

Achieving Environmental Sustainability in Canadian Households through a Bottom-up Distributed Leadership Coaching Program

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND



GREEN COACHING PROGRAM

- In 2012, the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) created a green coaching program where families are coached to adopt concrete pro-environmental behaviours
- Administered by the DSF's public engagement specialist, the "Queen of Green"



David Suzuki Foundation



PROGRAM DETAILS

- The program contains four modules: food, waste, toxins, and community action



- It is administered over a three-month period
- To date, 90 coaches guiding 450 families have gone through the program

RESEARCH GOALS & QUESTIONS



OVERALL GOAL



- This study wishes to explore the program and add to the understanding of what motivates and creates interest in sustainability in a Canadian context
- The goal of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in spreading environmental sustainability in Canadian households and provide recommendations for potential modifications, an expansion, and the creation of similar programs



OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION

How can the program expand its influence with household level sustainability practices in the Canadian context?



RESEARCH SUBQUESTION

- In what ways is the program successfully enabling participants to implement environmentally sustainable practices at the household level?
- What current challenges are participants, both coaches and families, currently facing?
- How could the program be expanded?
- What is the ideal outcome of this program?
- What are the possible challenges in achieving this ideal outcome?
- What would it take to overcome these challenges?

RESEARCH PLAN & METHODOLOGY



APPROACH

I will take a mixed methods approach to a case study:

- Quantitative methods will be used to look at numeric data for measuring impact, for broad reach and to ensure these potential participants have equal opportunity to provide their input to ensure fairness
- However, the main goal is to understand reasons behind the effectiveness of the program and to understand individual and subjective motivations. Therefore, it will be necessary to employ mostly qualitative methods as the research question is ultimately an inquiry into the social problem of environmental sustainability. Therefore, qualitative methods will be the focus for data collection and analysis as the goal is to create momentum in the sustainability movement



METHODS



- Three methods will be used for data collection:
- Survey (to families and coaches)
 - Focus groups (separate for families and coaches)
 - Interviews

CONTRIBUTION



CONCEPTS

The program will be analyzed through the lens of two key concepts:



- sustainability as a household level practice, as it relates to pro-environmental behaviours, and
- distributed leadership, where the program is evaluated to see if it could be a model for fostering leadership in the sustainability movement



SIGNIFICANCE

This study is intended to contribute to scholarship related to bottom-up movements aiming to implement environmentally sustainable practices in Canadian households.

A case study methodology will give insight into the effectiveness of the program as it exists today and will ideally permit to make recommendations for modifications or expansion of the program in the future as an alternative to top-down implementation of sustainability in Canada