, I took notes about the ‘sayings and doings’. In this setting, these mostly consisted of team members interacting verbally, and in written (chats and use of emojis).

The Executive Team meetings were operational meetings, related to the organization of the events held by the group. A typical meeting would start with chit-chat among those present, waiting for late comers to arrive. The co-presidents, who co-chaired the meetings, would then start the official meeting by asking everyone how they were and sharing their general remarks. The co-chairs facilitated the meetings using what they called ‘meeting notes’, which I interpreted as being the meeting agenda. The members, usually in pairs and representing their ‘departments’ (e.g., Marketing department, Events department) would be asked to update the rest of the group about any actions taken regarding their tasks and projects. Notes were taken by the co-presidents about actions taken – explaining the official title of ‘meeting notes’. Each meeting ended with a group selfie organized around a theme (e.g., the colour red, like Taylor Swift’s album) when members would reveal a theme-related object.

Having established that meetings were about the organization of events it became clear that the phenomenon of leadership needed to be understood within the context of event organization. I started focusing on the performance of leadership. As mentioned earlier, I decentralized leadership from specific individuals and embraced the idea that the production of direction may involve the 'sayings and doings' of several people. Crevani and Endrissat (2016), when writing about the leadership-as-practice approach, describe the unit of analysis as being "bundles of related actions" (p. 31) which may be routinized and recurrent. The authors emphasise the importance of studying "everyday activity, performances, and interactions" (p. 31) that are not centered on the behaviour of one person, that are social and interactional in nature, involve a number of persons and that provide direction to organizing. It is in this sense that leadership may be understood as being the "collective agency in changing and setting courses of action" (p. 42).

Initial Coding. As explained above, due to the hybrid nature of the meetings, observations of meetings were recorded using detailed field notes. Rather than focus on fine-grained details, the field notes allowed me to record routine sayings and doings and identify high-level shifts in topics and directions of conversation, and cases of decision-making. I felt that these could indicate when courses of action were being set, or direction produced within the meetings. Once I had field notes of several meetings, I started first-level coding as described in the methods section.

I followed Charmaz' (2014) recommendation and engaged in line-by-line coding, which she describes as a "heuristic device to bring the researcher in the data, interact with them and study each fragment of them" p. (121). I therefore added codes at the end of sentences within the field notes themselves. Example of first level of coding, with codes highlighted in grey:

Lea added that her group was going to be doing reviews of the January 10 event, [reporting on future action] that she would set up a deadline for those reviews and put the reviews up on the main page once Sophie and Kayla had looked at them and approved them [giving tasks to co-presidents – chain of action – following rules of responsibility]. Lea also wanted to use Facebook live [sharing idea] and asked the group what their opinion about it was [asking for feedback]. Sophie said she should try it [encouraging - autonomy – trying new things]. Renata said the content could be uploaded to Instagram since most people go to Instagram [giving suggestion] and Lea said that was a good idea [acknowledging input].

Excerpt of field notes, meeting January 3, 2022

At this point in time, I was engaged in what Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) describe as inductive coding, i.e., developing codes from the data. As discussed by Charmaz (2006), first-level coding involves creating codes to define action, elucidate implicit assumptions and identify processes. Already at this level of coding, I was interpreting to some extent the intent of the sayings; when I coded, I could sometimes see immediate outcomes of the saying (as in the example above) but I found that in many cases, there were no explicit outcomes, or later found out that issues discussed were either dropped or resolved outside of the meetings I observed. This made what Saldaña (p. 77, 2009) called searching "for the consequence of action or interaction" within process coding challenging.

Second Cycle or Focused Coding. Once I had completed initial coding, I engaged in focused coding, which involves the creation of larger or major categories by comparing and choosing among the initial codes. One technical issue I faced was how to compare codes within and across meetings.

As I am going over the field notes of my observations, putting text into one column and initial codes in a second column, I am wondering whether I create categories from codes for each meeting, and then compare categories across meetings. Instead, I could print out all Excel files and look across meetings to create categories out of codes across meetings. Not sure where I can find information about this….will have to figure it out myself. Maybe I will need to do it both ways and see if there are significant differences. Although it will be hard to keep an open-mind once I've done it one way, or have fresh eyes.

Memo

In the end, given the fact that the data did belong to specific meetings and 'hung' together, I decided to compare codes within each meeting. I created higher order categories for the codes I interpreted as having a similar meaning for each meeting. As described by Elliot (2018), coding was an iterative process for me; as I became more familiar with the data, I returned to earlier data and edited the codes accordingly and in some cases recombined them into new categories. Listing all the codes of one meeting under categories, I then compared categories across meetings and refined the categories to make them consistent with each other (Elliot, 2018). The list of categories I ended up with at this stage in time are the following:

- Anticipating problems
- Assisting
- Brainstorming
- Caring
- Clarifying
- Deciding

- Directing
- Encouraging
- Giving feedback
- Influencing
- Modeling behaviour
- Organizing
- Orienting
- Praising
- Providing vision
- Reporting
- Seeking guidance
- Sharing information

Rather than create a table of all the codes that belong to each category, I illustrate the categories by means of excerpts from meeting field notes, the only way I feel they make sense.

- Excerpt 1 from field notes.

Examples of categories: caring; clarifying; directing; giving feedback; reporting.

The team members started with a summary of the work they had done on their dossiers [reporting], one by one with feedback from S & K, sometimes from others [giving feedback]. A started with her comments. N. mentioned the difficulty in getting in touch with a [the Faculty Student Association] person, [reporting] "I've cracked the [Faculty Student Association] problem" (she had figured out who to contact, on what day and at what time and with what email address [orienting]). A checked in on the online members to see if they were ok [caring]. S went over important dates [clarifying], asked if team members planned on attending an event *[organizing] and telling them to "skip class if you have to" [directing], Flagship will be all day on campus.[clarifying]*

- Excerpt 2 from field notes.

  Examples of categories: anticipating problems; brainstorming; caring; modeling behaviour; organizing

S & K describe what they did last year (for an online student event they had organized): they gave a gift card if participants provided feedback about the event [modeling behaviour]. S & K tease each other in a nice way [caring]. Both take the lead in the meeting. Now S does the rounds. She talks about problems with panel events, and how they don't want participants to ask questions that get off topic [anticipating problems]; to have some control over the questions, they will plant ambassadors in the audience with pre-prepared questions [organizing]. There is then discussion about the funding of events, with a back and forth of ideas between S and other members [brainstorming]; after a few minutes K states "that's up to you guys" about the decision. [decision making].

- Excerpt 3 from field notes.

  Examples of categories: caring; decision making; giving feedback; offering assistance; organizing; praising; seeking guidance.

There is then talk about charity day, M. will go ahead with the idea of donating coats [decision making]; this is followed by talk about the logistics of this (transportation), which is discussed among a sub-group of volunteers. [organizing]. Next, it's the turn of the Involvement department: L. is online – others wave at her, send her little hearts [caring], there are claps (in-person and online) as well as thumbs up [praising] about the latest online event D. organized. D *asks the co-presidents if she should put up posts of positive feedback about the event, [seeking guidance]; they decide it's too biased, the reviews have to be objective, and they decide to ask participants to note what needs to be improved. [decision making]. A. talks about the ambassadors; she's not sure how the recruitment event went, others encourage her, telling her it wasn't awkward (as she felt) [praising]. M. explained she received feedback from a friend who went and thought that A. was really nice [giving feedback]. K. asked if she wanted help with the interviews [offering assistance]; A. said she'd figure it out with L.*

- Excerpt 4 from field notes.

  Examples of categories: influencing; modeling behaviour; providing vision; sharing information.

K. lets the group know they have 15 tickets sold and have 82 left.[sharing information] "We want to have a sold-out event like last year."[providing vision] She makes a plea to the group to invite people, and repeats her plea several times [influencing]. S. mentions she sent an invite to anybody she has on her Messenger list [modeling behaviour]. Someone mentions sending invitations to CASA reps because they tend to go to events in groups.[sharing information]

Since the purpose of coding and categorizing was to identify the ways in which the 'sayings and doings' were contributing to the production of direction – if at all - rather than only resting on my own interpretation, I turned to the leadership literature to compare my codes with known concepts or theories to finalize the second cycle coding (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). In the leadership-as-practice literature, Raelin (2016) describes leadership as a "collaborative agency mobilized through engaged social interaction" (p. 131) and advances the idea of a set of four activities (1, 2, 3, 4) that would be characteristic of L-A-P and that are not attached to any individual, and a further three that are activities from the affective dimension that supports members of a team as a whole in its efforts (5, 6, 7) (p. 141).

1. *Scanning: Identifying resources, such as information or technology that can contribute to new or existing programs. (…)*
2. *Signaling: Mobilizing and catalyzing the attention of other actors to a particular program of action or a project. (…)*
3. *Weaving: Creating webs of interaction across existing and new networks to document and mobilize mutual activities building trust and a sense of shared meaning. (…)*
4. *Stabilizing: Offering feedback to the program of action to converge activity and evaluate effectiveness, leading, in turn, to structural and behavioral changes and learning.*
5. *Inviting: Making sure that everyone who wishes to has had a chance to contribute to the program of action, no matter their alignment with previous agreements and no matter the ambiguity their contribution may bring.*
6. *Unleashing: Encouraging those who have held back to participate through their ideas, their energy, and their humanity without fear of repercussion.*
7. *Reflecting: Pondering among self and others the meaning of past, current, and future experience in order to learn how to meet mutual needs and interests more effectively*

However, as far as I know, no empirical study has used Raelin's (2016) proposed activities. The author also seems to be describing leadership-as-practice as a style of leadership whereas I am using the practice perspective to study the phenomenon of leadership (understood as a set of sayings and doings situated within the practice of event-planning). I turned to Yukl (2012) who created a well-known and often cited taxonomy of effective leader behaviours based on previous extensive factor analyses that he and his colleagues carried out. Following the individual leader-centric tradition, Yukl defines leadership in organizations as “influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 66.). He presents four hierarchical meta-categories in the taxonomy, classifying types of behaviours that formal leaders engage in when working at the team, work-unit or organizational level. The underlying assumption of Yukl’s work, although never stated, is that the purpose of effective leadership behaviour is to benefit the organization – not the team members themselves, society, or other stakeholders.

Table 1 Adapted Version of Yukl's (2012) Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors

Meta-categories	Categories	Examples
Task-oriented	Clarifying Ensuring people understand what to do, how to do it, and the expected results.	• explaining work responsibilities • assigning tasks • communicating objectives, priorities and deadlines • setting performance standards • explaining any relevant rules, policies, and standard procedures
	Planning	• identifying essential action steps • determining an appropriate sequence and schedule for steps • deciding who should do each action step • determining what supplies, equipment, and other resources are necessary
	Monitoring Operations Assessing whether people are carrying out the assigned tasks, the work is progressing as planned, and tasks are being performed adequately	• Gathering information to o identify problems and opportunities o determine if changes are needed in plans and procedures
	Problem Solving Dealing with disruptions of normal operations and member behaviours	• distinction between operational problems and complex problems
Relations-oriented	Supporting Showing positive regards, building cooperative relations and helping people with stressful situations	• showing concern for the needs and feelings of individual team members; • listening carefully when a member is worried or upset; • expressing confidence that someone can perform a difficult task • encouraging cooperation and mutual trust • mediating conflicts
	Developing	• providing helpful career advice;

Meta-categories	Categories	Examples
	Increasing the skills and confidence of work-unit members and facilitating their career advancement.	• informing about relevant training opportunities; • making assignments that allow learning from experience • providing developmental coaching when it is needed • asking a group member to provide instruction to a new member • providing opportunities to apply new skills on the job
	Recognizing Using praise and other forms of recognition to show appreciation to others for effective performance, significant achievements, and important contributions to the team of organization	
	Empowering Giving more autonomy and influence over decisions about their work to subordinates.	• Consultation: asking people about their ideas and suggestions and taking them into consideration when making a decision • Delegating: giving individual or group authority to make decisions formerly made by leader
Change-oriented	Advocating change	• provide information about better performance in similar work units or competitors; • explain undesirable outcomes likely to occur if emerging problems are ignored; • increasing awareness of problems without creating excessive level of distress; • reframing unfavorable events as opportunities
	Envisioning change	• articulating clear appealing vision of what can be attained
	Encouraging innovation	• providing intellectual stimulation; • encouraging innovative thinking; • encourage members to look at problems from different perspectives, • think outside the box when solving problems; experiment with new ideas; • find ideas in other fields that can be applied to their current problem or tasks
	Facilitating collective learning	• improvement of current strategies and work methods, or discovery of new ones; • support internal activities used to discover new knowledge • support activities to acquire new knowledge from external sources. • Use practices that facilitate learning
External	Networking Building and maintaining favorable relationships with peers, superiors, and outsiders who can provide information, resources, and political support.	• attending meetings, professional conferences, ceremonies; • joining relevant associations, clubs, social networks, • socializing informally, • using relationship-building tactics, • encouraging relevant networking by subordinates
	External monitoring Analyzing information about relevant events and changes in the external environment and	• studying relevant publications and reports, • conducting market research; • studying decisions and actions of competitors and opponents;

Meta-categories	Categories	Examples
	identifying threats and opportunities for the group	• environmental scanning
	Representing Representing the team in transactions with superiors, peers, and outsiders	• lobbying for resources and assistance, • promoting and defending the reputation of the team, • negotiating agreements, • coordinating related activities

Note. Adapted from " Contingency theories of effective leadership " by Yukl, G., 2011, The Sage Handbook of Leadership, p. 68, by the Academy of Management. Adapted with permission.

In the case of this research project, I was not trying to qualify the effectiveness of an action or behaviour, only interpretating whether I felt it was part of the 'production of direction'. In his article, Yukl (2012) gives examples of behaviours for each category (except for 'Recognizing'), and I compared both examples and categories with those that had emerged from my analysis. In general, I felt that there was a resemblance, especially for the task-oriented and relations-oriented meta-categories. There was little or no evidence of Change-oriented or External actions in the Executive Team meetings (except for one example of Envisioning Change and one of Representing). This was not surprising as Yukl's categories are hierarchical and those actions/behaviours in the Change-oriented or External meta-categories would usually be found in more complex practices than the one I observed. In individual leader-centric research, leadership behaviours are understood as belonging to a formal leader and as producing one-way actions that do not take into account the context, including the responses of the so-called subordinates or followers. This was problematic as some of Yukl's categories are considered to be behaviours of individuals typically holding a formal managerial role. I felt that the categories called "Monitoring" and "Developing" would be better called "Getting on the same page" and "Expanding" respectively; as such actions could be performed by any members of the team. The explanation Yukl gives for the 'empowering' category is unidirectional, I therefore decided to modify it to "Empowering each other" instead. This is similar to the explanation given to the

“Clarifying” category. I included in my analysis behaviours that reflected both giving and requesting clarifications.

The following is a table comparing my categories to two of Yukl’s (2012) categories:

Table 2. Comparison of categories

Yukl meta-category	Yukl categories	Proposed modifications	The coded categories
Task-related	Clarifying		Clarifying
			Directing
			Reporting
			Giving feedback
			Seeking Guidance
	Monitoring	Getting on the same page	Sharing information
	Planning		Deciding
			Anticipating problems
			Organizing
Relations-oriented	Supporting		Encouraging
			Caring
	Recognizing		Praising
	Empowering	Empowering each other	Brainstorming Orienting
	Developing	Expanding	Offering assistance

The categories above reflect the ‘sayings and doings’ of the team members across various meetings and amalgamated through the coding process to represent types of actions that are part of leadership work across the seven months of observation. Such actions - always part of social interactions among team members - often included a combination of both task-related and relations-related types of actions. When decentralizing leadership from specific individuals and accepting that leadership within a practice may involve several actors, Yukl’s examples of behaviours can be re-interpreted as representing actions all team members may engage in, and that contribute to the performance of leadership. I conclude with the following categories describing leadership actions that I observed: clarifying, getting on the same page, planning, supporting, recognizing, empowering each other, and expanding.

Although not a perfect match to Yukl's (2012) Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors, the codes and categories that did emerge do hold a resemblance. Because Yukl's behaviours are based on a unidirectional understanding of influence, it becomes necessary to understand that behaviours (or sayings and doings) may potentially be enacted by any member of the team and therefore needed to be renamed to reflect this.

5.3.2 Leadership in the Practice of Event Organization

Following the tenets of qualitative research and ethnographic based methods, it is important to re-emphasize that the observed leadership actions were situated within the setting of the practice. Having established that the actions of the members of the practice resembled those identified by Yukl (2012) and were part of interactions among the members of the practice, it becomes important to fully situate those leadership sayings and doings within the practice of event organizing.

Larsson and Meier (2023) described the focus of several studies in the field of 'leadership in interaction' as being on types of actions rather than on roles, allowing the "possibility of exploring the extent to which given actions are both distributed and collaboratively produced" (p. 31). Furthermore, the authors note that moving away from categories of decontextualized actions and focusing on their situatedness can allow researchers to examine how leadership is built out of the details of the particular setting, "with contributions being dependent on what the current, unfolding situation offers" (p. 29). Within the context of the observed practice, actions that were identified and categorized included those that I interpreted as contributing to the setting of courses of action. It becomes difficult to identify simple chains of cause and effect, both because actions may be accomplishing several things at the same time, and because of the characteristics of event organization itself. Event organization can be compared to the field of project management, reflecting the importance of how aspects of the practice evolve over time. The practice I observed was characterized by cycles of actions necessary for the organization of each event, the cycles themselves re-occurring at least 4 times over a seven-months period reflecting the number of events that were organized by the group.

Situated within the 'project-as-practice literature', Salovaara et al. (2020) point to the importance of situatedness and the idea of the 'moment' at which members of a project undertake actions. The researchers refer to play ontology (e.g. the play of fire, waves and light) to describe back and forth movements that can be used as a tool for researchers to grasp project issues in a time continuum. Projects as *becoming* are characterized by micro-activities that are project-relevant because understood as being "back-and-forth movements" (p. 50). As explained by Salovaara and his colleagues, many issues in projects are not solved immediately, become subject of re-consideration, and are repeated. To illustrate topics that were re-considered, I provide examples of interactions I observed over several meetings.

Example A.

Dealing with the uncertainty of whether their main event would be held online or in person because of the COVID epidemic, the VP Finance, N., is seeking clarity about the group's budget. According to the business school's umbrella student association, committees are non-for-profit groups that cannot have any budget surpluses at the end of the fiscal year. There are obvious differences in the costs related to online events versus in-person events and the group is at risk of having a budget surplus if their main event is held online. In this particular meeting, one of the co-presidents is absent.

> *Sophie then moves to finance* (the department) *and Nimra talks about the adjustments to the budget, wants to know by what date she needs to make them* (she is in fact referring to the date by which a decision will be made about holding the event online or in person) . *Sophie answers that she doesn't have the answer because she didn't talk to Kayla all week. Nimra talks about [*Central Student Association*], the issue of profit and the importance of spending their money. Nimra says to the Events' department and Catalina in particular that they would have enough money to pay a premium on a last-minute venue* (re: reserving a hotel conference center for an in-person version of their Flagship event*) – "Don't lose hope" she says, smiling to Catalina. There is then some brainstorming about how to spend the excess money, similar to the last meeting. Ayleen asks about having a raffle, Nimra talks about cool giveaways that could be shipped directly to attendees' houses. Sophie says it's a good problem to have.*

The above example illustrates ongoing interactions about the issue of avoiding profits and ways to spend the team's money; these interactions take place over a series of meetings. In the end, COVID restrictions were lifted, and the team was able to hold their final event in a hotel venue, including the creation of a giftbag for all attendees, thus spending all the money they had made through sponsor contributions and ticket sales. The 'sayings and doings' of each meeting did not always lead directly to setting a course of action because there was still uncertainty about regulations regarding the pandemic, and the budgetary implications associated with the context. In fact, the decision to create giftbags was a relatively last minute one, once different elements fell into place, i.e., COVID restrictions lifted, the venue secured, the sponsor contributions finalized, and the ticket sales calculated. Did the sayings contribute to providing direction to the organization of their event? They addressed immediate issues within the time continuum of a project. If one considers a project as *becoming* (Salovaara et al., 2020), some issues discussed may become irrelevant as time unfolds, as illustrated in the example above.

Like the above example, the following example illustrates how members anticipate problems by dealing with uncertainty and being prepared for different eventualities. They are also able to come to a decision considering one of the elements that needs to be organized for the upcoming event.

Example B.

At the time of the January 24 meeting, the government and university were still implementing restrictions related to the COVID pandemic in terms of meetings. There was uncertainty as to whether the group's final Flagship event would be held in person or online. With the hope that the event would be in person, the co-presidents had nonetheless suggested that the Events department (Mia and Catalina) prepare a plan B for an online version of the event. In this meeting Mia goes over the logistical details of their plan.

> *Mia pulls up her screen to show Plan B for the Flagship event, mentions something Catalina said, goes through the plan, talks about how she and Catalina decided something and says she needs to talk with Nimra about the budget. Kayla has a question about logistics which Mia answers. Nimra raises her hand; she has a comment on the cap for ticket sales. Sophie wants to know about whether participants should give a deposit. Catalina raises her hand and speaks about an example of an event she attended that involved refunds. There are positive reactions from Nimra and Sophie to Catalina's example. Nimra is not sure about the process of refunding people and gives an example*

of when it did not go well, making light fun of another group. (...). There is back-and-forth about processing fees and refunds of tickets, and a decision is made to not refund people. Nimra and Sophie decide on a $10 deposit that is non-refundable.

In the above example, the members described courses of action identified for a possible on-line scenario. Although the scenario never took place, their actions can be interpreted as that of providing direction to the organization of their event; they anticipated and prepared for different eventualities, once again acting within the time continuum of a project (Salovaara et al., 2020) whereby the eventuality of an online event became irrelevant as the regulations related to COVID changed.

Even though projects should be understood as flowing in time, it remains of course possible for members to set courses of action that do not need to be changed. The decision made about deposits for event participation illustrated in the example above did not change as circumstances did not compel such a change. Explaining that the organization of actions is a core aspect of leadership, Larsson and Meier (2023) argue that decision making is an important process regarding how "actions are shaped, and commitments mustered in interaction" (p. 34). The actions arising though interactions can also be understood as being part of micro-processes that make sense to actors in the specific moment, deriving meaning from the phase of the project(s), within the practice of event organizing (Salovaara, et al., 2020). Packendorf et al. (2014) remark on the importance of rhythm in the analysis of project leadership work. They argue that the formation of rhythms of action may implicate both formal deadlines of the project and "varying senses of urgency or relief as the process proceeds and issues emerge and disappear" (p. 9). Considering the ideas of situatedness in the practice of project/event management, and of sense of urgency regarding emergent issues, the 'doings' of the group regarding budget matters, venue reservation, and ticket refunds can be analysed as being part of leadership work, targeted at solving issues of the moment, and contributing to directing the organization of events.

In many cases, however, it was unclear to me whether a course of action was set. The social interactions often generated ideas about potential courses of actions when facing a problem, but if one was chosen (if any) is unknown to me. In many cases, I was unable to verify that the sayings and doings of the members led to the implementation of actions. This was because much of the actual work was done by the team members outside of the meeting setting. Blomquist, Hällgren, Nilsson and Söderholm (2010) provide an interesting avenue for reflection. Considering a process-oriented approach to the study of projects, the authors state that actions within the context of a project "are driven by [built in] mechanisms and accountability" (p. 12). In the case of the events studied in this research project, although I found no official trace of formal outputs of accountability (as for example monetary rewards, or loss of employment in the case of lack of action), it could be said that the public nature of the events acted as a type of accountability mechanism for the team members. Accountability could also be linked to the purpose of the practice and the engagement of its members. Given the successful delivery of the events, I can conclude that issues were resolved, and actions were implemented. Accountability may have had a role to play in the success and could be a concept used to explain the gap between what happened in the meetings and the delivery of the events.

As discussed above, one cannot write about the sayings and doings of leadership without situating them within their specific context. In the practice of event organization, the continuity of organizing projects over time becomes especially important to consider when explaining how actions may or may not contribute to providing direction. Once the leadership activities taking place in the executive meetings described, it now becomes possible to start exploring the members' field of participation, the opportunities offered to members to engage in leadership actions and consequently learn about leadership.

5.4 The Practice's Field of Participation

In the previous sections I attempted to 'lay the table' by describing the setting, the purpose of the practice, and the work of leadership that was performed. In the following sections, I describe and analyze the ways in which members are located in the practice's field of participation, the opportunities that the team members have to learn, and the 'forces' that limit the processes of learning.

5.4.1 The Roles

Within the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), social practices define the ways in which actors may participate in the practice – this is what is understood by the expression 'field of participation'. The process identified by the authors, legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), was proposed to analyze the ways in which newcomers (having legitimate access) are located within the field of participation and used to depict whether their participation in the practice is full or partial. Lave and Wenger's assumption is that practices (or communities of practice) always comprise 'old-timers' and potential 'newcomers'. In the case of the observed practice however, although it was re-enacted every schoolyear, it only represented a one-year mandate; the members, except for the co-presidents (and even for the co-presidents, their role was a new one) could all be new members. This meant that I did not focus on the entry of newcomers per se – instead I analyzed how each member was located within the field of participation. The importance of this, according to the theory of situated learning, is that the greater the participation or engagement in the practice's activities (the field of participation), the greater the learning. In this section, I will describe the ways in which all members of the executive team were located within the practice of event organization and how this impacted on their engagement.

To do so, I once again followed Nicolini's (2012) proposal, based on the ethno-methodology and micro-ethnography traditions, to observe the "interactional order that stems from, and supports, the accomplishment of a practice" (p. 222). I interpreted 'interactional order' as meaning the ways in which members of a practice interact among each other and that is dictated, at least to a certain extent, by the positions or roles that make up the practice.

The author proposes sensitizing questions that I utilized to orient my analysis. Questions included: "*What positions does this specific practice make available?*"; "*What sort of interactional order is performed by this specific practice?*"; "*How are these positions negotiated or resisted?*"; and "*How are asymmetries and inequalities produced or reproduced in the process?*" (p. 220). In this way, I identified the different positions that constituted the practice, analyzed how they were located within the field of participation, and how the location afforded or limited participation in leadership work.

The composition of the executive team, and the titles and roles of executives, were laid out in an article of the committee's constitution. The group clearly re-enacted the constitution's structure with the addition of two extra positions: that of VP Design and one Director Marketing. This however was allowed by the Constitution:

> *"The President or Co-Presidents will have the sole authority to create additional positions not listed in the constitution, or to merge positions listed in the constitution. For instance, the President or Co-Presidents may appoint associate positions under the*

directives of executive members, if deemed necessary. Such positions shall vary according to the needs of the committee."

Extract from Constitution

The article described one by one the roles and responsibilities of each member of the executive team. Pre-defined boundaries therefore existed that qualified the paths of action of the members. Nonetheless, within each path, so to speak, or within each role, members had the freedom to determine how they would organize and perform their work as I will describe next.

The Co-Presidents. The constitution put into place a formal hierarchy – the committee needed to have a president or co-presidents, whose official role was to lead the team. A few examples from the very detailed list of the president(s)'s internal duties include:

- *Plan, recruit, and manage the executive team.*
- *Address and resolve situations of lack of team member commitments.*
- *Meet with all executive members individually, twice a semester, to discuss strategic plan and goals regarding their respective positions.*

Extract from the Constitution

Secondly, the constitution allowed for the sharing of the co-presidency. There was a special provision in the constitution that allowed for co-presidency and that is the format that was chosen by the two co-presidents. In an extensive literature review about 'shared leadership', Döös and Wilhelmson (2021) identify a sub-field, that of co-leadership. The authors name this form of leadership 'managerial shared leadership' and define it as an "organisational phenomenon where a few individuals have and/or take mutual responsibility for the tasks included holding a managerial position" (p. 717). Although the authors understand managerial shared leadership as a leader-centric point of view - where leadership is understood as belonging to one person or more - I felt that this theory reflected the role and position held by the two co-presidents.

Döös and Wilhelmson describe managerial shared leadership as having both informal and formal aspects. The informal aspects refer to how the co-leaders operate in real-life (i.e., how things are organized between the sharing managers within the constellation - whereby constellation refers to the pair of officially designated managers), whereas the formal aspects are those found in the job description. In the case of this research project, the formal aspects are described in the student committee's Constitution (the Constitution, however, does not specify how the co-presidents should divide their tasks). Using the author's framework, it becomes possible to describe the co-presidents of the committee as being formally equals, having "the same managerial mandate and status, assum(ing) equal responsibility, shar(ing) power and accountability, and hav(ing) joint authority and merged work tasks" (Döös & Wilhelmson, p. 736). In the case of the practice I observed, the hierarchical structure and role description created an official pathway of participation in leadership work for the co-presidents (the formal aspect) but allowed them to create their own way of engaging in managerial co-leadership within that pathway, through the informal aspects of their position.

I interviewed the two co-presidents together and gathered information about their roles to better understand how they worked together. Like the process used for analyzing the field observations, I engaged in first and second level coding within the interview to create categories, using gerunds. The category "accomplishing work within the constellation" arose from codes resulting from responses to questions about what it meant to be co-presidents.

Category A - Accomplishing work within the constellation

- Figuring things out
- Sharing responsibility
- Merging operational tasks

Table 3. Category A: Accomplishing work within the constellation

Accomplishing work within the constellation	
Figuring things out	"*I think being a co-president is more like not only just making decisions together but also figuring things out together because sometimes we're just straight up lost [laughs] and it's nice for like both of us to be on the same lost page and figure things out together. So, making decisions together, figuring things out. Like, we've seen what makes sense and what doesn't, sometimes I'm like, Sophie, does this make sense to you in your head? She's like, yeah, that makes sense. So basically, just sharing our mind, I guess.*" (interview S&K)
Sharing responsibility	(About being on the Faculty Student Association Board of Directors) "*And I just wouldn't want to do it alone because it's a lot of, not just a lot of responsibility, but a lot of like you representing the whole team at all times. But when it's two of you, at least you can share that."* (Interview S&K) *"You know, like you get to share doing the stupid jobs no one wants to do."* (Interview S&K)
Merging operational tasks	"*Well, you know what, we kind of do the same thing now, but technically on paper, I'm supposed to be like managing the marketing, the internal, the CR team and the design, VP design, and then Sophie does events, finance because she's a finance major and involvement because she was VP involvement (*last year*). So those are our roles, but they merge all the time anyways because we were always like making suggestions and stuff.*" Kayla "*So, any time, like what we tell people, the team also, is any time they want to ask one of us something, unless it's something personal, to ask both of us, like put a group message with me and Kayla in it that way, because every time there has to be decision to be made, I'm always going to ask Kayla anyway. So, there's no point in someone just asking me, even if it is something for like involvement, which technically I'm the one who's in charge of it. I'm still going to ask Kayla, so we might as well just all be in the groups together.*" Sophie

The co-presidents describe the way they worked together as managerial co-leaders. The special provision in the constitution for co-presidency created the opportunity for two of the members to experiment and explore co-leadership, or using Nicolini's (2012) terms, create their own interactional order within positions made available by the practice. The co-presidents, given the formal aspect of their position, also had the opportunity to define how they would interact with the rest of the team. The second category and codes emerged from their responses to my questions about how they perceived their role within the team.

Category B - Accomplishing work with other departments

- Managing people
- Challenging members
- Coordinating
- Supporting
- Dedramatizing
- Making it useful

Table 4. Category B: Accomplishing work with other departments

Accomplishing work with other departments	
Managing people	*"it's (…) managing the people with all of our exec teams and not just like, it's a little hard to explain because they don't require a lot of direct management, it's not like every day I'm like: Did you do this one thing I asked you to do - both Kayla and I are more hands off for sure"* Sophie *"We just trust everybody to do everything correctly, and we trust them to come to us if they have any questions or if they need any extra guidance"* Kayla
Challenging members	*"more like watching them grow and trying to challenge them. Which I don't think Kayla and I either do very consciously, but it's just like, oh, I think Emily would be good at this, let's ask her to do it and see if she can do it. We're like, Oh, Lea wants to do this project with her collaborators. Yeah, let's just do it. We'll see what happens."* Sophie
Coordinating	*"But other than that, I think our role is just like making sure that everything fits together and making sure that each, like each department is super capable on*

Accomplishing work with other departments	
	their own. But since we don't really see each other in person, it's more like making sure that we're all on the same page through every single department because we have a ton of little parts and just making sure that we're all cohesive in that way. I think that's our biggest role, just like being the ones that bring everything together." Kayla
Supporting	"*Like for all of them, a few of them were really nervous before they started and were like scared about taking on the role and what it would mean. And like, we're worried they wouldn't have enough support. So, I think for them, it's like making sure that they know that we're here all the time to support them, no matter what they need. Kayla and I we'll be able to help them, whether they need us to like call venues, do like actual physical work or they just need people to bounce ideas off of like we're there to support them*." Sophie
Dedramatizing	"*At the end of the day, it's not that deep, we're not getting paid. This is not the end of the world stuff, like it's supposed to be fun at the end of this. So, I think it's just like making sure that people are enjoying themselves and don't get too stressed out*" Sophie
Making it useful	"*I think our responsibility to the team is like, we kind of have to fulfill their expectations of being in a team. I guess and make it a good experience. Yeah. Just to make it a positive experience and to get like experience that would be relevant in a job setting or like in a real life setting as well*." Kayla

Once again, the examples provided above illustrate how the co-presidents interpreted and performed the 'formal' aspects of their co-leadership position. The constitution provides a lengthy list of duties and tasks that co-presidents must perform, nonetheless, the list did not clarify how the co-presidents should share those tasks, nor did it stipulate how the duties and tasks should be performed. There therefore existed opportunities for improvisation or interpretation within the performance of those tasks. Described by Döös and Wilhelmson (2021) as the 'informal aspects' of managerial shared leadership, the practice theory perspective explains these as spaces for "initiative, creativity, and individual performance" (Nicolini, 2012, pp. 4-5) necessary in an ongoing practice that always presents both a certain historical stability and new, evolving circumstances. The managerial-leadership positions made available by the practice determined – at least in part - how the co-presidents could participate in the practice, provided the opportunity to engage in actions created by both the 'formal' and 'informal' aspects of the position. I understand the categories that emerged from the interview and that are described above as being examples of actions that were part of the co-presidents' personal trajectory of participation in the practice and therefore contributing to their leadership learning.

Interactional Order Within the Executive Team's Departments. As mentioned in an earlier section, other than the two co-presidents, the team was composed of eleven members who held the following titles:

- One VP of Corporate Relations & one Director of Corporate Relations (CR Department);
- One VP Involvement & one Director of Involvement (Involvement Department);
- One VP Events & one Director Events (Events Department);
- One VP Marketing & one VP Design & one Director Marketing (Marketing Department);
- One VP Finance (Finance Department);
- One VP Internal (Internal Department).

The constitution of the association described the role and responsibilities of each member within the so-called departments. As with the example of the co-presidents, however, the constitution's role descriptions did not wholly determine the interactional order of the practice.

Within the departments of the executive team, there existed freedom for the members to negotiate their roles despite a certain interactional order signalled by the titles each member held; this led to the potential creation of opportunities for leadership work. As described above, the roles and duties of each member of the executive team's 'departments' were outlined in the group's constitution. Some of the departments were composed of one member who was a VP (both the Internal and Finance departments), others of two members – one of whom was a VP and the other a director (Corporate Relations; Involvement and Events departments) and one of three members (Marketing department) which included a director and two VPs. Within the departments that had more than one member, roles and titles described in the constitution reflected a hierarchy whereby directors reported to VPs and VPs were the liaison with the team's co-presidents. However, as with the example of the co-presidents above, within each department, there seemed to be informal and formal aspects of the roles in terms of how the constellation members interacted with one another. During the interviews, I asked participants to describe their role and how they worked with each other within their own departments.

As explained by Mia who was VP of the Events Department:

> "*So the VP role is just honestly, looking back now, there's pretty much no difference with the director of events. We worked as a team. I wasn't really her leader, if that makes sense. (…) We basically just separated our tasks and worked together for bigger tasks as well, like finding the venue. … We didn't really look at the roles thing, we just did our own stuff. So, we'd be like, ok, I'm going to message venues, and then I'd say ok, I'll create the events' scripts and the overview and so on*."

Similarly, Claire describes the split of tasks between the director and vice-president within the Corporate Relations department:

> *"We're always working together since the beginning, because it is our department and our responsibility. At the beginning of our mandate, we used to have our meetings together with sponsors and companies just to make sure that we're on the same page in terms of how we approach companies. But then once we've got the hang of it, each one of us kind of works on her own connections and her own sponsors and whatnot. And then we always keep ourselves, like each other, updated in terms of who we're having conversation with, who is already signed off and so on."*

I was not able to observe the actual interactions between members of the departments as these occurred outside of the team meetings, and most often through email or texts. However, in the case of both the Events department and Corporate Relations department, there did not seem to be a hierarchical order of work that derived from the official titles or role descriptions. On paper, the possibility for asymmetries and inequalities existed but were not reported by the members. The sharing of tasks was negotiated between the two members of the department. Nonetheless, this does not mean that leadership actions were not being performed within the departments, only that I could not observe them directly and that they seemed not to be related to the formal job descriptions and position titles.

Freedom of members to add to their position's tasks despite the formal description of their role also seemed to create potential room for leadership work. Lea and Mariam both explained how they were free to add to their roles. Lea explained:

> "*So, the way it works, they gave us basically an executive summary with all of our tasks, which you can find on our website. Basically, those are the things that I have to do. I'm kind of lucky, in a sense, where I could add to my role as long as it follows the guidelines that are in.*"

Mariam talks about the importance of continuity but also the freedom to add her initiatives:

> "*I'm also responsible for the sustainability aspect of the group. (...) When I started, they gave me the Power Point they used the year before and we already have some goals written in it and we don't want to change goals every year. Of course we can add some. We also want to be consistent with the goals (...) Like, for example, one of the goals was that we wanted to completely stop using plastic water bottles (...) And that's something*

that we don't just do it for one semester. We also want to continue to do it. But then I also added some goals that I personally wanted to see on the list and some activities. I'm just going to give you a quick example. For example, this year I organized I think it was the first year that we did that, but I organized a clothes' collection to donate to a shelter for women."

Both Lea and Mariam are talking about their agency in undertaking and organizing new activities. Consequently, the members' field of participation evolved and, in this case, expanded as work was being performed and opportunities for leadership work emerged *in situ*. Within the practice perspective and as described by Gherardi (2019), "workers simultaneously maintain and alter practices" (p. 9). Nicolini (2012) specifies that *"a practice always requires adapting to new circumstances so that practising is neither mindless repetition nor complete invention. Yet individual performances take place and are intelligible only as part of an ongoing practice (…)."* (pp. 4-5). Lea and Mariam describe the freedom to add to the scope of their positions in ways that make sense in the context of the practice and are provided with opportunities to change and learn through their own trajectory of participation.

Members of the Marketing department, on the other hand, kept a real split of tasks between the VP Marketing and VP Design which reflected both the types of skill set each member mastered and the demands of the positions; the VP Design could not commence her activities until the VP Marketing had completed hers. Interestingly, a new position was created within this department, that of Director Marketing. The position was created by the co-presidents for Renata specifically, allowing her to be part of the executive team. As explained by Renata, the Marketing Director:

> "*So it was interesting because it* (the position) *was not very well defined*. (…) *And because it was new the co-presidents really didn't know what that will entitle* [entail] (…). *The Director of marketing was just like the extra, like (...) the extra task or creative wise. (...) Emily and I and the copresident just went through it* (the list of tasks), *and we're like, well, maybe this is a task you can do. (...) Like, Emily already has these five* (tasks) *that go together, and the 6th one looks a little out of place, so maybe you can take that one*."

Although a legitimate member of the practice since she had been accepted into the executive team and given a position, Renata could not be described as being a full participant. The new position was not well aligned with the needs of the practice which led Renata to hold a position that was almost outside of the practice's field of participation. As she described:

> *"I feel like I for sure could have been a little more active. Again, my time schedule was very full, honestly. This became in the summer at top priority, and then slowly became like my third one, to be honest."*

She became less engaged in the practice over the school year which undoubtedly limited her opportunities to perform leadership actions. As she herself explained in the interview "*I think my role and what I've learned was more observation.* (…) *So, I think it was more observation when it comes to decision making and how teamwork works*" In this example, the new position, because of its lack of definition, did not support the accomplishment of the practice and limited Renata's opportunity to be a full participant and thus engage in what she perceived to be leadership work.

Positions that are available in the practice do lay a foundation for members' potential learning trajectories. This is very clear when looking at the Director of Marketing's misaligned position which limited her ability to engage in the practice. However, as is illustrated above, well-defined positions could be negotiated and the interactional order that was performed was not necessarily limited to position titles. Furthermore, the positions could be enhanced albeit within what was understood as being the practice's purpose. All in all, there was space for members to negotiate their leadership learning trajectories.

Using LPP as an analytical tool allows for a better understanding of the ways in which participants' learning trajectories may be limited or enhanced, since, as explained by Nicolini, "practitioners [are] constantly busy positioning themselves within the ongoing practice" (p. 95). As mentioned earlier, practices are also linked to material arrangements, which among many things, help establish the mutual positioning of members and alignment among tasks. This, and how material arrangements contribute to learning how to 'do leadership' will be discussed in the following section.

5.5 Material Arrangements and Leadership Learning

In this section I will discuss how the material world is an integral part of the practice-theory perspective, position myself regarding the role of the material in social life, describe one of the material arrangements that existed in the observed practice, and based on the theory of situated learning, provide an analysis of how the material arrangement mediated members' opportunities to engage in leadership and learn about leadership work.

5.5.1 Practice Theory Perspective and Materiality

Most theories of practice agree that materials play a role in social life, however as indicated by Monteiro and Nicolini (2015), there is a complex debate about what the actual role is. I place myself in the humanist position that postulates that only humans have agency and that materials mediate human activities (Monteiro & Nicolini). Schatzki (2002) notes that human activities and objects are not equals, and that the world of the material takes on a mediating role in practices. According to the author, "practices are carried on amid and determinative of, while also dependent on and altered by, material arrangements" (p. 130). Writing from a leadership as practice perspective, Crevani and Lami (2023) note that there is a growing interest of researchers in the material character of the leadership phenomenon. These studies pay attention to materiality under the forms of "bodies, artifacts, spaces, places, and technologies" (Crevani & Lami, p. 23). Among the categories of material entities within this research project I focused on artifacts, and more specifically on the meeting notes as described below.

The discussion about materiality also reflects one of the facets of practice highlighted by Nicolini (2012) who identifies "tools, artifacts and mediation work" (p. 220) as a potential area of focus when studying practices. Among the sensitizing questions Nicolini proposes, I concentrated on the following to orient my analysis of the meeting notes: How do these artifacts contribute to the accomplishing? How are the artifacts used in practice? Which type of practical concerns, or sense, do artifacts convey to the actual practising? (p. 224). These questions are utilized as a first step to "re-produce" the practice and provide a base for assessing how materiality mediates members' learning about, and participating in, leadership.

5.5.2 Artifacts and Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) write specifically about artifacts which they name the 'technology of practice' (p. 101) and emphasize the importance of analyzing the interrelation of technology with other aspects of a practice. For the authors, artifacts play a very important part in learning since they carry a 'substantial portion of that practice's heritage' (p. 102) reflected through their design and use. From their point of view, a member cannot reach full participation in a practice without 'engaging with the technologies of everyday practice' (p. 101). They specify that the understanding gained from engagement with an artifact can vary according to how its use impacts a member's participation in the practice. Lave and Wenger write about the transparency of technology which they define as the interaction between how an artifact is used, and how its significance is understood; this interaction is an integral part of the learning process. In other words, understanding or learning is enhanced when a member is able to use the technologies in an appropriate manner within the practice.

The Meeting Notes. As described in previous sections, the Executive Team meetings were operational meetings related to the organization of events and facilitated by the co-presidents using what the group called 'meeting notes'. Early on during the observations, I was struck by the central role played by the meeting notes during the team meetings. I consider the meeting notes, a document prepared by the co-presidents and distributed to all members shortly before the weekly meetings, to be part of the "material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2002, 2010) of the practice.

I indicated in the methods section, I turned to Prior (2008) for indications on how to analyze documents. Prior (2008) provides a table identifying existing approaches to study documents. Several of Prior's categorized approaches are well aligned with both Nicolini's (2012) sensitizing questions and with Lave and Wenger's (1991) focus on members' engagement with the technology of a practice. As recommended by Prior, I analyzed meeting notes' use and function as a resource ("how documents are used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends" p. 825) before moving on to the analysis of their use and function as a topic ("how documents function in, and impact on, schemes of social interaction and social organization" p. 825).

I present in Appendix 4, a sample example of meeting notes. The example I chose is typical of the documents used for most meetings except for two: meetings that were clarification/preparation meetings for the final big group event, the Flagship: The notes for these meetings mainly consisted of logistical check points. As a first step, I analyzed the use and function of the meeting notes as resource for purposeful ends. The analysis is based on all the meeting notes, observations of the meetings and information gathered from interviews with members of the team. At this point and following Nicolini's (2012) questions, I specifically looked at how the notes contributed to the organization of events; how they were used in practice and by whom; and the practical concern(s) the notes conveyed.

Document as Resource – How the Notes Were Used by Members for Purposeful Ends. The notes contributed to the organization of events in several ways. Firstly, the notes helped the co-presidents – who wrote the notes - prepare for the executive team meetings. They adopted the use of notes following the example of the co-presidents from the previous cohort of women and leadership student group. The notes listed the tasks that needed to be accomplished during the meeting at that moment in time, in the practice of event planning (e.g., discussing topics of importance, providing directives, making requests, giving reminders). They also identified the list of activities, carried out by the 'departments'. Secondly, the notes served as official records of the meetings; this was an obligation the group needed to meet as outlined in the group's constitution. They acted as a written reminder for all members about the decisions that were made and the to-do items.

When interviewing members of the team about how they felt about the meetings, it emerged that the team members – other than the co-presidents – also used the notes to prepare for the meetings as the notes indicated when and what they would be expected to talk about. For example, Mia explains that:

> "*Like, we had our meeting notes beforehand and after, which was really useful, so everybody came prepared with stuff to talk about*" (Mia, interview)

They also allowed members of the department to plan and organize their own activities:

> "*So, we have the meeting notes that are prepared and meeting notes coincide with our tasks. So, a lot of them are already in the meeting notes. Usually, it's a perfect summary of what we would be discussing, usually that's released before the actual meeting on Monday. So, we kind of go over* (with Amina before the meeting), *okay, did we fulfill those tasks? It's kind of like a check list for us.*" (Lea interview)

Secondly, the notes helped the co-presidents facilitate the meetings - every meeting, the co-presidents would go systematically though the notes, using them like an agenda. I quickly came to view the pattern of the meetings as 'doing the rounds' because the structure of the meetings, dictated by the notes, followed a similar if not exact sequence every meeting. It must also be noted that, at the end of each item, the co-presidents asked whether members had concerns or questions. Nonetheless, members did not frequently respond partly due to fatigue but also due to the division of responsibilities. As explained by one of the members:

> *"Like, I know I zone out when they talk about 'Events' because I'm like, okay, it doesn't concern me right now. I can shut my mind off. It's the end of the day, too. You're drained, you're tired."* (Nimra, interview).

It seemed clear through interviews that members agreed that the structure of the meetings, conveyed through the notes, was necessary for efficiency, sharing of information and coordination of actions. For example, as stated by Nimra,

> "*So I think the whole purpose is not to be having those long discussions and whatsoever. (…) And the purpose of the meeting is just to have a quick rundown of everything that's going on so everyone's a bit on the same page*" (Nimra, interview)

I would argue that according to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of technology transparency, the notes were 'transparent': how members used the notes within the meetings and the notes' significance to the practice of event organization was well understood by the members thus enhancing their learning about event organization.

Document as Topic – How the Notes Impacted on the Schemes of Social Interaction. The second step of the analysis was to consider how the notes mediated the social interaction of the group to explore whether this had an impact on members' participation in the practice. Certainly, the notes were part of the material arrangements of the 'managerial shared leadership' (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021) accomplished by the co-presidents. The notes revealed how the co-presidents shared their responsibilities, each reading through the part of the notes that fell under their responsibility. More specifically and as reflected in the example (see Appendix 4), the co-presidents used the notes to:

- Share information with team members, e.g., *Applications are open until Feb 4th* (for applying to be president next school year)
- Encourage and praise their team, e.g., *Event X, It went so well!!!*
- Provide reminders to the team, e.g., *Friday, March 11th: FLAGSHIP*
- Give directives to members, e.g., *Start compiling all class dates/times for Class Talks here! NOW*
- Report decisions that were made, e.g., *Ways to spend money*
- Gather information from the team members, e.g., *Update on mentorship session*
- Monitor members' activities

As illustrated above, the use of notes reflected some of the themes that arose from the interview with the co-presidents when exploring how they accomplished work with the other departments, i.e. managing, coordinating and supporting. They also underscored some of the leadership 'sayings' of the practice as described in Yukl's (2012) Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors above: clarifying, getting on the same page, planning, and supporting.

By controlling the content, the flow of the meetings, and speaking time allocated to department members – the notes acted as a script, not only for the co-presidents but also for all the members, as they indicated what members needed to talk about and when their turn to talk would be. When team members were asked whether they felt the format of the meeting restricted their participation, they expressed that the balance between agenda control and allotted speaking time represented a necessary equilibrium between efficient management of time and opportunity to participate. For example:

> "*I like the way it's set up* [the meetings] *because we start with a general overview that touches on every Department and then we go really into details where every Department*

gets to speak for every meeting. Even if they haven't accomplished, let's say a lot of things or didn't have a task, they are able to contribute. I also like the fact that our co-presidents really always ask do you have any questions or concerns after every Department just because it really allows the floor for any questions from everyone. Let's say if 'Events' has any questions, they can ask it as it relates to 'CR' [Corporate Relations]*, they can ask it during our section of the meeting. So, I feel it's very open to everyone to participate and it's also organized so it's not really chaotic and everyone is speaking over everybody."* (Claire, interview)

Within the observed practice the notes could be understood as being the material representation of power structures within the group. In the case of this study, however, power structures – although not named as such by the participants - are understood as being something useful in the organization of the practice and necessary for efficiency. This is a potential role of power as described by Foldy and Ospina (2023) who argue that "there is no situation or system that is outside of power or in which power plays a lesser role or a greater role" (p. 548). Instead, the authors argue that power should be understood as something neutral.

The notes also reflected the cyclical pattern of event organization. For example, at the beginning of the year, the Marketing department was allotted more time within the meetings to talk about the year's upcoming marketing campaign which had to be organized upfront. Towards the end of the year, the 'Events' department had more 'space' to cover the logistics of the upcoming events. Concurrent to the cyclical pattern of event organization, the structure of the notes represented the division of responsibilities among all team members. This allowed members to participate in the meetings and in the practice according to their role. When asked whether she felt that the executive meetings were managed in such a way to allow members to express their leadership, Amina answered:

> "*Yes. Because everyone had a say in the meeting, everyone has the time to talk about their own things and their own problems or just share with us what they've been up to. Because it would have been totally different if there was only the co presidents talking the whole time and just telling us what needs to be done for us.*" (Amina, interview)

As 'role-related artifacts' (Eva et al.,1999), the notes enabled the enactment of leadership. They also contributed to creating rituals of behaviours during the meetings (script-like) and to the structuring of time (allotted speaking-time). On one hand, the notes supported the structure of 'managerial shared leadership' by allowing the co-presidents to share the facilitation of the meetings and accentuate their leadership actions. On the other hand, the contents and structure of the notes also reflected the cyclical pattern of event organization and the division of responsibilities or areas of expertise among team members. This type of work division is investigated by management researchers in the field of teamwork and/or project management leadership where "the responsibilities for leading portions of the work are distributed among team members according to their expertise and skills" (Scott-Young, Georgy, & Grisinger, 2019, p. 570). It has been described by Pearce and Barkus (2004) as the cohabitation between vertical and shared leadership, and by Müller, Sankaran, Drouin, Vaagaasar, Bekker, and Jain (2018) as the balance between vertical and horizontal leadership.

At certain points in time, members of the team other than the co-presidents had more time allotted to them, increasing their participation in the meetings. Moreover, because the meeting notes were structured around each department's tasks, members were able to take the lead on discussing their area of responsibilities as they related to the organization of events thus learning how to 'do leadership' or engage in 'leadership work' using the socio-material - in this case the notes - within the organized routine of the meetings (Cox & Hassard, 2018). This has also been highlighted in Carroll's (2016) study of a software development team and who argued how spaces, routines and artifacts could be understood as being 'pivotal sources' for leadership. Members of the team were thus engaging in different ways with the notes according to their role and responsibilities in the practice, thereby embarking on individual trajectories of learning about leadership.

5.6 Summary of the Zooming-In

Throughout the movement of 'zooming-in', I applied Nicolini's (2012) 'tool-kit approach', focusing on different facets of the practice, and utilized some of the author's 'sensitizing questions' as a first step to "re-produce" the practice. As I explore the different facets of the practice, I incorporated Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning to explain the learning of leadership in the practice.

Firstly, to address the question of '*how leadership takes shape in a practice setting*', I needed to better understand what the practice was about. I did this by zooming-in on the local accomplishment of the practice to make sense of its purpose. The site of the practice I observed were the executive meetings and events held by an undergraduate business school student group concerned with women and leadership. Through observations and interviews it became clear that the members of the practice perceived the purpose of their practice to be centered on the organization of events to educate the student population about the existence of gender discrimination and to help women attain leadership roles. Using Lave and Wenger's (1991) words, the "concerned character of the thoughts" (p. 50) of the members of the observed practice included easing the passage from university education to employment, identifying pathways to leadership positions in a business world where gender discrimination exists, and determining what issues might obstruct such pathways.

Secondly, to convey how leadership was performed in the practice setting, I zoomed-in on the 'sayings and doings' of the practice. As the setting consisted of hybrid meetings, I mostly observed verbal interactions. Based on the adopted definition of leadership as being the "collective agency in changing and setting courses of action" (Crevani and Endrissat, 2016, p. 42), I paid special attention to shifts in topics, movements of conversations and incidents of decision making within the meetings. The observation notes of the 'sayings' were coded and compared to Yukl's (2012) well established Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviors. Given that Yukl's taxonomy is based on a unidirectional understanding of influence, it became necessary in some cases to relabel Yukl's categories of behaviours so as to represent actions that were 'bundled' and related (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016). I identified the following categories of leadership actions that members performed: clarifying, getting on the same page, planning, supporting, recognizing, empowering each other, and expanding.

To better comprehend the 'sayings' of leadership within the observed practice, it was helpful to turn to the literature about the practice of project management (e.g. Ropo & Salovaara, 2019; Salovaara et al., 2020). Like leadership in the management of projects, leadership actions within the practice of event organization could be understood as being part of micro-processes that make sense to actors in the specific moment, deriving meaning from the phase of the project(s) within the practice of event-organizing (Salovaara, et al, 2020). The observed practice was indeed characterized by re-occurring cycles of actions and many issues in the observed practice were not solved immediately, became subject of re-consideration, and were repeated.

Next, to address the second research question '*how leadership is learned within a practice setting',* I once again turned to Nicolini's (2012) sensitizing questions and explored the positions or roles that made up the practice. Considering Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory and its emphasis on the members' participation or engagement in the practice's activities, I analyzed how members were located within the field of participation, and how the location afforded or limited participation in leadership work.

Within the observed practice, the group's constitution provided an official list of titles and description of tasks roles; nonetheless it did not dictate how the roles should be carried out. After analysis, it became clear that the role of co-president fit Döös and Wilhelmson's (2021) definition of 'managerial shared leadership'. The authors describe 'managerial shared leadership' as having both informal (how things are organized between the sharing managers) and formal aspects (the job description). In the case of the practice, the hierarchical structure and role description created an official pathway of participation in leadership work for the co-presidents (the formal aspect) and allowed them to create their own way of engaging in managerial co-leadership within that pathway, through the informal aspects of their position.

The same framework was used to analyze the roles in other 'departments'. In one case, the creation of a new position was misaligned with the needs of the practice and limited the member's opportunity to be a full participant and thus engage in what she perceived to be leadership work. In the case of the well-defined positions, members' activities were negotiated amongst themselves, and the positions could be enhanced albeit within what was understood as being part of the practice's purpose.

Lastly, adopting Schatzki's (2010) position that "practices are carried on amid and determinative of, while also dependent on and altered by, material arrangements." (p. 130), I looked at the role of materiality in mediating members' learning about leadership. I investigated how members "engag(ed) with the technologies of everyday practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 101). Applying Prior's (2008) framework for analyzing documents, I moved beyond a focus on content and looked at the role documents played in social interaction. More specifically, I assessed how the meeting notes contributed to the organization of events; how they were used in practice and by whom; and the practical concern(s) the notes conveyed.

The notes helped all members prepare for the executive team meetings, and the co-presidents to facilitate the meetings. Members expressed a clear understanding that the notes established the structure of the meetings, and were deemed necessary for efficiency, sharing of information and coordination of actions. The interaction between how the notes were used within the meetings and their significance to the practice of event organization was well understood by the members, making the notes 'transparent' (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In terms of how the notes mediated social interaction, they supported the managerial shared leadership of the co-presidents. By reflecting the cyclical pattern of event organization and the division of responsibilities among team members, the notes also enabled other members to engage in leadership work according to their place in the field of participation, thus enabling their learning about how to 'do leadership' in a practice of event organization.

Using Nicolini's 'tool kit' approach to 're-present' (2012) the practice, I switched between theoretical sensitivities" (p. 213) for the study of the practice and focused on certain aspects while putting others to the side (Orlikoski, 2010). While helpful from an empirical research point of view, emphasizing different facets separately is a somewhat paradoxical way to represent a practice. By zooming-in, I studied one facet at a time but, as indicated by the very definition of a practice, all facets are interconnected. The leadership 'sayings' were indeed mediated by both the meeting notes, the roles of the members, and the time-continuum characteristics of event organization.

In this project and based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, I analyzed how access to opportunities to engage in the practice did or did not foster learning about leadership. Reflecting the 're-presentation' of the practice, learning to 'do leadership' was enabled through the members' participation in the meetings, linked to their engagement with artifacts (the meeting notes), and mediated by their roles. For the members, with one main exception, the opportunities to engage in the practice offered individual pathways to learning about leadership.

Chapter 6. Findings: Zooming-Out

In this section, I engage in the second movement recommended by Nicolini (2012) in his theory-methods approach to the empirical study of practices: that of zooming-out. Guided by Nicolini's (2017) sensitizing questions, I identify an associated practice and explain how participants' interaction with members of this associated practice contribute to their comprehension of leadership and gender within broader academic and professional contexts. I go on to discuss the place of the individual in the practice theory perspective and Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning. Lastly, I describe how individual members' engagement in the practice supports the development of their leadership identity.

6.1 The Practice of Event Organization and an Associated Practice

One of the tenets of the practice perspective is that the world consists of associated practices "connected in space and time" (Nicolini, 2017, p. 2). The author argues that practices cannot be carried out in an independent manner, stating that "all practices are involved in a variety of relationships and associations that extend in both space and time, and form a gigantic, intricate, and evolving texture of dependencies and references" (p. 229). It therefore becomes important to consider the social phenomena, in this case that of leadership in the organization of events, in terms of its associations. This is necessary, according to the author (2012, 2017), to engage in a stronger research programme that goes beyond a local description of a practice's performance.

I therefore endeavor to analyze and explain how the practice of event organization is a part of "bundles of practices and arrangements [that] provide the material out of which social phenomena, large and small, consist" (Schatzki 2010, p. 6.). Once again, I was guided by

Nicolini’s (2017) sensitizing questions: “How is the practice under consideration causally and materially connected with other practices?” and “Which other practices affect, enable, constrain, conflict, interfere, etc., with the practice under consideration?” (p. 231). The research questions of this project were also taken into consideration when addressing Nicolini’s questions:

- In what ways do the concepts of gender and leadership intersect in a practice setting?
- How does the group comprehend leadership and gender within broader academic and professional contexts?
- In what ways do individual members understand their own leadership development through their experience in the practice?

To identify relevant associated practices, I followed the empirical connections that existed through the practice’s activities. Considering Nicolini’s (2017) sensitizing questions and the project’s research questions, the connection of the observed practice with the external business community clearly affected, enabled and constrained the practice of event organization. Without the link to the external business community, the events could not exist; the number and characteristics of the external persons involved in the events affected the legitimacy and usefulness of the events; and the amount of sponsorship provided by the external business community could constrain or boost the quality of the events. Thus, the practice of event organization and the external business community were causally and materially connected. Considering the premises of the practice perspective, the main events organized by the group could not occur in isolation and without the work and engagement of other external business leaders.

6.1.1 The Advancement of Women in Leadership

The businesspeople who participated in the events organized by the student group – all women having leadership roles – came from diverse business fields (e.g., management consulting, finance, entrepreneurship, marketing) but had all agreed to speak about topics important to women business students interested in leadership. The businesswomen shared the same aim as the practice under observation: to educate students about gender inequality in the workplace and help young women students start a career that might eventually lead to a leadership role. For example, one of the businesswomen moderators of the flagship event asserted in her presentation how she personally desired "to propel female ambition, democratize the business C suite, and challenge the status quo". Another woman who spoke at one of the mentorship sessions stated how "important [it is] to have women in sales and investments and wanted to support and help them". I therefore surmised that the practice of event organization was part of a wider nexus of practices, one of which being the practice of businesspeople engaged in the advancement of women in leadership. The activities organized by the student group served as a meeting space between aspiring business student women leaders and businesswomen holding a leadership role.

6.1.2. The Intersection between the Concepts of Gender and Leadership

As stated above, the businesswomen championing 'women and leadership' and the members of the observed practice, shared the same purpose. It therefore becomes possible to state that one of the ways in which the concepts of gender and leadership intersected in the practice setting was through the practice's purpose or aims, i.e. educating the student population about the existence of gender discrimination and helping women attain leadership roles. Relatedly, the two concepts also intersected through the participants understanding of leadership and gender within the broader academic and professional contexts, which in turn informed the organization of events. To explore the ways in which the concepts intersected within these contexts, Tan and DeFrank-Cole's (2024) proposed framework designed to understand the literature on women and leadership was chosen.

Tan and DeFrank-Cole describe their framework as being interdisciplinary - it aims to organize the research and help explore how interconnected gender-related factors influence individuals and their leadership, in both beneficial and detrimental ways. The proposed four domains of the framework include the societal, the organizational, the interpersonal, and the individual. After a first overview of the data collected from interviews with the members of the practice's executive team, and the topics of discussion included in the various events held by the group, the framework and its four domains were utilized to analyze how members of the executive team understood leadership and gender within the broader academic and professional contexts.

The broadest domain presented by Tan and DeFrank-Cole (2024) is the societal domain and includes topics related to societal values and culture. The authors specify how "perceptions, attitudes, and ideas of leadership and gender are impacted by the values and expectations of culture and society" (p. 25). Several of the students from the executive team, were either international students or first-generation immigrants and came from countries where women did not possess equal rights to men. In keeping with the topics related to Tan and DeFrank-Cole's societal domain, they understood leadership and gender within the broader academic and professional contexts as being related to societal/cultural values and beliefs (Tan & DeFrank-Cole, Table 2.1, p. 25). When talking about the importance of the practice and why they had joined the women and leadership group, several students spoke about the importance of education for women in general, and of the importance of emphasizing access to leadership roles in the workplace. Nimra, for example, when explaining how her values aligned with those of the student group, emphasized the importance of education for women:

"So, for me, I grew up, I come from [a South-Asian country]*, so they're, in my household my parents always emphasized so much how education, even with the human rights, it's often a privilege that a lot of people don't have access to. And obviously, I'm sure you're very familiar with the story of Malala and how a lot of young girls like her are denied education and all that. And I also have family back home and constantly hearing about it, you feel very privileged being here and having access to all that education."* (Nimra interview)

Members of the practice emphasized how education about inequalities and potential barriers in the workplace could be a potential solution to addressing gender discrimination and increase the representation of women in leadership positions.

Secondly, Tan and DeFrank-Cole (2024) define the organizational domain, which includes topics related to types of organizations, systems, structures, types of groups and rules, and how these are linked to different barriers women face when attempting to obtain leadership roles. Several of the women students spoke about the existence of an obvious gender imbalance in certain fields of study or work domains. Sophie for example, speaks of the need for having the women and leadership student group in the business school, making an explicit link between lack of diversity and implicit bias:

> *"I think if you ever sat in any finance class, ever, you would know why there's a need* [for the Women and Leadership student association]*. I think it's just like, just like small things, like constantly being interrupted or being one of three women in my class or like the Prof not taking you seriously. And for me, it's obvious to me because, I don't think*

they really, they don't realize what they're doing. If I went up to them and said you didn't listen to me because I'm a woman, they would say, of course not, of course I value what you think and all this. They don't, but they just can't understand that. They don't understand why. And it comes from the students; it comes from professor in the class (…). You know, it's like, well, unconscious bias. You know, they don't realize they're doing it now, but they still are. (Sophie interview)

Another participant from the field of accounting shares her observations from academic conferences and how participants and presenters do not represent the wider society:

"But every time I went to a conference, the first thing I did was first question, and I would look around the room, how many women are there? Second thing I would do, how many people of color are here? And often it wasn't that many. All the people looked alike. It was always white men. Even like when you would have speakers, it was often white men. I was like, this isn't necessarily normal." (Nimra interview)

This gender imbalance is also reflected in internships or part-time employment. Mariam, a student in finance explains:

"I'm a finance student, and when you see several majors, if you compare finance with marketing, you're going to see that in marketing, there's more girls, of course. Finance is more male focused. For example, right now I work in capital markets, and I can tell you we are in the team, three girls, and there's maybe 25 males. And sometimes when I'm in the office, I'm the only girl. The other girls, they're all like the secretaries. And also, just in general, when you check for the board of directors of like a big company, you're

always going to see it, maybe five men for one woman. You always see that." (Mariam interview)

Nonetheless, Mariam talks about witnessing the beginning of change:

> "*But now I think today in the 21st century, I'm talking about it's getting better. We're getting better at it, and we're all trying to involve more women and to integrate them into these kind of roles that before were more taken by men. And you also see it in several companies. Sometimes I feel like I was interviewing for KPMG in September and for management consulting, and I was with the managing director, and she was a woman, and she was interviewing me, and she was like, honestly, I'm going to tell you the truth. I was interviewing for an intern position for this summer. She's like, I'm not going to hide it, but I really want this position to be filled by a girl, because literally in the team there's only males, at least an intern needs to be a girl. So, I feel like they really want this to change and they're like trying something new*" (Mariam interview)

The members of the practice were aware that there is an underrepresentation of women, especially in certain business fields, that this can lead to biases against women but that some organizations are starting to hire women in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Through their engagement in the practice, the participants came to understand that opportunities exist and are reinforced through "developmental relationships" (Tan & DeFrank-Cole, 2024, p. 28). These are classified within the interpersonal domain reflecting "the relational aspects that can bolster as well as prevent women from advancing to leadership" (p. 27). The activities organized by the group exposed the participants to potential allies in the business world who were willing to support women. Renata explains:

So, something that I mainly took out of all of them (events), *which I felt like it was a common theme, was that being a woman in business is hard, but it's not impossible, which sometimes I feel like a lot of people make it seem that if you're a person of colour or a woman or this and that you're going to have to work very hard. And I think one of the takeaways from all of that was that they make sure to tell us that there's people out there who will give you opportunities and not to be so hard on yourself. So, I think that's my key takeaway, that there are people who are going to be willing to listen to me and give me a job."* (Renata interview)

These thoughts reflect the literature within the interpersonal domain that identifies access to professional networks, mentors and role models as important support mechanisms for women who later in their career, aspire to attain leadership positions (Tan & DeFrank-Cole, 2024).

Lastly, Tan and DeFrank-Cole's (2024) individual domain encompasses the "internal, personal elements that can either hinder or facilitate women's leadership" (p. 28). Many activities organized by the group addressed topics from this domain including leadership coaching, personal values, confidence, learning orientation, intersectionality, effective leadership styles and behaviours, and motivation to lead. These are illustrated by the questions posed to the businesswomen who participated in the events. Examples of questions that were meant to identify barriers to women in leadership included:

- What are some common, and uncommon, challenges faced by leaders and minority leaders?
- Did you encounter any challenges in your career because you are a woman?

- What advice would you give regarding imposter syndrome?
- Women are a small percentage of corporate executives; how do you go beyond these odds?

Other questions focused on elements that could lead to positive leadership outcomes for women:

- What leadership traits are required to be an efficient leader? What skills do you use most and are most effective?
- What keeps you motivated?
- How do you make room for continuous learning in your busy life?

In summary, the participants understood that both discrimination and opportunities exist for young women aspiring to leadership positions. Their awareness stemmed from their cultural background and education, their personal experience both in- and outside the classroom, general awareness gathered through different information outlets, and engagement in the practice of event organization. The organized events presented topics related to societal and organizational barriers with the aim of educating both male and female students and generally raise awareness. Through the lens of female students about to enter the work environment and aspiring to leadership roles, the participants understood that there existed gender-based barriers and support mechanisms at the interpersonal and individual levels. It is partly through their engagement in the organization of events and the exposure to the practice of businesspeople engaged in the advancement of women in leadership (i.e., the associated practice) that the participants came to better understand the topics of leadership and gender within the broader academic and professional contexts.

6.2 Practices and the individual development of leadership

The practice theory perspective focuses on activities carried out by multiple people (Schatzki, 2017) rather than the behaviour of individuals. Nonetheless, as Schatzki writes, "Because people perform actions, in particular, the actions that compose practices, practices presuppose people: no people, no practices" (2017, p. 26). Although the author further states that practices encompass the actions of different people and that people have their own lives, the practice theory perspective provides few, if any, guidelines for analyzing the situation of individual persons. Lave and Wenger's theory of situated learning (1991), on the other hand, does refer to the individual through the concept of identity but without fully explaining its role in learning. According to the authors, "knowing is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities and is located in relations among practitioners, their practice, the artifacts of that practice, and the social organization and political economy of communities of practice" (p. 122). Building on the theory of situated learning, Wenger (1999, 2020) further develops the concept of identity within his theory of social learning. He emphasises that persons are a "meaning-making entity for whom the social world is a resource for constituting an identity" (2000, p. 2). The author explains that communities of practice are not isolated units, but part of what he calls 'broader social systems' that include multiple practices; he further clarifies that learning is made up of both social systems and individuals' personal experience of those systems.

The experience of the whole person (body, brain, relationships, aspirations), Wenger explains, "is actively constituted, shaped, and interpreted through learning" (2000, p. 2). Learning is not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person. Going a step further he argues that learning involves not only making sense of a community of practice, but also of broader systems and one's position in all of this. Wenger calls this the 'landscape of practices'

(2000, p. 3) and writes about the different ways the negotiation of identity contributes to learning in this landscape. Using the lens of the landscape of practices, I attempted to capture how individual members understood their own leadership development through their experience in the practice of event organization and its associated practices, and the meaning they attributed to their experience.

6.2.1 Leadership Identity Development in the Practice of Event Organization

Wenger explains that membership in a community of practice allows participants to obtain a sense of self with respect to the regime of competences of the practice. He defines the regime "as a set of criteria and expectations by which [members] recognize membership" (2000, p. 2). It includes the understanding of the practice's purpose or telos, the ability to engage in the 'sayings' and 'doings' of the practice and the appropriate use of the repertoire of resources. Membership establishes identity, not just through reified markers of membership (such as titles) but through required forms of competence (Wenger, 1999). However, it is important to note that the author contrasts alignment and modulation of identification. A person "can identify more or less with a community, the need to belong to it, and therefore the need to be accountable to its regime of competence" (2000, p. 3). In this sense identity is 'negotiated' by persons within a social system.

In the women and leadership group, when reflecting on their leadership development within the practice, members described it in terms of their ability to engage in the 'doings' of the practice and using the appropriate resources to complete their tasks. Some talk about their roles, as Mariam notes, "*So, it's more like we know what each of us needs to do, and we know that by doing that, we'll be able to accomplish something and showing our leadership by doing what we* *need to do".* Many mention the skills and the use of tools that were needed to carry out their responsibilities. Skills mentioned by several of the members included communication, collaboration, organization, thinking outside the box, and time management. Emily, for example, when asked whether she felt her experience in the group allowed her to develop leadership, described the skills she improved through her role as marketing VP and the tools she produced to perform her activities:

> *I would say it made me more organized, and I guess stay on top of everything. Well, I usually always create like a calendar of like what's going to happen for like the next week. So that way I can better visualize what's to come. Then I kind of like just tackle the most important ones* [tasks]. *I think that's something that I didn't used to do before. I would just be a bit more overwhelmed with it.* (interview Emily)

For some members however, the skills they developed were not clearly tied to leadership development, for example Nimra muses "*I'm not sure about leadership, I think it's helped. I don't even know what's the appropriate word, but just maybe it's group work, just being able to gather information and then from different parties […] And it's being able to find solutions to problems quickly*". Nimra's personal experience and the meaning she made of her actions within the practice were obviously different than that of Emily or other members who clearly recognized their skills as being associated to developing leadership.

Wenger (1999) also writes that identity is formed through the accumulation of experiences and reification (into a social category or discourse of the self for example). As people interact with others and observe the impact they have on the world, these experiences and reifications continuously build upon one another, to produce a sense of self, or identity. He further states, "what narratives, categories, roles and positions come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice" (p. 151). Mia reflects on her engagement in the practice over her year-long mandate and the impact it has had on her sense of self; "*I think just because I've achieved or hosted such big events like the one that I just recently did, shows that I could pretty much do anything I put my mind to. It's given me a lot more confidence, too*". The positive feedback that she received about the events she organized contributed to her sense of self-efficacy, *"I thought it was really rewarding to see attendees come up to you and say, this is an amazing event. Please do more. So, I thought, like I appreciated that a lot".*

6.2.2 Leadership Identity Development and the 'Landscape of Practices''

The social world, as Wenger (2000) puts it, "includes myriad practices; and we live and learn across a multiplicity of practices" (p. 3). He uses the metaphor of a trajectory across 'landscapes of practice' to describe identity and writes:

> *Over time, it reflects our journeying within some communities as well as transitions across communities. It incorporates the past and the future into the time it accumulates memories, competencies, key formative events, stories, and relationships to people and places. It also provides directions, aspirations, and projected images of oneself that guide the shaping of the trajectory going forward.* (Wenger, 2000, p. 5).

As members of the practice, individual participants became more engaged over time and gained access to more sources of understanding, including contact with mentors, and members of other practices within their landscape of practices. In fact, learning implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by the broader system of relations in which they have meaning. Claire, who was one of the members responsible for gaining sponsorships, talked about gaining more confidence over time because of her engagement in activities that were challenging for her and involved contact with members of the wider constellation of associated practices:

> *"But as I got more comfortable in my role and as I got more comfortable speaking with outsiders as well, and external people, I feel that it has developed my confidence, which, again, ties into leadership. I find that being more confident in what you're here to do, being more confident in your role in the committee that you're working with has really helped me personally to just develop the leadership skills of taking the initiative, really being confident in what I say and what I'm bringing to the table. […] I was dealing with companies and potential employers that I could work for someday. So, I feel that it was a bit intimidating for me to reach out to these people and to network in that sense. But getting out of my comfort zone and really just being out there has really developed me as a person and honed a lot of my skills too."* (Claire interview)

Like Claire, Amina noted how her skills evolved over time and how she developed a sense of empowerment through contact with members from associated practices during their events:

> *"So I know for myself I am someone who's rather shy, and I feel like this committee helped me maybe being more outgoing when it comes to talking with strangers, being the first one to speak, being the first one to address certain issues, and maybe being in control and everything (…) And I feel like since I went through now it's my third or fourth time doing one of these events, I feel like I'm way more comfortable going up to strangers and just talking about anything and asking questions that I need."* (Amina interview)

Another important way that individual members developed a sense of self – or potential self - in the landscape of practices is through the mode of 'imagination' (Wenger, 2000). The author writes, "As we engage with the world, we are also constructing an image of the world that helps us understand how we belong or not." (2000, p. 5). These images contribute "to locate and orient ourselves, to see ourselves from a different perspective, to reflect on our situation, and to explore new possibilities" (p. 5). Nimra, for example, reflects on the epidemic and her course work, and how she developed a different perspective of what leadership, or being a leader could mean. She put great emphasis on the need for empathy and respect.

> "*And you also have to remember (...) people have lives outside of the bubbles that you know them. They might have issues outside of those things that you don't know about and I think the pandemic emphasized that a lot when especially in the beginning, people are opening their cameras; you see their personal lives at home. (...) Then if you can see someone, like, visibly struggling, just being there for them and just letting them know, like, hey, I can support you, just let me know which way. Because support can look different to every person. The way that I might feel supported, it might be different from the way someone else feels supported. (...) Always taking two steps back and really there's a bigger picture and it's not just like your point of view"*

The mode of imagination is also closely associated to the members' understanding of leadership and gender within the broader professional context. Through contact with women leaders during the organized events, members could imagine a potential future where being a woman leader would be possible. Women telling their stories of success allowed to boost participants' confidence that one day they could accede to a leadership role. This was a topic of special consideration for the women students of colour who have so few role models in the business world. Claire expressed how, as a woman of colour, becoming a leader may be difficult but nonetheless possible:

> "*I do a lot of readings in terms of articles and one of the things that always strikes me or that has been happening a lot, or emphasized on, is that if you don't see people that look like you in positions that you aspire to become or in things that you aspire to become, it will shy you away. And that's like human nature; you will shy away from that. And so, seeing women leaders in industries that I'm interested in, for me, that helps me a lot because it gives me the encouragement that it is possible. And it's not just like a fantasy that you're dreaming. These women have gone, yes, there are challenges. And so, learning from their experiences so that, I wouldn't say try to avoid them, but if they do occur, then I know how to be prepared for them".* (Claire interview)

Wenger's (1999, 2000) social theory of learning and specifically his concept of 'landscape of practices' provides a way to conceptualize the members' understanding of their own leadership development as that of gaining a sense of self – or identity - as a current or future leader. First, through their engagement in the practice, members are learning skills they describe as being associated to leadership, and they are construing their roles and tasks as being associated to leadership positions. Through their engagement in the activities of the practice and their contact with the broader social system, they are developing different perspectives of what it means to be a leader. Lastly, given the knowledge they have of the wider professional context through the stories mentors and panelists shared, they become better able to project themselves in the future as women holding leadership roles.

6.3 Summary of the Zooming-Out

To summarize, zooming out to associated practices contributes to a better understanding of how the concepts of gender and leadership intersected in the observed practice. Through the members' reflections on why the women and leadership student group was needed, and why they were interested in joining it, it became clear that they comprehended that there were systemic barriers to women attaining leadership roles, and that there was a need for students to learn how to address these barriers. This is reflected in their perception of the purpose of the practice.

International students or first-generation Canadians members of the practice spoke about their personal experiences with discriminatory societal and cultural values ingrained in their countries of origin that limited women's access to education and to leadership roles. More generally, the members spoke about the existence of male-dominated environments in both academic fields and the work environment, the lack of female role models, and of women at senior organizational levels. The practice of businesswomen championing women leadership associated with the student group's practice informed members of the barriers related to advancement but also vitally of strategies for overcoming these barriers. Importantly, the businesswomen imparted a sense of hope to the members of the practice through their own stories and expression of willingness to support female students entering the job market, aspiring to reach leadership roles.

Although the practice perspective does not focus on individuals, Wenger's (1999, 2000) work that builds on the situated learning theory does bring some insights on how to conceptualize individual members' understanding of their own leadership development within a practice. Looking at the role of identity in learning, he emphasizes that learning involves making sense of one's position within a practice and the broader systems associated with that practice. Zooming-in and -out of the practice, or what Wenger (2000) calls taking into consideration the 'landscape of practices' helps to frame how members developed their sense of self through their engagement in the practice. Firstly, they understood their own leadership development in terms of their roles and responsibilities within the practice – carrying out one's responsibilities demonstrated leadership. Many, but not all, perceived the skills they were developing as being leadership skills. Others spoke about a growth of confidence in being able to lead that built over their one-year mandate as they accumulated positive results while organizing several events and working with members of associated practices. They developed new perspectives on leadership through their engagement in the practice as well as an image of themselves as potential future female leaders.

Chapter 7. Discussion

In this section I start by summarizing the main results of the study and discuss how these may be captured through a cyclical process model of leadership learning. I then present contributions of this study to the literature on methodological approaches to studying collective leadership, to the literature on the role of adult learning theory to explain the process of plural leadership emergence, and to the field of gender and leadership learning. I also discuss implications for practice, the limitations of the study and future research directions.

7.1 Summary of Main findings and the Cyclical Process of Leadership Learning

The general aims of this study were to explore the accomplishment of student leadership within a business school setting; the role of adult educational theories in explaining how leadership is learned within such a setting; and the ways in which gender intersects with leadership learning. The main findings of this research project can be summarized as follows:

a) As a foundational idea in both the practice perspective and the theory of situated learning, *purpose* (telus or meaning) becomes an overarching concept necessary to explain the leadership learning of the women students. Inspired by By's (2021) definition, purpose can be understood as both a guide to activities that are useful for the practice and something that is personally meaningful to the participants and society at large. Through the practice's purpose, gender intersected with leadership learning as the participants connected with other champions of women and leadership, providing the members with opportunities to develop their identities as potential future women leaders.

b) When looking at the emergence of leadership in a practice of event organization, the participants' engagement in leadership work as indicated by their leadership 'sayings' during meetings is mediated by the members' roles and the practice's artifacts in ways that can enhance or limit the learning of leadership. More specifically,

   - When a member's role is misaligned with the practice's needs, the opportunity to become a full participant in the practice is restricted; this results in limited engagement in leadership work and consequently learning how to do leadership – i.e., pathways to learning how 'to do' leadership are severely limited.
   - When the roles are well aligned with the practice's needs and in a context of managerial shared leadership, all participants are presented with official and unofficial opportunities to engage in leadership work; these opportunities are also mediated by the artifacts used in the practice, which are themselves also associated with the roles.
   - Students' learning to do leadership cannot be fully understood without considering the characteristics of the practice of event organization. The practice of event organization is determinative of the artifacts that are used and the roles that are held but is also dependent and altered by these. Thus, the process of event organizing called for different tasks to be executed at different moments of time in the repeated cycles of event organization over the academic year, by different people (i.e., roles), and utilizing specific artifacts or tools (i.e., notes). At the same time, the process of event organization was dependent on the division of roles and the use of organizing tools and altered by how participants negotiated their roles and use of tools within the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable by the

practice. Without considering the particularities of the practice, one cannot fully explain the emergence of the participants' individual leadership learning paths.

Turning to the work of Cloutier and Langley (2020), I look to a process model to recapitulate how the learning of leadership unfolded over time and to identify contingencies that would be likely to affect the evolution of students' leadership learning at both the individual and collective levels. The authors explain that process models are a way to describe "the dynamic unfolding of phenomena over time" (p. 2). In the case of this study, I propose that a cyclical process model captures how the phenomenon of leadership learning emerged and evolved over the 7-months period of observation. I turn to the data I gathered through observations, interviews and analyses of artefacts that provide "empirical pathways" (Cloutier & Langley, p. 6) to explain the process of leadership learning. The theory of situated learning as mentioned earlier is characterized by a focus on temporality, change, and activity (Cloutier & Langley, 2020). Within the theory, LPP was originally developed as a conceptual tool to explain how newcomers in a practice learn to become old-timers. In the observed study, however, the practice is bound to one university academic school year. Instead of referring to members as 'newcomers' and 'old-timers', I prefer to describe their evolution as being that of novices who become competent members of the practice.

Over the period of one academic year, members organized four events, each one becoming more complex and involving increased responsibilities for the group. Each event consisted of a cycle of activities involving a similar set of actions, divided among the members according to their responsibilities and the needs of said event, involving interactions among members at both the departmental and team levels and mediated by the tools of the practice. Moreover, within each individual event cycle, and as discussed above, interactions among members at the department were characterized by facets of shared managerial leadership, involving both prescriptive activities and the possibility to innovate, leading to the creation of personal trajectories of participation uniquely contributing to each member's learning to do leadership work. Expressed in terms of the situated learning theory and LPP specifically, members can be said to have been fully engaged (except for one person) in several cycles of event organization, growing from being novice members to competent members of the practice. Through their participation in the cycles of event organization and mediated by their roles and the meeting 'notes', members were presented with opportunities to engage in "changing and setting courses of action" (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016, p. 42). At the same time, members developed new perspectives on leadership through their engagement in the practice and began to identify themselves as current or potential future woman leaders. The process is illustrated in Figure 3, below.

Cloutier and Langley (2020) further explain that when describing the "dynamic unfolding of phenomena over time" (p. 2) through a process model, it becomes necessary to "identify the event-based contingencies that are likely to redirect pathways over time" (p.5). In the case of this study, contingencies that influenced leadership learning pathways or trajectories included the alignment/misalignment of roles within the practice, the mediational function of artefacts during the meetings, the aspects of shared managerial leadership allowing the balance of prescriptive activities with the ability to innovate within roles, and the characteristics of event-organizing itself. I therefore conclude that the dynamic unfolding of members' learning to do leadership can be described as a cyclical process, defined by cycles of action within each event and across four events, and characterized by several contingencies influencing individual learning pathways within the practice of event organization.

Note. Image generated by ChatGPT, March 27, 2026

Figure 3. A Process of Leadership Learning

7.2 Contributions to the Literature

In this section I present four important ways in which this study contributes to the literature. Firstly, it contributes to the literature about methodological approaches to study collective leadership. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that Nicolini's (2009, 2012) 'tool kit' framework, which he also calls a "theory-method package", is implemented to zoom in on the collective accomplishment of leadership in a practice and zoom out on an associated practice. The use of this approach responds to calls for linking "theoretical conceptualizations to methodological concerns" (Alvehus & Crevani, 2022, p. 1) to study leadership. By mobilizing the different perspectives of practice theories and using sensitizing questions - proposed by Nicolini (2012, 2017) - that draw upon these perspectives, I was able to pay attention to several modalities of leadership, including that of language, material arrangements, and interactional order, thus adding to the empirical study of leadership from a practice perspective. This approach may be useful to further explore the various modalities of leadership.

Secondly, the research project presented a new way to study the emergence of plural leadership by utilizing an adult learning theory to explain the process of leadership learning in a group of women business students engaged in the practice of event organization. Focusing on one theoretical facet of practice, specifically learning, the theory of situated learning and its concept of LPP (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was chosen to analyze the process of leadership learning. Mobilizing the perspectives of different theories of practice through sensitizing questions as per Nicolini's (2012) approach made it possible to draw upon the strengths of the different perspectives to enhance the analytical power of LPP. This permitted the analysis of how roles and artifacts, combined with the cyclical needs of event organization, augmented or diminished participants' engagement in managerial shared leadership (a form of collective leadership) – and thus restricted or opened opportunities to learn how to do leadership. This led to the proposition that the unfolding of members' learning to do leadership can be described as a cyclical process, characterized by several contingencies influencing individual learning pathways within the practice of event organization. These findings may lead to an expansion of the use of the theory of situated learning to analyze different processes of plural leadership emergence.

Thirdly, applying the zooming-in and -out framework highlighted how the concept of purpose plays a part in explaining how women students learned about leadership. The methodological approach broadened the field of analysis and exposed how the practice of event organization was connected and dependent on the practices of businesspeople sharing the same purpose as the student group. The exploration of this association between practices provided a more in-depth analysis of the process of learning. The process involved students learning about leadership by both engaging in the ‘sayings and doings’ of the practice and by developing a sense of self – or potential self as future leaders through contact with participants of associated practices that shared the same purpose. This study therefore also contributes to literature about women and leadership learning by highlighting the important role of women leaders sharing their stories of success, a topic of special consideration for women students of colour who have so few role models in the business world.

Lastly, I expanded Yukl’s (2012) hierarchical taxonomy of leadership behaviours by using it to analyse and categorize “bundles of related actions” (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016, p. 31) that contributed to the “collective agency in changing and setting courses of action” (p. 42). Although the original taxonomy was based on results of leader-centric research that did not consider the context, including the responses of the so-called subordinates or followers, it was nonetheless a useful tool for categorizing several of the ‘sayings’ of the participants. It became necessary to make adaptations to certain categories of actions as they could be performed by any member of the practice and involved interactions among any team member. In these cases, Yukl’s examples of behaviours were re-interpreted and re-labelled to represent actions all team members could perform, and that contributed to the collective performance of leadership. This expanded taxonomy may be useful for future research exploring the leadership behaviors of teams.

7.3 Contributions to Practice

In this section I reflect on two main ways that this study could contribute to enhancing the emergence and development of collective leadership among student populations, (a) firstly by providing support and training to members of student associations and (b) secondly, through the analysis of barriers facing women leadership development in higher education settings.

7.2.1 Student associations

As observed in this study, students learned to do leadership work by being participants in a practice that had purpose and that provided opportunities for them to be engaged meaningfully. Students who participate in associations or clubs in business schools are for the most part engaged in similar types of practices where it would be both possible and desirable to enhance the learning of leadership. As Allen et al. (2021) note, formal initiatives to develop student leadership outside of the formal curriculum are rare and not necessarily linked to student organizations or clubs. These practices take place in environments that are still part of a formal educational context but that also provide a work-like experience without the high stakes associated with ‘a real job’.

Lehtonen and Seeck (2023), in their overview of leadership development from the L-A-P perspective, present several findings from their literature review that could contribute to the emergence and learning of leadership in student groups. As reported in this study, leadership actions are often ‘bundled’ together, always part of social interactions among team members, and part of routines. A first step to enhancing leadership learning would be to help bring “the unconscious and unspoken into a more active, conscious and explicit domain” (Lethonen & Seeck, p. 57) at the group level and then having members reflect on their own and others’ contribution to the unfolding of leadership actions. Following this type of reflection, Raelin (2006, 2016, 2020) argues that as individuals engage in new practices, they will have increased awareness of the processes involved in contributing to the emergence of leadership.

Based on the theory of situated learning and the process of LPP, it becomes possible to reflect on what enhances and what blocks engagement in practice, and by extension the opportunity to do leadership work. As part of the reflection on the practice or on participants' experience, members could consider what structural or 'material' aspects could be changed or adapted to enhance leadership development. Eva et al. (2021) provide ideas such as encouraging questions about processes and using shared and agreed upon prompts to flag issues. The authors also mention having practice members deconstruct what they call 'leadership associations' by using critical discourse analysis to encourage the examination of textual materials (e.g., policies) and how they evolved over time.

Such initiatives could be undertaken by student affairs' officials within universities or business schools who would need to obtain training in practice-based approaches; training could then be provided to students, who could then become trainers themselves, multiplying the number of persons involved. As resources are currently stretched across institutions of higher-education, researchers interested in student leadership could also work with practitioners and utilize an action-research approach to generate actions and analyze the results to enhance leadership learning in their contexts.

7.2.2 Facilitating women students' leadership development

Members of the observed practice mentioned the existence of several gender-related barriers women face both at university and in their careers. At the same time, through their engagement in the practice, they also identified several ways to face those barriers. Tan and DeFrank-Cole's (2024) framework, which aims to identify how interconnected gender-related factors influence individuals and their leadership, could be an interesting analytical tool to be used in business schools or other higher education institutions to identify the academic and non-academic factors preventing or encouraging women students' leadership learning beyond student associations and clubs.

Taking into consideration what members of the practice spoke about, special consideration could be given to the critical deconstruction of implicit gender biases in the classroom, to increase the discussion of gender issues within the curriculum (e.g., utilizing teaching cases that include non-biased representations of women, referring to research addressing gender issues in the classroom, inviting women speakers in the classroom, and increased exposure to female role models), and augment the presence of women faculty members within the school. This could help women students to both develop a leadership identity and a sense of belonging associated with seeing people like themselves in positions of leadership and expertise. As indicated by the study, at the interpersonal level, exposure to more women role models also contributes to the development of women students' professional networks and is especially important for young women of colour. Future research could study the implementation and effectiveness of the different types of interventions mentioned above. This would fit into business schools' equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, valued by business school accreditation bodies.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite the contributions to the literature and potential contributions to practice, I must also acknowledge this study's limitations. In the first place, the observation of the 'doings and sayings' of the participants during hybrid meetings was challenging. At the time of the study, to the best of my knowledge, there existed no information to guide the observation of hybrid settings; it was a new phenomenon for all. As mentioned in the methods section above, the hybrid meetings meant that not all actions or sayings were easily observable due to participants having their cameras off, their medical masks on, and the occurrence of different technological problems. Although these challenges were partly counterbalanced by speaking with the co-presidents at the end of the meetings, the routine nature of the meetings and the relatively lengthy observation period, there is no doubt that more data could have been collected if all meetings had been held in person without the use of medical masks. This situation may have led to the loss of some interesting data. The knowledge I gained from the observations is necessarily partial and contextual.

Attending to more than one modality of leadership is also challenging. Answering Alvehus and Crevani's (2022) call to take into consideration the multiple modalities of leadership, I attempted to go beyond language (the 'sayings') and included the socio-material (e.g., interactional order and meeting notes) aspects of leadership and how they connected to leadership learning. However, it was difficult to go into a deep analysis of all modalities under study, especially within the time frame of a doctoral research project. This meant that I could not undergo a full discursive analysis of the sayings of the ten meetings and focused instead on higher level shifts in conversations and decision making. A focus on the fine-grained details of the 'sayings' would have undoubtedly brought more of the richness of the discursive elements of leadership emergence to the fore.

Finally, as noted by Gherardi (2009), the use of written language in re-constructing practice is limited. By writing about their knowing, researchers "discursively construct the phenomenon which they study and describe" (p. 123) and, as she further explains, human knowledge is not only discursive, but also "pre-discursive, sensorial and embodied" (p. 123). The written re-presentation of the observed practice is therefore a limited reflection of the observed practice as it occurred as well as reflecting my own learning experience and positionality. The written format necessarily reflects my own practice as a student working towards the obtention of a doctoral degree. The organization of the writing follows a format necessary to meet the university's needs, to aid readers' comprehension, and to faithfully represent the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It is therefore an imperfect re-presentation of the local accomplishment of the practice and the relationship it has with other practices.

7.4 Future Directions

In the following and based on the findings of this study, I explore three main ideas for future research. First of all, I look to my findings that indicate that the unfolding of members' learning to do leadership work can be described as a cyclical process embedded in social interactions mediated by the tools of the practice. These interactions existed among members at both the departmental and team levels, nonetheless the interplay between and among the different constellations of shared managerial leadership could be further studied. Questions could focus on how the different types of interactions mutually contribute to leadership learning. This would entail the need for ethnographic studies that capture the sequence of actions over time, identify who enacted the actions, taking into consideration the characteristics of the situation, and the objectives of the group (van Knippenberg, Pearce & van Ginkel, 2025).

Secondly, one of the main findings of this study was the identification of several contingencies that influenced individual learning pathways within the practice of event organization. Future research could attend to learning at the collective level and study whether individual recursive learning processes “scale up to group ones” (Cloutier & Langley, 2020, p. 14). Writing about collective learning, Nijland and Vermeulen (2025) describe collective learning as more than the sum of individual learning that can be understood as a “dynamic, cumulative social interaction process” (p. 2). The authors point to different ways that could be used to study collective learning. These include gathering information about the ways in which learners “exchange information, knowledge and perspectives” (p. 2), the development of feelings of belonging to the group, and the ways in which group artifacts are created and changed.

Lastly, although the study looked at how concepts of gender and leadership intersected in the practice setting, I did not take a feminist perspective or approach. Poggio (2025) writes about what feminist perspectives can add to practice theory. Using feminist perspectives, the author argues that practice theory can be expanded. One main expansion of practice theory that future research could explore through a feminist approach is that of affect. As explained by Poggio, “emotions such as anger, joy, or solidarity, shape the political and ethical potential of practices beyond cognitive or linguistic expression” (p. 6). This is a promising approach to studying practices whose purpose is to address inequalities. Researchers could examine how affect contributes to how members understand the purpose of their practice, to their engagement in the practice as well as to their development of sense of self or identity.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of the emergence of collective leadership, in addition to enhancing our knowledge around the development of leadership of young women, at the start of their careers. The study also contributes to the literature about methodological approaches to the study of leadership from a practice perspective and about the need to support the research on management learning and education. It remains important for business schools to develop the competencies of all future leaders to address the complex challenges the business world - and the world at large - is facing.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

No right or wrong answers – interested in how you're experiencing being in the group

Tell me the story of how you joined JMWL?
- Interest, mandate, why JMWL specifically, why is it important to you?

How would you describe your role in the group?
- Tasks, place in the group

Could you describe how you and X work together?
- How do you communicate (phone, google meet, Slak, email, in person)
- How do you make decisions? Describe any
- How do you solve problems? Describe any
- Has the way you work together changes over time? How?
- How and when do you communicate with others in the group (at Exec only)?

What are you getting out of the different activities the group organizes?
- events, mentorship, bonding - narratives

Do you feel that the group is developing leadership?
- In what ways is the development of leadership at the group level reflected?
- When do you feel it's happening (moments of leadership)?
- What is making it possible?
- Is there anything that is limiting it? That is making it difficult?
- Has group leadership evolved over time? Have you noticed a change in the group over time?

Do you personally feel that you are developing leadership?
- If yes, what makes you feel that you are? (examples or personal feelings, id, learning, skills)
- Why do you think you are – what is enabling it – what is restricting it
- If no, why not? What do you think leadership is?

Appendix 2. Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects

Appendix 3. Event Questions

Event 1. Negotiate to Level Up

How do you know what a fair starting salary is?

How do you feel about asking your coworkers about their salary?

What is an important lesson that you had to learn the hard way in your work?

How has networking played a role in your career growth?

Is it always a good idea to try to negotiate a salary?

Have you ever faced a situation where you were scared to ask for a better salary or benefits?

What are some tips to know when you would like to re-negotiate your current salary?

What was your first negotiation experience like?

How has salary negotiation helped advance your career?

How do you respond to a low salary offer?

What is the first step when it comes to negotiating?

Can we tell through body language if someone is willing to negotiate?

What advice would you give to university students in negotiating a reasonable salary for their first job?

What would you do if you initially agreed to a salary, but once you begin your role you realize that you should have negotiated for a higher one?

Can you lose a job offer by negotiation?

Should you wait for your employer to give you opportunities for advancement or initiate them yourself

How do you identify and get a mentor in the workplace to help you succeed

Do you think negotiating your salary will change the image your boss has of you?

negotiation

Event 2: Imposter Syndrome

How do you define imposter syndrome?

When was the first time you experienced imposter syndrome? How did you cope?

Do you believe that it is a common feeling amongst people?

What are tips and tricks that you recommend for people who experience it?

Do you attribute your success to luck, connections, or another external factor?
Do you think that the feelings of imposter syndrome fade with age and experience?

- \- Are there moments in time when imposter syndrome typically occurs in your career?
- \- Do you recall/remember the first time you felt imposter syndrome ?/ A moment where you felt like you were doubting your abilities?
    - \- How did you address it?
    - \- How did you overcome it?
    - \- Tips on overcoming future challenges related to self-doubt/imposter syndrome
- \- Support systems can be rare, at times where you felt self-doubt, was there someone or something that helped you?

Questions:

- Or alternatively: when you notice someone on your team/ someone close to you has a moment of self-doubt, what's the approach you make?

- \- If you could go back to that moment, is there any advice you would give to yourself ?
- \- Do you think there are ways for other leaders in the company to avoid the feeling of imposter syndrome for women in their teams?

<u>Event 3. Flagship</u>

Topics in morning: Navigating Conflict resolution:

- Leadership traits
- ○ Challenges of Leadership roles
- ○ Conflict resolution & Risk Management
- ○ Leading in Turbulent times eg. COVID 19 (Virtual Leadership)
- ○ Women in leadership

1. Have you always aspired to be in this leadership position? What road did you take to get here?
2. What leadership traits are required to be an efficient leader and why?

3. What skills do you use most in your leadership role? Can you describe how you gained those skills?
4. What are some common challenges faced by leaders? (Minority challenges)
5. How can leaders contribute to conflict resolution?
6. When conflict emerges among your subordinates, how do you deal with it? (Provide an example if applicable)
7. What proactive steps can leaders take to minimize risk and avoid conflict?
8. How do you make room for continued learning in your hectic lives?
9. It's clear that the pandemic forced many businesses to adapt swiftly and turn to virtual leadership. What lessons have you acquired from leading during turbulent times?
10. Though men and women begin in parity at the start of their careers in finance and accounting, the C-suite is still largely dominated by men. Have you noticed any impacts of leading in predominantly male dominated spaces?
11. As successful female leaders, what advice can you give to aspiring women looking to overcome this challenge?
12. What books, podcasts, apps, and other resources do you recommend for prospective leaders?

<u>Evening panel: Leadership in action</u>

- Crucial leadership characteristics & traits
- ○ Leadership style
- ○ Communication style and challenges
- ○ Moving up the ladder (tips & challenges)
- ○ Women in leadership

1. As successful leaders, what traits do you believe are most crucial in leadership positions and why?
2. What do you personally do to strengthen your leadership skills?
3. What is your leadership style? How do you lead others?
4. How would you describe your communication style?
5. Have you faced any major challenges as a leader? If so, how do you overcome them? (ex. delegation..)
6. As your professional career progressed, have you ever experienced imposter syndrome?
7. Have you had any role models or mentors that have driven you to fulfill these leadership roles?
8. Have you always aspired to pursue leadership roles?
9. What would you tell your younger self if you could go back in time with all of the information and wisdom you've learned over the years?
10. As a successful leader, what have been some of your crowning achievements and pleasures?
11. Many studies have found that, despite the fact that women hold the majority of bachelor's degrees in Canada, they make up a small percentage of corporate executives and have less opportunities in leadership. How have you overcome these odds and what advice could you give to aspiring leaders?
12. What books, podcasts, apps, and other resources do you recommend for aspiring leaders?

Appendix 4. Example of Meeting Notes

Executive Team Meeting

Meeting #20

Monday, January 17th, 2022

Room: Google Meet

Start Time: 7:00pm

End Time: 8:30pm

GENERAL

- Presidency
  - Applications are open until Feb 4th
  - Here is the link
  - Any of you can do it
  - Please text us if you're interested!
    - If you're thinking of applying but aren't sure, let us know
    - Also you can kinda know who you want to be co-president with
    - Or you can just be a president
  - Ambassadors and collaborators can also apply!!
  - We can have a meeting to talk about it :) <3 :) <3

- [redacted] Event
  - It went so well!!!
  - So proud of you guys <3
  - Any feedback/comments

- Important Dates for Fall/Winter (Notify C&A and tell them to add to their calendars!)
  - Thursday, Feb. 17th: Event 3
  - Friday, March 11th: FLAGSHIP
  - Thursday, April 7th: [redacted] Event

- Start compiling all class dates/times for Class Talks here! NOW

EVENTS

- [redacted] Event

- Meeting on Thursday at 7pm to figure out a plan for online
    - Assuming that they will agree to have it online
    - Front Row Ventures - let them know we're moving online
    - Once you meet, notify CR about the plan so they can reach out to the speakers
- Flagship
  - Start thinking about a plan B
  - Ways to spend money
    - Giftbags for attendees
    - My mom knows an online event planning person, might be able to help us
  - Might still be in person?
- **Meet with CR as often as you can**
  - Any questions/comments?

CR

- Update on reaching out to companies for in-kind sponsorships, free things to give out to attendees, rewards for Kahoot in events
- Any sponsor updates (Tesla, PwC)
- Contracts update
- Any questions/comments?

FINANCE

- We need to adjust the budget for online events
- Do we need to follow any policies from the school for the scholarship?
- Marketing boost expense
  - For [redacted] + flagship
- Any questions/comments?

INTERNAL

- Any update on communication/refunds
- Update on mentorship session
- Bonding session (dates?)
- Any questions/comments?

INVOLVEMENT

- Ambassadors
  - General update

- Collaborators
    - General update
    - Quick recap of their feedback
    - Have the [redacted] event reviews gone up?
- C/As can reach out to small businesses, write a possible script for them to reach out
- Start preparing them for class talks
    - Start the week of February 7th
- Shadowing update
- Any questions/comments?

MARKETING & DESIGN

- [redacted] Event
- [redacted] Event
- Flagship
- A/C announcement post
- Promoting our scholarship website page & urging more people to apply - what do you think?
- Any questions/comments?

TEAM PHOTO
Theme: Pink