Gender and Leadership
in Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting

International Participatory
Action Research in the
Netherlands and Scotland

Final Report

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Findings...

Tailored leadership opportunities provided by WAGGGS can develop girls' confidence, their ideas of themselves as leaders and specific leadership skills such as decision-making

Views of leadership within WAGGGS show less gender bias than in some other research studies. Participating in the project appears to have resulted in an expanded view of leadership among girls and boys, and recognition of more women leaders and their contribution among some members

WAGGGS contexts provide a safe space for discussion of broader gender inequalities and the development of leadership opportunities; this can be especially true for some girls in single-sex settings

Leaders identify barriers to leadership due to a range of complex intersecting factors: age, gender, cultural expectations, local context, experience, as well as individual disposition

Leaders have developed a range of engaging activities to address such barriers. They note the value of observing and reflecting on activities to reveal aptitudes and issues that may not otherwise emerge. Leaders also recognise the need for tailored intervention strategies to increase both awareness and experience of leadership

Leaders value the opportunity to focus on leadership issues within the project, and to share their ideas across countries/contexts

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1 Introduction

This project was instigated and commissioned by the Europe branch of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) in response to concerns regarding women's representation and participation in leadership across political and economic spheres in Europe and globally. WAGGGS approached Oxford Brookes' Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, to work on developing a project which would develop leadership in girls and women, with a broader vision of transferral to external and future contexts.

Overarching aims included...

➤ To develop leadership competencies and confidence in girl members

➤ To enable recognition among boys, men, girls and women of gendered barriers, their role in overcoming such barriers and the benefits to all of addressing these barriers

➤ The development of competence and confidence in girls and young women to address specific gendered barriers that they face

➤ To enable local recognition of diverse contexts and needs, and the development of tools to address these, which will then be available for the wider WAGGGS community

➤ A wider recognition of the value of the opportunities girl guiding/scouting can provide to develop leadership skills, confidence and experience leading to improved recruitment and retention

2   Contexts

2.1   EU and national contexts

Gender equality is a foundational value of the EU dating from the 1957 Treaty of Rome which sought to establish equal pay. Since then, some progress has been made towards gender equality although significant inequalities still exist. Among those these identified as core aims by the EU specific measures for the advancement of women, and the addressing of under-representation on women in decision-making processes. In autumn 2015, women accounted for 29% of members of the single or lower houses of parliaments in the EU countries[1]. In corporate contexts women make up just 22.7% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU countries. The causes of such unequal representation are complex (see Summary Report: Gendered barriers to leadership in youth for a consideration of some of these) and vary within as well as across member nations. Despite such diversity it is recognised that equal gender representation is beneficial economically as well as socially, although this recognition is slow to translate into practices across the EU. While some counties can boast better statistics than others, none can claim anything like equal representation.

While both the Netherlands and the UK sit fairly high in world rankings of gender equality, (the Netherlands at 13/145 and the UK at 18/145) within the more closely-ranked EU more nuanced differences emerge to give a context for the 4-point global difference. In terms of women in decision-making roles, according to the last survey in 2013[2] the Netherlands has 23% of large company board seats occupied by women, where the UK had 18%; neither country however had a single woman chairing a large company. In national parliament, in the Netherlands 39% of elected representatives are women, while the UK has just 23%. Figures are more even at local government level, where the Netherlands has 34% and the UK 325 women as elected representatives. These figures give a context for more general perceptions that the Netherlands has a more gender-inclusive culture. However it should be noted that the UK figures are for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined, while participants in this project were exclusively from Scotland. Scotland has women leaders of four of its main political parties and is aiming for 40% representation on boards, compared to England's more modest 30% target. These figures suggest that broader national contexts may have both differences and similarities that aren't immediately obvious in the popular view or represented nationally.

2.2   WAGGGS context

WAGGGS is a global voluntary movement of young women, aimed at developing girls into active, ethical citizens and to provide recreational opportunities for such development. It provides local, national and global opportunities for the development and sharing of practices promoting the healthy development of girls. Developing girls as future leaders forms a strategic priority for WAGGGS Europe Region; it is hoped that by developing leadership training informed by external and internal research, girls and young women will be supported in achieving their leadership potential both within and beyond guiding/scouting. This project will form a pilot, the outcomes of which will be shared with the wider region.

In the Europe Region activities and programmes are offered in both single-sex and co-educational settings. This provides a unique opportunity to develop models for working with boys and men as well as girls and women on gendered barriers to equality.

Members in this study ranged from age 10-25, and were drawn from a range of single-sex and mixed groups. Leaders were both male and female. Scottish groups were all single-sex. The gendered context for the groups provided some interesting differences in the nature of findings, both in the behaviours observed by leaders and the attitudinal questionnaires.

3 Method

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A two-part approach was employed in this project. The primary approach was participant action research (PAR), and an online attitudinal questionnaire was administered before and after the PAR element, to both participating leaders and their members.

3.1 The PAR element

PAR is a community-based approach to research that emphasises local expertise, collaboration and action for improvement. It is described as an approach rather than a method per se, because it can employ a range of methods such as observation, interviews, or visual data. These methods are qualitative and interpretative; they emphasize reflexivity and contextual understanding. PAR provides participants with tools for evidence gathering and reflection, which they use in their own contexts. It unites action with research, enabling participants to develop interventions drawing on their skills and experience, and then to share these with others. The object of PAR is to develop local solutions, within a broader aim of identifying and addressing social inequalities.

The use of PAR was particularly suitable for this project because it:

➤ recognises the diversity of contexts within WAGGGS Europe. There are differences at national and local levels in terms of gender, culture and barriers to leadership. Local groups could also be single-sex or mixed, varied in number, led by male or female leaders, and varied in age compositions. PAR allows for such diversity, and can recognise the specific opportunities it provides (see 2.2 above)

➤ works with locally recognised issues and solutions rather than imposing external views and resolutions. Participants use the tools provided to identify a problem, devise a means of addressing it and measure the outcome themselves. These tools can lend validity to participants' accounts of their experiences, provide an evidence base for the organisation and are transferable to other initiatives/activities

➤ recognises the hands-on, active and collaborative nature of the WAGGGS movement itself. Researching-by-doing allows leaders to integrate research into their activities. It fosters communities of practice through the sharing of tools, activities and outcomes

➤ aims to be transformative for leaders as well as members through considering issues and perspectives which may not have been to the forefront of the agenda, and though revealing issues via data gathering of which they may not have been aware previously

Design

The project design was approved by the WAGGGS steering group, and a timeline developed. At the initial meeting, participating leaders were given the opportunity to reflect on gender issues locally and more broadly, including: women's representation in leadership roles; gendered media cultures; tensions between endorsed femininities and leadership behaviours; the masculinisation of leadership. Leaders were introduced to PAR as an approach, and training was provided in the use of some research methods. They were also introduced to the reporting back structure. They then conducted initial audits using tools suggested, and planned activities to address issues identified in the weeks following. Participants were supported locally to develop their projects and research approaches between meetings by WAGGGS leaders, with MP providing help with queries/further guidance via email as necessary.

3   Method

Ethics

The ethical guidelines of the WAGGGS were agreed on as encompassing the range and scope of the activities and data security.

Timing

Timing presented a problem for some local groups in terms of recruitment for the project, meaning some dates were bumped forward.

Final presentations

A sudden family bereavement prevented MP from attending the final presentations. These were instead video recorded, and supporting materials (notes, PowerPoints; evidence) made available. The quality of recording was good, and the presentations clear and detailed, making this exercise as close to live presence as practicable.

Evaluation

Participants were asked to evaluate the project at the final meeting and via the second questionnaire – outcomes are reported below.

Leader Participants

GIRL GUIDING SCOTLAND
9 Leaders conducted PAR activities with 9 groups of which 5 were of Guiding age (10-14) and 4 were of Senior age (14- 25).

SCOUTING NEDERLAND
9 leaders conducted PAR activities with 5 different groups of which 2 were of Scouts age (11-15) and 3 were of Explorers age (15-18).

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaires were devised by MP and then approved/modified by the steering committee. The questionnaires draw on existing research findings regarding gendered barriers to leadership in youth, summarised in the initial report. They provide a snapshot view of attitudes and beliefs of WAGGGS leaders and members in relation to those identified in existing international research. They were administered online via Survey Monkey administered to leaders, and to their participating members before and after the PAR projects, to enable measuring of possible changes.

There were some problems regarding access – some leaders found it easier to complete paper copies with their members. Language also presented some issues. The questionnaire and the responses had to be translated to and from Dutch for the Netherlands participants. Some of the leaders reported the vocabulary a challenge for their youngest members.

4 Findings

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4.1 Questionnaire: FIRST ROUND

4.1.1 Questionnaire to Leaders #1

Questions 1-4: Information about participants

12 female and 7 male respondents recorded full answers. One questionnaire was discarded because incomplete. 10 respondents were from Girlguiding Scotland and 9 from Scouting Nederland. 12 were leaders of single sex groups, of which 1 was all-male and 11 all-female. Most participants reported some experience of leadership outside of the WAGGGS, whether formal or informal - these include positions of responsibility in school, in sporting activities, mentoring, and taking a leading role in social and leisure activities.

Question 5: fields most strongly associated with leadership

Participating leaders are more likely to think of leadership in voluntary (52.6%) and educational (68.4%) fields than in existing research, which finds leadership to be most strongly associated with political, military and corporate realms[3]. This is an interesting finding, suggests that WAGGGS involvement (in itself a voluntary, educational activity) fosters expanded ideas of leadership beyond the traditional realms which dominate elsewhere.

The three traditional fields nonetheless are well represented in responses (political 47.4%; military 31.6%; corporate 31.6%).

Leadership in environmental and local fields appear (both get 10.5% of citings) but do not score highly. This finding is interesting because some studies[4] suggest that these are the fields from which youth and under-represented groups (women, ethnic minorities, disadvantaged) are most likely to emerge as leaders. Environmental issues also have a high profile among youth. This may be an area which the organisation wishes to discuss in terms of promoting leadership, in terms of meeting youth interest and developing leadership in under-represented groups.

Sports and religion do not appear in the answers as fields likely to be associated with leadership. This finding is again interesting given the high profile of sport, and of sports managers in some contexts - and in terms of wider religious and secular contexts. Both these fields are dominated by male representation and leadership.

Questions 6 and 7: Gender and leadership qualities/behaviours

The leadership qualities list was drawn up from a sample of similar studies exploring the gendering of attitudes and leadership behaviours in the popular imaginary (the exception is 'charisma' which did not appear in the research review, but was suggested by the steering committee), and those observed in studies of children and young people in school and at play.[5]

WAGGGS leaders identify more leadership qualities as typical of both sexes than in the studies. This finding is encouraging, and is reflected in the kinds of activities and roles offered through the PAR activities later in the project.

There does remain a perception of some specific qualities as feminised - those associated with communication and collaboration. However, these qualities do not score highly on the 'typical qualities associated with leaders' findings. This suggests girls are perceived as equal or similar to boys in some leadership areas, but some of their behaviours are not perceived as valuable in leaders, and are also not seen by leaders as likely to be adopted by or recognised in boys.

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Question 8: Conflict between gender and leadership roles

Leaders' perceptions of possible conflict followed some more widespread gendered patterns, with compliant and co-operative behaviours being perceived as unproblematic for girls, but more assertive behaviours as creating tension (interrupting; carrying own ideas forward; using voice or physical stature). Compromise and especially seeking help are seen as potentially problematic for boys.

Question 9: How are leaders chosen?

This question was posed because the issue of selected vs emerging leaders was indicated in the research as significant in terms of gender. This formed an interesting theme in terms of Leaders' own findings (see below). Here the spread of possibilities is fairly evenly distributed except for 'emerging from activity' which is the most common, and self-selection the next. The ways in which leadership roles are allocated emerged as a key action point from some of the PAR activities.

Questions 10 – 11: Other responsibilities

These questions were included to gain a sense of Leaders' perceptions of the leadership/roles of responsibility. It will be interesting to compare these with self-reports of members and post-project questionnaires.

It is clear that respondents are committed to the idea of gender equity in leadership. How far this is felt to be achieved and how far inequalities are recognised as appearing naturally varies in different local contexts

4.1.2 Questionnaire to Members #1

This questionnaire included open-ended elements to allow members to offer their ideas on leadership in their own vocabularies appropriate to age, nationality and experience, and to provide insight into attitudes which leaders could use in planning and evaluating their PAR projects.

Questions 1-4: Participant Information and context

As with the leaders' questionnaire, the first four questions provide information about participants. There were 58 respondents, of which 38 (65.52%) or roughly two thirds were female. The age spread was from 10 to 25 years old, with 77.58% falling into the 13-15 and 25-18 categories. The age spread was found to be a significant factor in Leaders' findings (see below). Most of the online participants were from Scouting Nederland – this may have been owing to access difficulties reported by some leaders in their project summaries, and so hard copies were administered. These are not available at the time of writing, but did inform Leaders' work and evaluations. The divide between single-sex and mixed grouping was exactly 50%., although one of the 29 single-sex groups was all male and the others all-female.

Question 5: Fields most strongly associated with leadership

In contrast with the leaders' responses, military leadership scored most highly among members in the first round (74.51%) with politics in a strong second place (66.7%) Volunteering and education also make a strong showing, and family is mentioned in 23.3% of responses, but other fields remain around 10% or lower.

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This suggests that popular ideas of leadership associated with masculine domains prevail as in other studies, closely followed by participants' own experiences. This contrasts with PAR activities, in which members draw most strongly on locally available models, especially WAGGGS leaders and teachers. This finding is interesting in its reflection of the contrast between visible models of leadership in the wider and media domains (which tend to be made and associated with male-dominated domains) and members' local experiences in which they encounter many women in positions of authority, particularly those still in the primary stages of education. It also suggests that involvement in the WAGGS may work to counter dominant stereotypes about gender and leadership though offering role models and experiences to girls.

Question 6: Describing a good leader

In this open-ended part of the questionnaire a range of qualities were offered in response to the prompt. These showed a balance of personal qualities, in which trust, empathy, helpfulness and responsibility emerged strongly – and skills, among which keeping order, public speaking and management are described by several participants. Some responses appear to describe leadership within the WAGGGS; others take a more expanded approach. As many of the less masculine qualities are attached to the idea of the WAGGGS leader, this suggests that experience and values provided by the WAGGGS context may support a more expanded view of effective leadership than is generally found in youth.

In the Netherlands responses there was a more frequent citing of qualities associated with authority, keeping order and control. This reflects the broader patterns in other studies, in which popular ideas of leadership are masculinised. It may also reflect the gender balance of respondents from the Netherlands: in Scotland, there were no male participants.

Questions 7-9: Experiences of leadership

Responses indicate that many members have experience of roles of authority, advice and direction in their lives beyond the WAGGGS, although these may not be recognised by them as leadership experience per se. The positive responses are greater than leaders' estimates of their members' experiences. The 'never' responses are all in the 0-2 range, with the 'sometimes' column reflecting most experiences. These experiences could provide a rich vein for leaders to draw on in expanding ides about leadership, and enabling members' own recognition of such experiences explicitly as leadership.

The opportunities to practice leadership in its various forms seems to be something over which members feel they have some control – volunteering is the most common route to experience; context in terms of peer group appears significant, while getting chosen by an adult is the least common. This supports models of emergent leadership, but also suggests intervention/selection may be appropriate for those lacking the confidence to put themselves forward. Previous studies have suggested that girls in particular, when selected for leadership roles, develop the capacity to fulfil such roles[6].

Question 10: favourite leaders

Across all three choices, women make up approx. one third of those cited. Named figures range from royalty, teachers, politicians, and scouting leaders to family members. Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are the most frequently named. The predominance of male leaders named reflects broader patterns or real-world and media representation. Some surprise figures are mentioned such as Hitler – this also emerged in leader activities with members, where the difference between being a good i.e. effective leader and a good person was raised.

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WAGGGS members are somewhat more likely to identify women leaders as inspirational than participants in some previous studies[7], suggesting that the context provided by WAGGGS in part mitigates the lack of women role models in wider culture. This finding reflects a recurring theme in the PAR project findings, that members frequently shape their responses around the idea of leadership within the scouting movement itself, in which they are likely to experience female leadership (see below).

Question 11: Ideas you have about why there are fewer women leaders in the world than men

Responses to this question reflect some of the tensions observed by Leaders in their PAR projects, and reflected in wider social contexts. These are the tensions between the belief that gender equality is generally accepted as a principle, and a recognition that gender inequalities exist. There is frequent recognition of adverse historical contexts (see for example respondents 15, 16, 25 and 39), and of contemporary tensions. Some respondents locate the issue with women themselves, describing them as reluctant, disinterested or afraid. Others blame men for being overly authoritarian and afraid to give up power.

Scattered amongst these replies are some that are clearly meant in fun, or to challenge ideas about what we mean by a good leader. These are not only to be expected in questioning a youthful cohort, but are interesting themselves in the suggestion that ideas about good leadership are not taken-for-granted by them.

Some of these tensions were also reflected in Leader's meetings, where what has been described as 'the most modern barrier to women's advancement'[8] , could be observed in terms of an implicit belief that gender equality has been achieved, and that any persistent inequalities must reflect a lack or a failure on the part of those experiencing them. This may be more prevalent where a focus on gender legislation and removing sexual inequalities has been high-profile, creating a broader public feeling that gender barriers have been overcome. In shirt, gendered barriers are less likely to be recognised in in contexts where equality has a high profile, because there is a general belief that it has been accomplished. The same can be true of other forms of inequality eg. on ethnic, disability or religious grounds.

This can create particular problems for those experiencing inequality, as their experiences can be dismissed or they themselves can feel to blame. It can also be uncomfortable for those who do not experience inequalities; when presented with evidence they can feel that they should have been aware before, that they are somehow responsible, or they can dismiss the evidence as inaccurate. The PAR model can help overcome these difficulties, as it encourages participant researchers to gather evidence for themselves in their own contexts, and to discuss it with their research subjects.

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4.2 Questionnaire: SECOND ROUND

Observations of some key differences...

4.2.1 Questionnaire to leaders #2

There were fewer respondents, with 4 of the 7 original male participants and 10 of the original 12 female respondents completing the questionnaire.

Question 5: Fields most strongly associated with leadership

showed changes that were in contrast with those of members; while members views of leadership became more evenly distributed across the diverse fields, among leaders there was more concentration on military (69.2% from 31.6%) and political (84.6% up from 47.4%) leadership domains. This was a surprising result in terms of the contrast, but may reflect a greater awareness of wider social representations of leadership – for example, there were sessions on media representations of leadership at the weekend training event. It would be interesting to follow up this finding in discussion with participating leaders.

Questions 6 and 7: Gender and leadership qualities/behaviours

There is some variation in priorities from the first but the pattern remains fairly distributed. The rise in confidence (69.2% from 47.4%) is the most notable; a lack of confidence emerges as a key barrier in members' leadership development across a range of groups so this may reflect their findings. Sensitivity is included this time, although listening is a less popular choice. In terms of gender, there is a reduction in the perception of girls carrying through their ideas but also in listening to the ideas of others; boys remain the gender associated with use of voice/physicality, while both genders are seen as equally unlikely to summarise others ideas, and equally likely to work in unfamiliar groups. Asking for help is now less likely to be seen as conflicting with boys' gender roles, but taking control and ensuring their own ideas are followed though continue to be seen as possibly problematic for girls.

Impressions in this second round are likely to be drawn from PAR observation data, so it is interesting to see which impressions are confirmed and which countered.

Question 9: How are leaders chosen?

The changes in this question are most marked in the turn-taking/fair rotation. Rather than leaving leadership roles to chance/volunteering, Leaders are more likely to ensure everyone has the chance to experience a leadership role.

Questions 10 – 11: Other responsibilities

Again these findings suggest a positive outcome as a result of the PAR interventions. Leaders demonstrate both a greater awareness of the leadership roles their members may occupy in their everyday lives (reporting now 100% affirmative), and also of possible gendered barriers that may inhibit them from taking up leadership opportunities (confidence and self-image in teen girls).

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4.2.2 Questionnaire to Members #2

The second questionnaire received many more responses (105 compared with 58) and so this must be taken into account in terms of comparability; it is assumed that the leadership activities promoted interest in completion among other members.

Question 5: Fields most strongly associated with leadership

In response to this question members' associations of leadership with particular fields are more broadly distributed, with less emphasis on political and military – these still score most highly but are reduced in proportion (military down from 74.51% to 59.8% and politics down from 66.7% to 58.8%). Other categories have increased.

Question 6: Describing a good leader

In response to this question, kindness, fairness and communication feature most strongly. Authority still has a presence, but this expressed more often in inspiring others to follow rather than necessarily taking command. Fairness and fighting discrimination also feature. These results are interesting in their suggestion that the leadership role is seen by members as having a social function in terms of ensuring equalities.

These may indicate that the PAR interventions have led to a broadened view of leadership – this would accord with other studies which have found that discussing preconceptions surrounding leadership helps shift such preconceptions and counter poplar stereotypes

Question 10: favourite leaders

While a similar range of names occurs, the gender balance has shifted. More men than women are still cited, but the gap has closed from around a third to almost half. This is significant in that the awareness of role models (both local and drawn from the wider world) is suggested as significant in promoting girls' leadership ambitions. The presence of more women may be a reflection of some of the activities undertaken by Leaders such as the 'name game' photo or the 'dinner table'.

Question 11:

In this second response the term 'sexism' is specifically used, and the continuing domestic role of women described by several participants. These may suggest a more critical view of persistent gendered inequalities and historical awareness extends to the Scouting movement itself. Global inequalities are also mentioned. These results may reflect what Leaders described as member's external awareness needing activating though discussion. However, essentialist views (i.e. what women and men are 'naturally' like) still appear, as do some apparently provocative comments concerning the capacity of women. The inclusion of such comments reflects patterns of online 'trolling' of girls expressing feminist views, and of online 'disinhibition effect'[9] in which the anonymity of virtual contexts can allow for the expression of views otherwise considered socially unacceptable.

4 Findings

4.3 PAR activity outcomes

Findings from presentations and discussions...

4.3.1 Contexts

Initial audits suggested a diversity of findings both between and within groups. Some leaders decided to focus on promoting existing positive attitudes and strategies. Some concentrated on supporting individuals and small groups. In discussion, the Scottish groups were observed to focus more on female leaders and gendered barriers for girls, whereas the Netherlands groups included gender observations as a part of a broader leadership remit. Some noted however that there were marked similarities between the single sex units across the two countries. The differences in issues and behaviours noted across single- and mixed-sex groups is significant, suggesting that gendered context is an important shaper of behaviour, and that single sex settings can provide spaces for girls to develop leadership qualities not more widely endorsed as feminine.

This led to a questioning of the differences in the kinds of activities between single and mixed sex contexts, with leaders reflecting that differences in perceptions might in part be due to 'the activities that we offer '(Discussion #2, 1.13).

4.3.2 Age

In both national contexts age was observed as a significant factor in developing confidence. One group discusses the difficulty of identifying leadership potential in younger members because of this; they note that it is important to give them opportunities then 'let's see what happens as they mature' (Discussion #4, 2.17).

However, it was observed that age and gender intersect in diverse ways. In mixed sex groups it was observed that 'older boys are more dominant than older girls' while at earlier stages girls can be more dominant (Discussion #5, 0.32). In one of the Leader presentations, it was clear that the younger girls were the newest members, so their lack of confidence compounded age, gender and group status and experience.

Age was also an important factor in terms of exposure to gendered leadership and defining a good leader–younger children are more likely to have female teachers and draw on these immediate role models. Some young members are reported as having 'never met a male leader'. In one group however it was observed that younger members did not have a clear idea of what leadership was, and tended to name school friends as leaders. The group was single sex girls, and those named as leaders were all boys. Older members drew on an increasingly wider range of leader models, and this range becomes more masculinised.

These finding present a more complex picture than existing research[10] suggesting that the idea of a masculine leader develops early in childhood. In this project, findings from both the PAR activities and the questionnaires suggest discussion and awareness-raising can lead to an expanded idea of leadership at all ages. The Scottish groups in particular benefited from an activities pack which provided resources for this.

4.3.3 WAGGGS contexts

Leaders and members identify WAGGGS as proving a positive context for developing leadership in girls, in terms of opportunities and role models. It is a safe space for discussion, provides opportunities for new skills and can counter experiences of inequality elsewhere.

4 Findings

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It should be noted that the concept of leadership, and commitment to its development, is already present in guiding and scouting's core aims, culture and vocabulary. This meant that discussion with members often tended to focus on leadership in terms of the WAGGGS, as well as on broader concepts of leadership. In describing ideal leaders, for example, members often described or drew an ideal WAGGGS leader. This was especially true of the younger groups. Such descriptions therefore tended to reflect personal qualities young people value in their leaders; the portraits among the single sex groups especially are orientated towards traits more often perceived as feminised; the drawings of ideal leaders tend to represent scouting leaders, and to depict them in skirts although as one leader observed, they invariably wear jeans/trousers. On leader reflects that the terminology 'Leader' as opposed to the former 'Guider' possibly encourage this focus.

Member's experiences within WAGGGS can be seen as mitigating experiences elsewhere- some members are described as showing understanding of inequalities such as gendered pay gaps and becoming angry at these (Discussion #2, 2.58), but feeling Guiding provides a space where they do not have to encounter sexism. This provides a dilemma for some leaders – they perceive a focus on inequalities as potentially negative, and running counter to the optimistic and empowering remit of the WAGGGS where 'you can be what you like' (Discussion #1) One leader questions the value of knowledge of gender inequalities members have acquired in school, asking 'Have they been taught to worry?'

4.3.4 Tensions

Several members describe tensions between members' belief in girls' equal potential, their awareness of inequalities, and their own lack of confidence, meaning that this potential is not realised. One leader describes this as the contrast between 'knowing that they can do whatever they want and seeing what they will grow up into'. Another leader describes how 'their perception does not match society's perception at the moment'. Among male leaders there was some claiming of essential biological difference as responsible for gendered role difference – 'girls have the babies' (Discussion #2 18.06). These tensions and attitudes are indicative of wider attitudes of what has been termed post-feminist culture, in which the battles of feminism are assumed to have been won. This creates particular tensions for girls in that it locates responsibility for lack of achievement in personal inadequacy[11], and also allows for the re-emergence of some traditional ideas which offer naturalised explanations for societal inequalities i.e. they can feel inequality is their own fault, and that they cannot overcome biology.

There was some extended discussion of leaders' own experiences of gendered leadership/management styles in their workplaces – this showed an interesting teasing out of some of the issues raised by the project in terms of their own lived experience.

4.3.5 External contexts of inequality

Through discussion members raise a range of issue which they feel act as barriers to ambition. These include unequal educational provision, and school contexts where being 'good in class' attracts negative attention'. Some older members describe sexism as 'a huge issue', especially in terms of pay and opportunities. One leader describes girls' frustrations with perceived lack of opportunity. Some Netherlands members highlight the persistence of domestic roles and stereotyping as holding women back, and are aware of wider cultural issues. Some leaders report members find discussion of gendered inequalities 'incredibly stressful', and debated the value of introducing them into WAGGGS activities which are more focussed on how they can achieve their potential. This is returned to in the recommendations below.

4 Findings

Leaders report that members both reproduce some stereotyped roles in terms of their ambitions, and challenge some others. They show awareness of a range of internal and external factors/barriers: discussion often focusses on confidence, and self-consciousness, and also lack of representation

4.3.6 Role models and ideals

Leaders find that most members view good leadership qualities as being gender-neutral; however, there are gendered patterns in their discussions of role models. Local models identified such as teachers and guiders are largely women, and members tend to focus on interpersonal and communication skills. Beyond immediate contexts more wider-world male leaders were named than female, and these models are attributed with more authority, public confidence and knowledge. They are drawn from range of fields – politics, acting, music, royalty (in NL); history.

There is some awareness among members of the differences in the ways men and women are represented in the media. In one group, women are described as represented 'in a self-absorbed way', with a focus on appearance, feelings and personal life, whereas men are presented in terms of actions/achievements. This is reflected in some discussion activities, with members describing male leaders in task-orientated terms and women relational terms

A photo-recognition activity in the GGS pack used by several groups may promote awareness of female leaders.

4.3.7 Leadership behaviours

The range of leadership behaviours observed from one of the richest themes in the reports.

These identified differences in the kinds of roles girls and boys were elected for or volunteered for; the gendering of leadership behaviours; differences in decision-making processes. In one group, leaders observed that those volunteering or elected to leadership roles within the organisation were not the most likely to show leadership behaviours in activities – 'they were more or less followers – suggesting untapped leadership potential in others' (see self-selection in questionnaires). This led to a reconsideration of the election/section processes, especially as existing leaders showed a male bias in role allocation.

In other groups, gendered patterns of leadership behaviours were noted in terms of dominance in discussion and activities. In one activity, the leader describes how older girls let boys take charge: 'the boys took all the leading; the girls just stood by and asked "How can I help? What can I do?"' As one leader noted, 'Boys claim the space as leader; girls request the space to lead... Girls are not taking their space and the boys are not giving it to them'. However, in the same activity an all-girl group (i.e. formed within the larger mixed-gender grouping) of younger members took on leading roles without hesitation. In another group younger girls were wary of sounding 'bossy' and so removed 'takes charge' from the list of leadership qualities. This indicates how some socialised gender roles from outside are enacted within WAGGGS settings, and that this appears more strongly as girls grow into adolescence. In younger girls, lack of confidence can appear associated with age.

However, leaders observed that age grouping for activities and other strategies can help mitigate these behaviours, providing safe spaces and structures for trying out leadership roles and behaviours

4   Findings

Leaders identified experience as central to developing confidence as well as competencies. A leader observed that 'None of the older girls saw themselves as a leader; mostly because they thought they wouldn't be good at it'. In the same group boys were described as taking over from leader perceived as ineffective. In this group activities ensured more members were given the chance to experience leadership roles. . In one of the groups, the leader reported that older girls were unable to identify leadership qualities in themselves but able to identify them in each other. Other leaders focussed particularly on decision-making processes, noting that girls were slow to make decisions and preferred detailed directions from those in leader roles. Activities were developed to support girls in decision making. However, attempts to share leadership roles more evenly were at times met with resistance – there was evidence of some anxiety/discomfort when newly assigned roles conflict with gendered socialisation. A previously dominant boy 'didn't feel useful while being democratic' while a non-dominant girl 'thinks she's fine as she is. No need to be dominant'. Stepping outside of comfort zones proved a challenge for both genders.

It is also important to note that gender alone did not explain all leadership issues; in one group most of the girls happened to be new, young members and so were not represented in any of the roles of responsibility.

4.3.8 Reported outcomes of the PAR projects

Outcomes/benefits were observed in the following areas:

Increasing confidence and experience

Improvements in areas relating confidence were noted by many leaders – these included taking roles, speaking up and recognising strengths. Another described attitudinal change as difficult to measure, but observed that the activities promoted confidence and developed experience of leadership. Where girls are lacking confidence, one leader feels activities can help identify barriers and give 'a little push' to help girls 'follow their dreams and feel like they're really equal' This idea of the 'little push' emerges in the reports in a range of ways – through reflection on their own capacities, through being offered new experiences, and through reflecting on relatable examples from the wider world.

Some direct changes in confidence-related behaviour were observed as an outcome of the activities and strategies. For example, girls in one group where the focus was on decision making are described as more decisive as a result of the intervention. In another group, girls who might not have taken on leadership roles left to themselves successfully fulfilled the role when it was allocated to them. It is also interesting to note that boys could recognise their discomfort and reflect on the causes when required to step outside leadership roles when they tended to naturally occupy this position (see 4.3.7 above).

Consciousness raising

Leaders reported members developing their ideas about leadership (especially among younger members), about gender, and about their own potential. There was also an increased awareness of women leaders through discussion of role models. Some groups reported more diverse conceptions of leadership, more varied role models –and some new 'ideal' figures, as well as a conscious attempt to represent gender and racial diversity in follow-up activities among members.

4 Findings

The project also raised some interesting issues about power and responsibility – effective leadership vs ethics – these reflect some of the tensions revealed in the questionnaires, and indicate that the WAGGGS provides a space for discussion and development of values and ethical citizenship.

Enrichment

Several of the leaders describe the activities as worthwhile in themselves independent of the PAR, and as enjoyable by both leaders and members. One leader describes the experience as an affirmation of WAGGGS values.

Gender within activities

There was some interesting reflection on the differences observed in single sex and mixed groups. Some leaders felt it might be beneficial to girls to develop more single sex activities in which girls could gain experience of leadership in less constrained settings. Other members thought it would be beneficial to develop activities based on girls' behaviours/preferences. As one leader put it, the group can be a 'space issue, as in, who can claim it?'

Gendered differences in behaviour were more likely to be both noted in single sex settings, and in the findings more likely to be seen as natural in such settings; in single-sex groupings the girls necessarily take on all roles, and behaviours are not likely to be so inhibited by adherence to socialised expectations. There were some interesting observations on the differences in leadership behaviours within a mixed-sex group when members formed single-sex groups within it (see 4.3.7 above)

Reflections on PAR process

There were some positive reflections on taking part in The PAR process. Some leaders described it as valuable in the opportunities provided for reflection on activities/roles. There was particular attention paid to the value of observation, and the need to pay careful attention and to take detailed notes. Commitment to the project was revealed in the careful and nuanced observations made – this was strong feature of the presentations and the volunteers are to be commended for their commitment to the project, and the elements revealed that were sometimes a surprise to the leaders themselves. The importance of meeting and discussion with colleagues as well as gathering the data was noted. It seemed then that PAR gave tools for measurement and reflection, and opportunities for sharing issues and ideas, as well as successes.

Changes to practice

Leaders reported changes which include a greater recognition of potential; – being more creative in leadership role allocation, and giving more experience of leading roles, especially to girls. Findings from the project will inform internal group elections, and the ways leaders allocate responsibilities.

5 Evaluation

Evaluative feedback from participating leaders was sought in two ways: via the final questionnaire and at the final presentation meeting where participants responded to these three questions:

> ➤ What did you love about the project?
>
> ➤ What could have been better?
>
> ➤ What would you advise another organisation thinking about doing the same project?

There was some difference between online and live feedback; this typically reflects anonymous, individual responses and those offered in positive group contexts. Neither is more 'true' per se, but they reflect different the aspects of participants' experience as well as different platforms for recording it.

Feedback was positive and enthusiastic overall, and three key themes emerged in terms of benefits:

The opportunity to work closely and share ideas with leaders from different countries

The extended nature of the project and several meetings fostered not only the sharing of ideas but the building of friendships. The international nature of the project was appreciated. The inclusion of more groups to allow for more cross-fertilisation was a recommendation made by more than one participant.

The opportunity to learn more about leadership and about WAGGGS

Participating in the project gave leaders the chance to reflect in detail on leadership qualities, on which they wanted to foster and on the best ways to work with their members to do this. Learning more about the WAGGGS through international co-operation was also appreciated.

The opportunity to develop research tool and activities

In the presentations as well as the feedback the care and attention to observation and recording was evident. This meant all the presentations were underpinned with a strong basis, and gave leaders the confidence to offer their findings as valid. They also felt they had learned more about their members through the research activities, and were better able to plan suitable activities. They also valued the activities themselves, finding them fun, worthwhile and exciting. The project was described as 'interesting' and 'empowering'.

One leader described the experience as 'eye-opening' and specifically mentioned witnessing changes in opinion and approach among fellow-leaders as particularly rewarding.

5 Evaluation

The questionnaire data from leaders conflicts with the project report findings in some respects – for example, 4 of 11 participants answering the evaluation question report that the project did not enable them to recognise gender issues affecting members, but all members described such learning via their projects. Perhaps this reflects the fact that they were aware of wider gender issues already, and that they brought this awareness to the project. Another respondent felt it a benefit that they were able to concentrate on leadership rather than gender per se in their context.

The timescale was felt to be too short by some – especially over the Christmas period; However, others observed that the WAGGGS annual calendar is always busy; this and the voluntary status of leaders means there are no extended periods of relative inactivity in which such a project could be more easily accommodated.

Overall participating leaders felt they would recommend participation to others, and felt the young members' learning about leadership – as well as their own - should be highlighted as a strong feature of the project. They also stressed that learning to lead was fun, and that it was important to give members the opportunities to do so. 'Develop yourself and those you work with' was how one leader summarised her recommendation.

From an OBU/design perspective, some stated they would have liked more input on PAR and the project goals, and on leadership itself. While this would have been hard to deliver in the limited project meeting times, it is worth noting and thinking about other ways more input could be offered – perhaps by making further materials available online.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Building confidence: Giving voice/space for developing leadership behaviours

A recurring finding from the leaders is that girls can need 'space' and voice' to develop confidence as leaders – and also structures to develop specific behaviours. They also find that interventions can result in measurable improvements.

The project reports and the questionnaires suggest that members volunteering for leadership roles are, unsurprisingly, most likely to occupy such positions. Leaders find that this can deny others the chance to gain experience, particularly those who lack the confidence to put themselves forward. Some leaders are therefore experimenting with more intervention and swapping round of leadership roles to ensure more members can build experience and confidence in the role. Extending this practice may be particularly important for girls and for younger members.

6.2 Building confidence: Recognising leadership

Questionnaires and some activities also suggest that members may have a range of experiences and qualities that they themselves do not necessarily recognise as leadership – for example responsibilities at home or at school, or in their peer group/social roles. Leaders developed some discussions/ activities which both helped identify these, and to build confidence and girls' sense of themselves as leaders. Such activities also help leaders develop a fuller picture of the needs and experiences of their members.

6.3 Tensions

Some responses attributing women's lack of representation to inborn, gender-based inadequacy (i.e. women are not good at leading; women do not want to lead) are evident in both project reports and questionnaire responses. These attitudes and beliefs are drawn from wider and media cultures, but are brought from there into WAGGGS contexts where they may create barriers to girls' development of leadership confidence. They also can create barriers to boys' support of equality-promoting activities.

Such attitudes can create a double disadvantage for girls - they experience inequality, plus they get the message that they themselves are responsible for it. Challenging these attitudes can be difficult; they appear as an easy common-sense explanation for difference. Further, highlighting gender privilege can create discomfort for boys who can feel somehow personally 'blamed'. It is recommended that this issue is the subject of ongoing discussion among leaders, focussing on countering the internalisation of inadequacy models by girls, and encouraging boys to recognise the reality of gendered disadvantage without feeling that they are personally responsible for it – instead that they can be allies in countering it.

6.4 External contexts of inequality

How far leaders wish to educate members about external conditions of inequality – sexism and barriers in the outside world - to prepare them to overcome them, and how far they wish to provide 'safe' spaces in which girls do not encounter potentially stressful information must be a matter for judgement and local knowledge. It may be useful for this to form a topic of discussion among leaders themselves, and to judge on a case-by-case, contextual basis.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.5 Role models and ideals

In the short space of the PAR project there is some evidence of members developing expanded ideas about leadership; there is also evidence of more inclusivity and diversity in role models (It should be noted that this is from a starting point that may be more diverse than in non-WAGGGS members – see 4.1.2 above). As well as discussing media-prominent figures, other research has found guest talks/visits to local leaders from a range of fields to be effective in helping young people develop more inclusive ideas about leadership.[12] There was some evidence in the project reports and in the questionnaires of ideas of complementarity – or that the genders have 'equal-but-different' leadership. Such models are popular in corporate worlds too[13] but tend to devalue the qualities perceived as belonging to women; leaders may wish to discuss these ideas further with their members.

6.6 Dissemination

In the evaluations several members express appreciation of the chance to share practice and ideas with leaders from other contexts. The project has a Facebook group for participants; perhaps thumbnail outlines of projects could be posted with details of how to get information. This would have to preclude the sharing of data (e.g. pictures) that could identify members.

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