

6-1999

# Creative Skating: A Creative Approach to Figure Skating

Elin G. Schran

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct\\_capstone](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone)

---

## Recommended Citation

Schran, Elin G., "Creative Skating: A Creative Approach to Figure Skating" (1999). *Critical and Creative Thinking Capstones Collection*. Paper 279.

[http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct\\_capstone/279](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cct_capstone/279)

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Critical and Creative Thinking Program at ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Critical and Creative Thinking Capstones Collection by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact [library.uasc@umb.edu](mailto:library.uasc@umb.edu).

CREATIVE SKATING: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO  
TEACHING FIGURE SKATING

A Thesis Presented

By

Elin G. Schran

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

June 1999

Critical and Creative Thinking Program

CREATIVE SKATING: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO  
TEACHING FIGURE SKATING

A Thesis Presented


By

Elin G. Schran

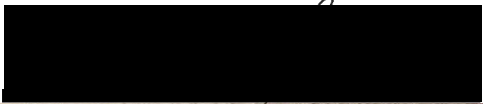
Approved as to style and content by:



Steven Schwartz, Professor  
Chairperson of Committee



Delores Gallo, Associate Professor  
Member



Delores Gallo, Program Director  
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

© 1999 by Elin G. Schran  
All rights reserved

## ABSTRACT

### CREATIVE SKATING: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING FIGURE SKATING

June 1999

Elin G. Schran, B.A., University of Massachusetts Boston

M.A., University of Massachusetts, Boston

Directed by Professor Steven Schwartz

Standard figure skating training methods focus on rote learning and skill practice. Little or no attention is given to the development of the skater's creative self. As a skater, coach, competitor and professional performer, it is my contention that it is this lack of attention to creativity that contributes to the high rates of burnout and stress-related disorders found in the sport. By enhancing creative development, I believe that confidence levels and levels of intrinsic motivation can be improved which should in turn lead to better, more substantial skill development and more contented skaters. In this paper, I will describe one such program, Creative Skating, that I developed to speak to these concerns.

The conceptual framework for this project is grounded in the fields of creativity, education, and psychology, including the work of Teresa Amabile (1996) who has studied extensively the effects of intrinsic motivation; Bernie Warren (1997) who has focused on the use of creativity as a therapeutic tool; and Roger Von Oech (1997) who advocates the value of play for stimulating creativity and breaking the mental set.

The Creative Skating method proposed here is intended as a supplement to standard training. This paper examines the problems of standard training methods, describes the Creative Skating method that I have designed, and presents evidence from a small pilot study of adult beginners participating in the Creative Skating workshop, as documented by a companion video tape. The participants' stress and confidence levels were tested by several instruments, including the PANAS measure (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988), a visual self-portrait and a specially designed questionnaire before and after the workshop. The results offered considerable support for my hypothesis. Participants reported greatest gains in the areas of pride, trust in one's body, and confidence suggesting that by enhancing intrinsic motivation through play, adult beginners are better able to relax while skating, and begin to automate kinesthetic skills. Further study of the importance of creativity as a means of increasing intrinsic motivation levels, lowering stress levels and encouraging confidence in acquiring complex motor skills is warranted based on the positive results of this study.

## Acknowledgements

A large debt of gratitude is owed Professor Steven Schwartz who guided and assisted me in this process and from whom I have learned an infinite amount. Another big thank you goes to Program Director Delores Gallo whose strength has been a source of inspiration and who kept me focused on the possibility of a finished product.

For my daughter Twyla who gave the most inspiring deadline  
and also for my husband Steve who energized me throughout.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	vii
CHAPTER	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Standard Training and Teaching Methods for Figure Skating and Resultant Problems.....	1
Definition of Creative Skating.....	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Uses of Creativity for Improving Self-Esteem.....	9
Creativity in Context- A Componential Concept of Creativity.....	13
The Value of Play and the Creative Skating Workshop.....	19
3. CREATIVE SKATING WORKSHOPS.....	23
The Origin of Creative Skating.....	23
Children: Spontaneous Skill Learning.....	29
Props.....	31
Creative Currents, the Creative Skating Company.....	34
4. PILOT STUDY.....	36
Instruments.....	37
Results.....	40
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	44
Discussion.....	44
Conclusion.....	45
APPENDIX.....	47
A PANAS.....	48
B Drawing Score Manual.....	49
C Questionnaire.....	50
Table I.....	51
Table II.....	52
Table III.....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	54

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As a competitive skater, coach, and professional performer I am interested in applying some of the knowledge I have gained from the Critical and Creative Thinking Program to particular problems in figure skating. Specifically, how one can foster a greater intrinsic motivation in skaters through the use of creativity. After describing the main problems inherent in the standard training methods, covering a brief review of relevant literature and a description of my proposed supplemental methods, I will present a pilot study testing the efficacy of an aspect of my original program, Creative Skating.

#### Standard Training and Teaching Methods for Figure Skating and Resultant Problems

Over the course of my career I have seen that the current training and teaching methods in figure skating can produce high levels of stress in learners of all ages. These methods rely heavily on extrinsic motivation like badge earning, test passing, competitive success, and rewards from parents and coaches, rather than on intrinsic motivation. No part of the standard methods allows for or encourages creativity, or the nurturing of intrinsic motivation, two things that are linked to each other and also to more productive performance outcomes (Amabile 1998). Because skating is both a sport and an art form, it is necessary to balance the athletic and creative aspects involved. Normally, in the standard training format, little time is allowed for the expansion and development of the skater as an artist. She is expected to invest a certain degree of emotion in each competitive performance, but is not particularly supported in the internal process this entails. Training time is focused on technical improvement, the skater's internal

landscape is ignored, and the resulting performance often lacks shine. By connecting the skater with her inner impulses and emotions, Creative Skating workshops, which focus on the development of the creative self, can be a support in the process of inner discovery that will lead to greater depth of performance. The reason that connecting the emotional, internal process with the outer performance makes a difference is that the performance born of integrated and personally meaningful emotion, has an honesty that effects the audience on a deeper level (Laban 1992). Of course, this honesty has a similar effect on the performing skater as she, having invested personally in the program she performs, skates with a different motivation than solely completing the technical components of the program successfully. This intrinsic focus gives greater meaning and motivation to practicing the program and to the actual performance. “In each individual’s act of creation, the arts engage the emotions and free the spirit. This can encourage individuals to do something because they want to and not just because someone else decides it is good for them” (Warren 1993, 4).

The standard methods for teaching skating focus mainly on demonstration, verbal instruction and repetition. Skaters are led by coaches through exercises to learn certain skills at particular stages and then are required to imitate and practice these skills in preparation for the next lesson. This format for teaching skating is akin to the “banking method” (Freire 1997, 53) of classroom teaching where the teacher deposits information into the empty account of the student’s brain. Just as this method has been found by many teachers to be unsatisfactory for academic subjects, it is my contention that it also presents problems for teaching skating. In academia, a general shift has been made

toward Discovery Learning and Creative Skating seeks to employ similar principles of learning in skating.

Rote practice and straightforward skill learning are necessary parts of a course in learning to skate. However, these methods can and should be augmented by a system that places greater value on the skater's innate knowledge, trust in her own body, and personal impulses for movement or musical interpretation. In other words the skater's creativity should be developed as well as her technical ability, as creativity and understanding of the self are deeply linked (Cameron 1996).

Because the standard methods for teaching skating rely on extrinsic motivators problems can arise when a skaters' initial love for the sport is forgotten as the intensity of her training grows and she develops stress-related problems. For example, many competitive skaters suffer eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia as they struggle to conform to the standards of beauty set within the sport. The desire for competitive success comes to outweigh the desire for good health as the skater struggles to control her body (Albright 1999).

Benita Mosley writes in her 1997 Women's Sports and Fitness article, "Eating disorders usually strike people who suffer from depression and low self-esteem" (Mosley 1997,29). Skaters may develop low self-esteem due to the pressures of competition and high stress training regimens. The fear of poor performance and displeasing others can lead a young skater to extreme methods of physical discipline. Eating disorders abound in the sport (Ryan 1996) as skaters believe that by staying very thin and postponing puberty they will have greater competitive success. The desire for thinness can get out of control though and develop into anorexia nervosa or bulimia. Strictly controlled eating

can also be seen as an expression of the skater trying to take control of an aspect of her life when other parts may feel beyond her grasp. Often her schedule is dictated by her coach or parents, and the subjective judging of the sport keeps the control over competitive placement in the hands of the judges and the politically savvy. Starving, or bingeing and purging, offer at least a shred of independence to the skater who may be desperate to assert herself but unable to find an appropriate outlet for her feelings. She can at least decide what goes into her body, if not what is done with it. Focusing on weight loss may also be less threatening than focusing on the fears about competition or daily training stresses. Eating disorders may start as an attempt to take control, but soon take over the life of the sufferer who may feel powerless to stop her self-destructive behavior. Treating the competitive skater as a whole person, seeing and meeting her needs for affirmation and validation as an individual, can help secure self-esteem and help her to avoid eating disorders. Working to increase levels of personal creativity may be one way of enhancing self-esteem as “through the development of the creative self (one) may gain...confidence in (one) self as a worthwhile person” (Jones 1982,108). The use of creativity as a tool for enhancing self-esteem is discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Another way to help the competitor to retain her identity as a whole and worthwhile person while engaging in intensive training is to help her put skating back into perspective. It is, after all, only a sport and should be used as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. Sports can easily be used to teach life lessons but these lessons have, for the most part, been overlooked by skating professionals. Very few skaters ever make it to Nationals, or Worlds, or the Olympics. Because of this reality it is important to

present other goals to the skaters as worthwhile and attainable. Learning discipline, focus, and determination to overcome setbacks are just a few positive habits that can be learned from a serious interest in skating. These are life skills that are useful in many situations such as business, academics, and social settings, and learning to develop these skills, along with strong jumping technique, is important. By extending the range of goals worth pursuing, the skater can avoid the all or nothing setup that can make competition and competitive training seem overwhelming to some.

In the Creative Skating workshop emphasis is placed on the importance of developing these dispositions and recognizing that they can be transferred to situations beyond the ice arena. If the skater can be reminded that skating benefits like enhanced physical fitness, discipline, and an opportunity to have fun, are as valuable as external rewards like medals, she may be able to free herself from some of the overwhelming feelings of stress. Part of this process of putting skating into a healthy perspective has to do with developing intrinsic motivation and offering the skater a creative outlet where she can discover her own personal reasons for involvement in the sport. The creative person defines her own goals – “She has her own idea of success” (Jones 1986,64). When the skater can claim for herself personally meaningful goals, the attainment or failure of which will not affect her value as a person, she is free to pursue those goals with energy and perseverance.

Overtraining is another serious problem for many competitive skaters whose intensive training schedules exhaust them both physically and emotionally. When the training regimen does not allow sufficient rest for the athlete’s body to recover and restore its energy, overtraining can lead to burnout, injury and other problems. Symptoms

can include depression, loss of competitive desire, and loss of enthusiasm for the sport (Albright 1999).

Because the training schedule for most competitors involves skating six days a week for three or four hours a day, as well as taking off-ice training classes such as dance and weight training two or three times a week, members of this population are susceptible to overtraining problems. Additionally, many adolescent competitors attend school only on a part time basis or attend by correspondence to maximize training time. There is little time left for developing as a person, learning who one is, about personal likes and dislikes, or any type of internal reflection. Especially during adolescence, a time of general self-discovery and questioning, such a schedule can increase the chance of the individual feeling powerless and unsure of herself. This sets the skater up for self-doubt and she can quickly come to equate her worth as a person with her performance on the ice (Dulberg 1998). A good day skating can make her feel like a good person while a bad day can lead to negative feelings and poor self-image. I believe that broadening the training focus to include such aspects as the development of intrinsic motivation, and self-discovery through creative exploration, will lead to better all around results.

### Definition of Creative Skating

Creative Skating focuses on the creation of a playful, non-judgmental atmosphere for learning and exploring, a sort of kindergarten on ice for skaters of all ages and ability levels. The Creative Skating philosophy is that learning is enhanced when it is personally meaningful, fun, and satisfying, and that intrinsic motivation leads to greater creative results and commitment to a project than extrinsic methods (Amabile 1996).

Creative Skating is a method of teaching intended to supplement and enhance the standard training method. Being in the moment and free of inhibitions is essential to the Creative Skating experience which focuses on the importance of a judgment-free environment and enjoyment of the activity at hand. Failure to provide such a judgment-free environment is detrimental to the creative learning experience because “external evaluation is always a threat and as such brings out defensiveness and cuts off awareness of some portion of the experience” (Torrance 1965,317). The purpose of the Creative Skating workshop is to return the control of the learning process to the student, helping her trust her own impulses for movement and for musical interpretation. To achieve these goals we play games on and off the ice (to stimulate divergent thinking and to loosen creative energy), use props (to increase body awareness and levels of playfulness), engage in free interpretation to music (to connect with inner motivations for movement, and to enhance choreographic work), and do partner and group work (for increasing awareness of the use of space, interaction with others, trust, personal responsibility, and a non-judgmental attitude). The emphasis is placed on playful discovery rather than on instruction and no evaluation of performance takes place.

At a Creative Skating workshop, the beginner can let go of some of her inhibitions and the competitive skater can cut loose and play with new ideas for movement and choreography in the safe environment of the workshop. Here one is not constantly judged, so it is easier to find the courage to experiment. The standard session is not the place for such experimentation because of the watchful and critical eye of coach and competitor, and also for reasons of safety. Creative Skating workshops, on the other hand, are designed to be safe by keeping the number of skaters allowed on a session



low, at approximately ten, whereas regular freestyle sessions usually have about twenty skaters on the ice at a time. It is also important for skaters to devote standard freestyle session time to practicing technical moves, like jumps and spins, which follow a standard pattern on the ice. To have a skater exploring with creative skating in the midst of a competitive freestyle session would be dangerous and would interrupt the flow of the session for the other skaters. This is another reason that weekly or monthly participation in Creative Skating workshops is important; what the workshops provide cannot be had otherwise.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses primarily on the body of literature that offers support for the theories behind Creative Skating. Specifically, the first section describes the benefits of creativity to improving self-esteem, as documented by Professor Bernie Warren (1986) in his book, Using the Creative Arts in Therapy. The next section gives a detailed account of the model devised by Teresa Amabile for understanding the specific components of creativity and relates this model to creativity in the figure skater. Finally, the work by Roger von Oech on the value of play to unlocking creative potential is described.

#### Uses of Creativity for Improving Self-Esteem

Creative activity can be helpful for reducing stress levels, and boosting self-esteem and self-confidence (Warren 1984). Creativity expert Paul Torrance discovered through his research that “creative thinking is important in mental health” and even that stifling creative thinking could have detrimental effects on mental health (Torrance 1965,10). Further research shows that creative activity provides opportunities for self-discovery and personal development (Warren 1984). It has also been found that creative people share certain characteristics such as a decreased tendency to become frustrated when personal performance does not meet the standards of others, an ability to self initiate learning, and a capacity for considerable perseverance and self-discipline (Warren 1984). Also, because of the psychological and emotional power of creative work, it has been found to be effective as a means of therapy which shall be detailed below.

Skaters, either competitors or beginners, can benefit from using creative work to enhance their levels of confidence and reduce stress levels. The competitor can use this decrease in stress to manage strenuous training schedules, and avoid burnout and other stress-related problems like the eating disorders discussed earlier. The adult/beginner can use this lowering of stress levels to relax and open herself up to her full learning potential. Boosting confidence and self-esteem are important to the serious skater's competitive success as she is less likely to succumb to nerves when she is feeling confident. For the adult beginner, confidence makes it possible to try new things and explore her abilities.

In his book, Using the Creative Arts in Therapy, Professor Bernie Warren (1984) offers a collection of writings by experts in the field of art therapy. Again and again the themes of high enjoyment levels, a judgment-free environment, and self-discovery are stressed as effective for increasing self-esteem and confidence. Warren cites Fred Gettings (1966) as saying, "Art is of value for the way it improves the mind and sensibilities more than for its end products"(Warren 1984,36). This appreciation of the process over the end result is fundamental to the Creative Skating approach wherein skaters are encouraged to see personal success in broader terms than numbers of tests passed or medals won. Throughout Warren's book the term 'creative thumbprint' is used to describe the mark or product that each individual makes when producing creative work. "It is this mark which states 'I exist. I have meaning' and it is a reflection of an individual as a unique human being" (Warren 1984,xiii). Validation leads to greater self-confidence.

One of the desired effects of the Creative Skating workshop is, simply put, getting skaters, especially adults, 'out of their heads' so that body-learning can take over from verbal learning. Warren calls this process "getting lost in the creative moment"(Warren 1984,9). This is, he says, "a liminal state that brings together different aspects of our being (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual) in a way that offers unique opportunities for healing to take place"(Warren 1984,9). He goes on to describe it as "stilling the mind [and] climbing into the body[,] becoming fascinated with one's own range and quality of movement expressiveness" (Warren 1984,74). This is the effect that playing on the ice generally has for skaters as they are freed from the normal sets of goals and value judgments that accompany standard training sessions which focus mainly on limits of ability.

Part of helping someone get to this state of quieted mental control, is understanding the rate at which the individual is comfortable working (Nadeau, cited in Warren1984,52). Different people work at different paces and one day's work may be very different from the next. Being in the moment and learning not to compare oneself with others, or even with one's own performance from the day before, is important for stretching creatively and developing awareness of the inner workings of one's mind and body. Needless to say this is a foreign concept to the competitive skater whose pursuit of gold is defined by the comparison of herself with others in her field. Ironically, sport psychologists have found that if an athlete can learn not to compare herself with others, but instead to stay focused on her own work, she is more likely to perform up to her potential under pressure (Dulberg 1998).

When the skater can concentrate on what is within her control she feels empowered and more confident. Conversely, her power is undermined when the focus slips to what is out of her control. As a competitive skater of over fifteen years, I have seen that many skaters are superstitious, believing that unless they follow little rituals (putting the left skate on before the right, wearing a piece of lucky jewelry, only doing a certain jump in a certain place on the ice, etc) they will fail. Sport psychologists work with skaters to redirect their attentions to the internal, to trust their training, and think positively. Creative Skating, though certainly not a substitute for psycho-therapy, helps the skater do some of this by helping her focus positively on what she can do, what is possible, and on the value she as an individual has to offer. The non-judgmental atmosphere of the workshops helps her learn to quiet the negative voices in her head and reprogram her mental tape in a positive way.

Adults as well as competitors need help getting their focus back to a more productive, internal place. Too often they are limited and inhibited by fear, and self-consciousness. Working through these feelings, maybe even incorporating them in a creative skating piece, can help the adult process them and let them go. Playful discovery on the ice shakes much of the inhibition and fear free automatically, bringing the skater naturally to a place where self-discovery can occur. Warren points out that most people “have lost contact with their source of spontaneity” (Warren 1984,111). Creative Skating workshops work toward restoring this sense of discovery and emotional reaction.

## Creative Skating in Context-A Componential Concept of Creativity

Teresa Amabile lays out a framework of the components of creative performance. They are: 1) domain-relevant skills; 2) creativity-relevant skills; and 3) task motivation . The first component, domain-relevant skills, refers to the “response possibilities” (Amabile 1983,363) a person has for working within a particular field. In order for a person to have a wide range of creative expression available to her, she must first have a solid grasp of the skills required to perform tasks within the field. A creative skater who has a high degree of skill in movement on the ice will be able to approach a skating task with greater creativity than a beginner whose repertoire may include very few moves. Expanding knowledge and skill within the field can be compared with broadening one’s vocabulary for verbal expression; the more words you know, the greater number of ways you will be able to express your thoughts. However, although having skills increases the range of possible creative expression, it does not guarantee or necessarily enhance creativity. A highly skilled person may have low levels of creativity while a person with less skill may have high creativity. Skill attainment frees expression of existing creative impulses.

It is the second component, creativity-relevant skills, or the “something extra of creative performance” that, when coupled with domain-relevant skills, leads to enhanced creative performance (Amabile 1983,364). Creativity-relevant skills depend upon a number of cognitive abilities such as “breaking perceptual set” (Boring 1950; Katona 1940 cited in Amabile 1983,364), or an ability to let go of previous classifications of things. This skill pertains to the individual’s ability to see things in new and different ways. One example of this is being able to see unusual uses for ordinary objects. In the

Creative Skating workshop we play divergent thinking games such as 'No It's Not' which asks participants to find new uses for ordinary objects. The person who can break perceptual set is not stuck in old ways of seeing, but can break out of "functional fixedness" (Duncker 1945 cited in Amabile 1983, 364). Another cognitive ability which contributes to creativity-relevant skills is "breaking cognitive set"(Newell et al 1962 cited in Amabile 1983, 364). Like breaking perceptual set, this has to do with abandoning old methods, and being willing to approach the problem in a new way. A third aspect is the willingness to keep response options open for as long as possible. In other words, being able to resist the urge to go with the first solution discovered and continue searching for alternative answers. This leads to the next point, "suspending judgment" (Amabile 1983, 364), or not interrupting the creative flow by prematurely evaluating ideas or expressions. Editing too soon, in a group or internally, can prevent the voicing of the most creative answers, and lead to settling for the most obvious. One way to improve all of the above-mentioned aspects of creativity-relevant skills, is to work on one's ability to "make the familiar strange" (Gordon 1961 cited in Amabile 1983). Often achieved through playfulness, this involves seeing things in a new light, postponing judgment, and opening the mind to new, even silly possibilities.

The third component in Amabile's model, task-motivation, points to the importance of intrinsic, as opposed to extrinsic, motivation. This component determines the productivity of the individual. No matter how high the levels of domain-relevant skills and creativity-relevant skills, without the proper motivation there will be little or no creation. Filmmaker and comedian Woody Allen, a highly creative individual says he "shuns tasks he feels pressured to do but earnestly attacks work that meets his own

interests” (Amabile 1996, 7). Author D.H. Lawrence said, “If I want to write I write- and if I don’t want to I don’t” (Allen 1948, 225 cited in Amabile 1996, 8). Both cases illustrate the importance of intrinsic motivation and taking pleasure in one’s work for greatest productivity. Intrinsic motivation requires freedom from external constraints and pressures, and is expressed as a willingness to persevere that is fueled by the individual’s personal desires for engagement in the task. Amabile’s work on the effect of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation on the performance of various tasks, points to the importance of an internal reward and goal system rather than one which has been externally constructed. She defines intrinsic motivation as, “the drive to engage in some activity because it is interesting and involving”(Amabile 1986,17) and focuses her work on the implications of this type of motivation on classroom or workplace performance. Because for many athletes training becomes a job involving similar stressors to those found in the workplace or classroom, Amabile’s research is useful in designing a better training atmosphere for skaters. By incorporating techniques for enhancing intrinsic motivation the skater could engage in her training at a deeper level of focus (Amabile 1986) and possibly avoid the pitfalls of the standard high stress training environment (Albright 1999). For skaters to stick with the demanding schedule of competitive training it must be enjoyable; not simply because of approval from coach, parent, or judge but for personal reasons that will emerge from within the skater herself. Champions like Michelle Kwan (1999) say that when they are performing well their main focus is less on winning and pleasing others, and more on enjoying themselves and skating their best for personal satisfaction. When they focus solely on winning, or getting external rewards for their efforts, they do not perform at their best. Creative Skating workshops reintroduce



skating as fun, as personally rewarding, and as a means of discovering the powerful possibilities lying within each individual person. The competitor who participates in Creative Skating and takes its non-judgmental philosophy to heart may be less likely to burn out or stress out because the creative work done in each session can help her reclaim her intrinsic motivation.

Motivation for a given task includes attitudes toward the task, and perceptions of the participant's own motivation for undertaking the task. Amabile (1983, 365-366) lists three points upon which such task motivation depends: 1) the initial level of intrinsic (versus extrinsic) motivation toward the task; 2) the presence or absence of salient extrinsic constraints in the social environment; and 3) the individual's ability to cognitively minimize extrinsic constraints (Amabile 1996). In terms of the competitive skater these subcomponents can be simply defined as the skater's general attitude toward the sport and competition, and whether she feels pressure to continue to pursue goals determined by her coach or parents. More specifically, the first has to do with staying connected with her initial reason for involvement in the sport, which in most cases was simple enjoyment. The second relates to the fact that coaches, competitors, parents, and judges are constantly critiquing the skater's progress. The third can be linked with the skater's ability to deal with this criticism in a constructive way and to stay focused on the aspects of her training that are within her control.

Most competitors love skating and competing but can be overwhelmed by the high-pressure atmosphere of intensive training. Amabile asserts that "competition must be considered a salient social factor in creative endeavor"(Amabile 1996,13), and this is surely as true for the skater as for other types of creative people. However, there is a

difference between healthy levels of competition which induce one to strive to do one's best and another type of competition where one struggles to prove oneself and satisfy the expectations of others. The first type of competition is linked with intrinsic motivation, competition serving to fuel the pursuit of a creative endeavor for its own sake, while the second involves extrinsic motivation, competition as a highly stressful test to be undergone to maintain or gain the respect of others. Also, it is not at all clear that although competition can be a motivating factor for creativity in some skaters, that it is necessary for improving creativity in all skaters. In fact, within the field of skating it is often the case that the most highly creative routines are those skated as exhibitions rather than in competition. As far as skating is concerned, healthy competition may be seen as a motivation for greater application for skill learning but not necessarily for the expansion and development of creative ability which seems to depend more on the willingness to take risks and explore in fun.

Creative Skating offers an opportunity for the skater to re-connect with the positive aspects of the sport, rediscovering the fun of skating while enhancing performance and choreographic techniques. Taking the focus away from what one cannot do and putting it on the discovery of what may be possible, is a main difference between Creative Skating and the standard method. Below I will discuss several ways in which Creative Skating relates to concepts about environments that promote creativity. In her book Creativity in Context, Teresa Amabile writes that, "virtually all theorists concerned with intrinsic motivation have described that phenomenological state as marked by both deep involvement and playfulness" (Amabile 1996,131). Creative Skating workshops provide an environment which allows skaters the opportunity to experience playfulness

on the ice and this playfulness leads to fascination with newly discovered possibilities in the sport.

The extent of creative production depends upon the freedom given a person by the environment in which she works and the extent to which that environment “encourages diversity and tolerates the seeming ambiguity that such diversity suggests” (Lytton 1971, 74). The environment of the standard training format in skating is not supportive of creative experimentation and its resultant ambiguity. In fact, competitors may be penalized for striking out too far from the norm in their competitive choreography. It is not until a skater has reached a certain level of professional proficiency that she is free to explore her creative potential. The Creative Skating workshop offers a venue for this exploration at earlier stages in the skater’s career, as well as for skaters of all levels of ability. It is the larger aim of the Creative Skating workshop to affect change within the skating environment by teaching participants to carry the benefits of their creative experience with them to their standard training sessions. “Social environments influencing creativity can be changed easily and can have immediate observable effects on performance”(Amabile 1996, xvi). Changing the environment within which most skaters learn probably will not be easy, but it may be possible to broaden the sphere of the skating experience to include and value self-discovery and expression. By teaching skaters to trust themselves and their own impulses for movement, musical interpretation, and methods for communication, the workshops offer a fresh perspective on the skating experience. Suddenly there is freedom from performance pressure, weighty externally imposed goals, and criticism - both external and internal as the skater slowly learns to be gentler with herself and to turn down the volume of her inner critic.

### The Value of Play and the Creative Skating Workshop

Roger von Oech (1986), president of the consulting firm Creative Think, stresses the importance of breaking out of mental locks to free creative potential. By mental locks he means the ruts we all find ourselves in from time to time that keep us from taking new approaches to the problems in our lives. These locks limit us and dull our life experience. To get out of the locks, von Oech prescribes playful creative activity. He encourages adults to act as children and to use this positive regression from proper adult behavior to get a new perspective on things. Some of the techniques he offers for manipulating ideas are: Adapt, Imagine, Reverse, Connect, Eliminate, Parody, and Incubate (von Oech 1986,61). These are also useful in the Creative Skating workshop where participants are encouraged to be childlike in order to see skating, and their abilities within the sport, in new ways.

Creative Skating uses these techniques in the following ways. Adapting and Imagining are the basics as skaters are encouraged to shake up their ways of seeing. First, they are used in off-ice divergent thinking games that require seeing ordinary objects in extraordinary ways, coming up with new imaginative uses for them and turning them into something other than what they seem. Then they come into play on the ice as we adapt a series of props for use and exploration on the ice. By bringing objects that normally do not belong on the ice into a skating session we are making ordinary objects strange by giving them a new context in which the skaters can redefine their usage. Likewise, by bringing non-skating items onto the ice, skating is made sort of strange and

new, cannot be judged or criticized by old standards, and also must be redefined. This all serves to free the skater to explore new ways of being and moving on the ice.

Both Adapting and Imagining in the Creative Skating workshop serve the greater goal of Reversing (von Oech 1986, 61), or turning skating upside down and backward. Skaters are encouraged to ask questions like: Why should certain moves be valued as pretty and others not? What happens if I try to do this move in a way opposite from what I have been taught? What if I felt confident and strong while I skated instead of embarrassed and unsure? Turning old beliefs about skating and one's ability to skate on their ear can lead to overcoming the negative ones and building up the positive ones.

The technique of Connecting is important so that the skater can relate her workshop discoveries to her 'normal' skating experience and lesson taking. Often in the Creative Skating workshop skaters accidentally link moves in ways they have never tried before. Perhaps when flying a kite a skater has to turn quickly to avoid another skater and then glide backward on one foot to catch her balance and keep the kite in the air. She does not intend to do this relatively tricky manouver, in fact if she had been told to try it she might have been reluctant, believing she would be unable to do it. But her body knew she could and when the mind can be distracted or put into a playful mode, the body is free to make many connections and discoveries. The good thing about accidental learning is that that way the skater's body comes upon the new move in a very natural way so that the move can be repeated whenever she wishes.

Eliminating is also fundamental to the Creative Skating philosophy. von Oech suggests Elimination to prompt questions such as: What rules can I break? (von Oech 1986, 61). Creative Skating seeks to break many of the rules of standard skating because

so many of those rules serve to intimidate the individual skater out of trusting her own instincts and developing her own style. Breaking rules can be empowering and the increased confidence this brings actually speeds skill learning.

The technique of Parody, of seeing how silly you can be, runs throughout the Creative Skating experience (von Oech 1986, 61). With the music turned up, the critical voice turned way down, and bizarre objects being tossed around the rink it is difficult to suppress the urge to be silly. This is important because feeling inhibited and embarrassed tenses the body and slows learning drastically. Being loose and willing to try new moves is the key to improving skill learning at a rapid pace.

The final von Oech technique discussed here is Incubate (von Oech 1986, 61). One of the main problems with the standard training method is that skaters have little or no time to fiddle around and let new ideas form inside them. The Creative Skating workshops offer this time that is critical for creative progress and to keep skaters' minds and styles from getting stale.

All of the techniques mentioned here encourage self-discovery as well as creative production. Learning how to break free of creative blocks has much to do with understanding what internal mechanisms put them there in the first place. This is, I believe, one reason that creative play is so beneficial to enhancing confidence and self-esteem. Understanding oneself is a first step to working on deeper emotions that may previously have been hidden or ignored. By using the von Oech techniques in a skating workshop I have seen unsure skaters develop into more confident ones as they access inner strength they were unaware they possessed, and advanced skaters put more energy

and drive into their choreographic efforts as new levels intrinsic motivation and creative potential are revealed.

## CHAPTER 3

### CREATIVE SKATING WORKSHOPS

In this chapter I discuss the origin of Creative Skating, and its basic philosophy. Further, I describe in detail the qualities of children's general learning that inspired my method. Then, a description is given regarding the use of props in the workshops to give a clearer picture of their uses and benefits to skill learning. At the end of the chapter I talk briefly about plans for enlarging the business of Creative Skating and its parent company Creative Currents.

#### Origin of Creative Skating

The idea of creative skating workshops came to me as a result of my work as a teacher of beginners. I saw a marked difference in the learning styles and learning speeds of my adult and child students. The children, as a group, learned and mastered skills at a much faster rate than the adults, and they also seemed to enjoy their skating time more. I looked for reasons for this difference and, after acknowledging the clear advantages of the youthful body over the older body, a condition that cannot be affected, the most remarkable difference was the children's level of freedom with their bodies on this ice. This, I thought could be affected in the adult, and so I observed the particulars of the child learning experience and set out to devise a method of skating and of teaching skating that would enable the adult to be more child-like and thus learn with greater fluency and enjoyment. It was after seeing success in this program with adult beginners - and with kids too- that I realized there was potential for success with competitors as well.



Adult beginners come to the ice with a significant number of fears. They are afraid of falling and hurting themselves, of looking foolish, and of failing to achieve at a rapid pace. Paul Torrance discovered, when interviewing teachers who used creative methods in their classes, that “At every hand, the teachers found that the fear of failure was a great inhibitor of learning” (Torrance 1970, 99). Of course, the standard teaching methods alone do somewhat help the adult beginner become more comfortable as she gains control and develops greater proficiency. However, if these methods are supplemented with a creative program the adult acquires skills much more quickly since she learns to trust her body and her own impulses for movement.

Adults tend to be careful on the ice. They pay polite attention to the instructor during lessons and listen carefully, and then skate off to try either to replicate what was demonstrated or to act out what they think is expected of them. Attentive, thoughtful students who really want to learn seem like every coach’s dream. However, the adult student tends to separate herself from her body, resisting her body’s natural impulses for movement. The adult skater typically is quite stiff on the ice. This sets her up as an obstacle to herself by blocking forms of body learning, like kinesthetic memory. Those who instruct adults often find themselves with students who have an excellent conceptual understanding of any given move, and who could write or draw an accurate description of it. Despite this great intellectual understanding however, they struggle to perform the move with their bodies. Some adult students actually bring notebooks and pens onto the ice so that they can take notes during a lesson. This is a way to make a risky endeavor such as a salchow jump less intimidating, but it serves only to pull them farther away from the actual experience of the jump itself. Adults like to have a deep conceptual

understanding of a move before they try it. This is good to an extent but unfortunately, most adults get stuck in the brain, inhibiting body learning. Developing kinesthetic memory and getting the feeling for a particular skating move is what is really important when learning to skate. No degree of intellectual figuring can replace the physical process and getting the feel of the body's actions during the jump (although focused visualization is a very effective supplemental tool [Gawain 1983]). Because adults are especially restricted by feelings of self-consciousness, getting them 'un-conscious' makes a big difference in the facility with which they learn. By focusing on the possibilities for enjoyment and discovery inherent in skating, rather than directly on performance or achievement, the adult is freed from the inhibitions that normally get in the way when trying to learn new skating moves. This is the process of automatization when actions are performed without conscious attention (Matlin 1998). Unlike tasks done with controlled processing (Schiffrin 1977, cited in Matlin 1998, 49) those that have become automatic require only divided attention. An example of automatic processing is the ease with which a skilled driver shifts her car from gear to gear. Once experienced, she no longer 'thinks' about the time to shift, or the relative pressure she must apply to the clutch and gas pedal.

It is the aim of the competitive skater to bring all her skating skills to the automatic level so that during a performance she is able to focus her conscious attention on interpretation of the music, her presentation to the audience, and pacing herself to avoid fatigue. Once the body has become comfortable with a new skill, to the point that it becomes very natural to do it, the mind can release its concentration. With skaters, and especially beginners, this process can work the other way around. This is done by

distracting the skater's conscious mind from the particular skating skills she is learning by diverting her attention with games, props, music and other activities. Once the conscious attention has been shifted away from the skill learning her kinesthetic attention takes over. At this point she is interpreting information on a kinesthetic level rather than on a conscious intellectual level.

Having made these observations about the ways in which children and adults differ in their physical learning I realized that an environment could be created which would encourage the children's approach and bring out that child-like response to learning in adults. The key was to tap into the playful attitude that the children naturally bring to their lessons. If a lesson could be set up that would actually encourage play instead of scold for it, then the children would be able to learn with pleasure and maintain their natural ease. Likewise this playful atmosphere would benefit the adults by taking the pressure of a formal goal-oriented lesson away, and help them to get out of their intellectual mindsets into more body-focused ones. I started Creative Skating workshops to explore the viability of my ideas and to see how adults and children might respond to these new methods.

The playful setting of the Creative Skating workshop helps redirect the adult's focus from hard and fast goals regarding skill attainment and relieves them of performance pressures. The approach aims to be informative instead of evaluative, removing the pressure of external approval so that the skaters are able to concentrate, on a kinesthetic level, on the information they are receiving through their bodies rather than on whether what they are producing will be judged good or bad.

Many adults want to get from A to B as quickly as possible but sabotage their efforts by placing undo pressure on themselves to achieve. Also, a great concern to most adults is that they might look silly or fail when attempting a new move. Because there is no right way to play creative games, or move with props in a creative way, these fears, along with any external goals become irrelevant in the Creative Skating workshop session.

Props, music, and group work are all tools for helping to encourage the adult skater to let go of the demands she makes on herself when she is learning. This way the skater can learn from the body up to the brain- the opposite of the way most adults are used to learning. Games, props and an attitude of fun help refocus the adult from the conscious verbal descriptions and admonishments to the kinesthetic experience where the body is free to do its own learning. Once the body has completed the move, an event which in Creative Skating workshops often takes place while the adult skater is unaware of what the body is doing, the mind can be reintegrated so that the move can be perfected and consciously called up whenever needed. Both the mind and the body need to learn, and with adults the mind often crowds the body out. As mentioned earlier this is the opposite of the way that children typically learn.

Because creativity is such an important part of letting the mind go and opening up to new possibilities, understanding how to encourage creativity and creative responses is crucial to the success of the Creative Skating workshop. Paul Torrance, when asked, "What makes a child more creative?" answered, "Anything which makes him more free and alive"(Torrance cited in Michael 1968,341). I believe the same is true for skaters, especially adults and beginners, and have constructed my workshops to offer the

maximum degree of freedom possible. Another critical factor for encouraging creativity is to keep the experience judgment-free. Any degree of evaluation can inhibit creative expression and take a person away from her personal motivation for participation. This is also the reason that no one is forced to participate in any workshop activity. All participants are free to watch from the sidelines, pass a turn in a game, or take a break at any time. The control is given to the skater to create whatever experience she needs at that time. Pushing someone to explore her personal creativity is counterproductive as it brings her back to the mindset of performing to please somebody else. Especially at a first workshop, people may feel awkward or shy about the activities and should be allowed to adapt at their own pace. They will see from their observation that the environment truly is judgment-free and then the next time they may feel more comfortable participating. Interestingly, a participant who seemed reluctant to join in at one workshop, and who I thought was having a miserable time, wrote in her evaluation that she had loved it, could not wait to come back, and felt that the experience had changed her approach to learning to skate.

Adults get stressed out if they feel that their progress is too slow. This of course retards their progress even more as negative emotions take over and the body responds to the feelings of stress by tensing. Maintaining a calm attitude in the face of perceived failure is important to skill learning and experimenting with props to see what works and doesn't work in a non-judgmental way is one way to develop this calmness. By seeing skating skills as a series of puzzles to solve rather than as a call to prove oneself or to achieve goals, the adult will lower her stress levels and let her body loosen up for learning. In other words she will take on a more child-like approach to her skating,

finding out what she is capable of rather than fearing the discovery of more that she cannot do.

### Children: Spontaneous Skill Learning

As mentioned above, the shift in my own teaching style, away from the standard methods, occurred when I noticed that the way the way children pick up skills differs from the way adults do. I saw that children have an incredible capacity for acting freely; with freedom of movement as well as freedom from certain doubts and fears, and that this freedom should not be repressed or disciplined out of them, but encouraged. One way that this freedom of movement expresses itself is simply in the way that children never stand still on the ice. They fidget, play, drop mittens and chase friends. Every time they move, making these seemingly insignificant and unfocused motions, their bodies are learning. Kinesthetic memory is such a powerful tool that even without meaning to, children are learning and stocking their muscle memory banks with valuable information. When they twist and squirm and bend to pick up mittens, they are not simply not paying attention to the lesson; they are actually learning to regain their balance, to turn their blades from one direction to another, discovering how the center of gravity shifts with a change in position. This automatic processing aids the children in learning skills at the rapid rate they tend to as these careless, natural movements are all actually building blocks for more advanced skating skills and are 'practiced' constantly by children this way.

For children who are learning to skate, it is important to encourage their natural curiosity and freedom of movement. Usually the focus of the standard teaching methods

is just the opposite. Children are trained to stand still and pay attention to what they are told. While this is important at times, it serves mainly to distance the child from her own instincts and stiffens her body movements as she tries to imitate the coach's style rather than enhance her own. Keeping skating fun for the child increases the chance that she will want to continue the sport, and that she will pursue her learning for intrinsic reasons. Becoming a champion should be the by-product of focused, intrinsically motivated work, not the sole objective of a skater striving to satisfy the needs of coach or parent, or to prove her own worth.

In a Creative Skating workshop children's natural inclinations for movement exploration, and their immediate responsiveness to music are highly valued. The structure of a children's workshop differs slightly from the adult's; all of which will be described in detail later. Mainly it is shorter, with fifteen rather than thirty minutes of off-ice warmup and then about thirty as opposed to sixty minutes of on-ice work. The following off-ice cool-down period is also relatively short and its length is guided by the children. Drawing, which the adults do before and after the workshop is done only at the end of the children's session and more as a way to help them communicate likes and dislikes about the workshop that may be difficult to put into words, than to provide a springboard for intrapersonal reflection on the creative process.

Prop use is also different in the children's workshop as safety issues come into play. Balloons might be used instead of balls, shortened dance ribbons or pinwheels instead of the long ribbons and scarves used by older participants. The most important prop for any workshop, but especially for children, is the imagination. Group storytelling and creating encourage creative expression and also lead to wonderful adventures on the

ice. Whether swimming through a peanut butter sea or becoming a piece of popcorn about to pop, skating skills are used and practiced as the children act out their fantasies on the ice.

Encouraging playful creativity at a young age can make it easier for the child to express herself on the ice as she gets older. She will be more familiar with the creative movement process and feel more at home in a creative role. For the competitor this means a greater ability to relate to the audience during a performance, more interesting choreography, and the ability to skate with the emotion of the music rather than simply to the counts of the score. All of these factors set a competitor apart from the rest of the field.

### Props

The use of props can be beneficial to actual skill learning as well as to provide a playful creative atmosphere. In discussing each of four main props below, I will identify the primary goal for its use as a learning tool and give a clearer picture of the way in which each is used in the workshops. Of course there is virtually no limit to the number or type of props that could be used (we have used beach balls, milk crates, frisbees, large bubble wands, and silly string just to name a few) and these particular four are described here because they most simply address the problems common to basic skill learning.

Kites are useful tools for helping beginners become aware of their arm positions. Many beginners lose track of limbs once they are out of their sight. An arm behind the back or out of the line of vision is often left to dangle or twist without purpose. By attaching a kite to the arm the skater gets a greater sense of positioning and of the way



arm position effects balance and direction. This is because the kite is subject to the drag and pull of the wind created by the skater's motion and the pull exaggerates the effect that the arm alone has on the skater's balance and direction. With or without the kite, varying arm heights, speeds, and direction, creates different effects for the skater. Experiencing these effects personally in an exaggerated, hands-on approach, decreases the amount of time it takes the skater to understand the importance of careful arm positioning. Also, when the skater's focus is on keeping the kite in the air she will turn, change speed and shift balance quickly and automatically, reinforcing these skills on an unconscious, body level.

Dance ribbons are used partially for the same reason as the kites, to alert the skater to her arm position. But ribbons are also useful for encouraging the skater to direct her gaze upward. Unlike the kite, the ribbon can "fly" in front of the skater when she is standing still (it is very difficult for a beginner to see the kite flying unless she is skating backward). Because ribbons make pretty patterns as they ripple through the air, skaters are naturally drawn to watch them. Getting a beginner to take her eyes off the ice and even to look up is a big step, and the ribbon helps distract the skater from her anxiety, so she can allow her body to process the balance shift that happens when eyes and head are lifted.

Once the skater has experimented with the ribbon while standing still, switching it from hand to hand, swirling it like a lasso overhead etc, she will be tempted to see what happens when she turns, making the ribbon swirl around her. This way, without prodding, the skater tries her first turn by herself and only when she and her body are ready. Getting used to the motion of the turn, even though very slow at first, is another

great step for the skater to take. But it is important that this be allowed to happen when the skater feels ready. She is learning to trust her body's impulses for movement, and rushing the process actually impedes it. If a skater looks ready to try something that has not yet occurred to her or her body I might suggest the move as something to consider trying when she feels ready, just to see what will happen.

Hula hoops most obviously target the hip and trunk area. Using the hoops on the ice as they are generally used off the ice, makes the skater keenly aware of hip positioning, body lean, and the shifting of weight from one side to the other. All of these are important for increased balance, and by framing the balance lesson as a game with hula hoops, the often frustrating task of learning to balance becomes enjoyable. Of course we don't stop at using the hoops only in the way they are generally used off the ice. We explore other ways of using them, like swinging a hoop around another body part- like an arm, or a neck, or a leg. All of these actions effect balance in different ways and the skater gains an understanding of how to counterbalance the wiggling movement of each body part.

Another way to use the hoops is in partner work. Skaters pair up and explore ways of interacting with each other through the hoop. They might each hold one side of the hoop and then drag one another forward or backward. Or one might "capture" the other with the hoop by passing it over her head and then seeing how they can skate together in that way. The one inside the hoop might turn in one direction while her partner turns in the other outside the hoop. Every workshop reveals new ways of skating with the hoops (and with each of the props).

Another popular prop is the parachute or large panel of fabric. It is brought to the center of the ice and each skater holds a piece of its edge. Then, to music, the skaters lift and lower the fabric, make it ripple, and sway back and forth. The basic purpose of the fabric panel is to help the skaters understand how other skaters' movements will effect them and their balance. It helps bring awareness and sensitivity to the skater as she watches the other group members move and anticipates the ripple effect of their movement on her. She also has to be aware of the possibility that another skater will lose her balance and need to be steadied by the others in the group. Awareness of other's bodies is as important for safe skating as awareness of one's own body. Also, learning to be empathetic to other group members helps each individual be kinder to herself.

#### Creative Currents, the Creative Skating Company

My partner and I founded Creative Currents in order to put our vision of Creative Skating and learning with joy into practice. We are planning to give our Creative Skating workshops at some of the eighty New England rinks starting next fall. Our plan is to visit a rink for a weekend and lead two or three workshops over the two-day period. Depending on the needs of the skaters at each rink these might be broken up according to age or by ability. It is our hope that the coaches at each rink will see the worth of our non-judgmental approach and incorporate it as much as possible into their regular teaching. We also hope that each skater participating in the workshops will carry away with her something of what is valued in the workshop; things like self-confidence and trust in one's own body and creative impulses. After traveling with our program for a year it is our aim to affiliate Creative Currents with a particular rink and offer regular

Creative Skating sessions there as part of the training or learn to skate programs already in place.

Creative Skating is intended only as a supplement to the standard training and teaching methods. These traditional methods work well for skill learning and should not be eliminated. They should however, be modified to take the whole skating person into account. The balance that creativity can offer the rigorous training schedule is much needed and long overdue.

## CHAPTER 4

### PILOT STUDY

It is my belief that by providing a more relaxed and positive learning environment the Creative Skating method can be a useful tool, when used as a supplement to standard training methods, for encouraging intrinsic motivation and decreasing rates of burnout and other stress-related problems. My specific hypotheses for this pilot study were that Creative Skating would provide a relaxed and positive atmosphere for learning that would be reflected in higher positive scores on the post-workshop tests of mood (PANAS-1988), more positive creative representation in post-workshop drawings, and positive general comments on a specially designed questionnaire about the workshop experience. The method used will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter.

Ten adult beginner skaters, ranging in age from twenty to fifty, took part in a video taped Creative Skating workshop. Participants included eight women and two men, of varying degrees of ability within the beginner range. Off ice exercises included name games for introductions, divergent thinking games, drawing, and stretching. On the ice, skaters explored new ways of moving and skating with and without a variety of props, to different types of music. They were reminded throughout the session that they would not be subject to criticism or evaluation at any point during the workshop and were encouraged to follow their impulses for moving and playing. After one hour of individual, partner, and group skating they participated in other off-ice activities including more drawing, and a guided relaxation exercise.

## Instruments

At the start of the session each was asked to fill out a Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988) and to do a creative drawing exercise describing general feelings about themselves. After the workshop they did another drawing, and filled out another PANAS, as well as a questionnaire that asked specific questions about their experience in the Creative Skating workshop.

The PANAS is a twenty-item mood adjective checklist (see Appendix A) designed to measure states of positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA). A high PA score indicates a state of high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement; a low PA reflects a state of sadness or lethargy. Conversely, a high NA score is indicative of the presence of such emotions as nervousness, fear, and anger, while a low NA shows that the subject is feeling calm and serene (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988). PANAS measures of each skater were taken at the beginning and end of the workshop and then results were compared for difference.

For the drawing exercise, each skater was asked to create a picture that, in a non-representational or abstract way, describes who s/he is at that particular moment. Each skater was given a blank sheet of paper and access to colored markers. S/he was told that the drawing would not be shown to anybody else unless s/he so desired. The first drawing was done before any other creative work was started and then put away where it would not be seen by anyone, including the artist, until the end of the workshop.

There are several reasons for including this non-verbal, open ended drawing task in the Creative Skating workshop. One is to help the participant make some contact with

her creative state. Few of us can take the time out of daily life to take stock of our creative energy, confidence, and drive. For many this means losing sight of personal creativity altogether resulting in the “I’m just not a creative person” mantra. But everybody has some degree of creative impulse and if it can be identified and tapped into, it can also be nurtured and developed (von Oech 1986).

Another reason for drawing at the start of the Creative Skating workshop is to bridge the gap between off-ice creativity, which may be fairly familiar territory for some, and on-ice creativity, which is generally unfamiliar ground for all. Asking people who are unsure of their personal creative abilities to hop right into creative work on the ice serves only to intimidate and inhibit. Participants need first to test their creative waters privately and to see that they can do this in a non-judgmental, accepting environment. Letting them know that their creative work does not have to be shown to others helps them understand the non-competitive nature of the workshop on and off the ice.

The drawings also help the skater to see the effects of the Creative Skating workshop on her creativity and her self-attitude. When the drawings done at the beginning of the workshop are compared with another set done at the close of the workshop, significant differences are observed. Those wishing to share their drawings with the group are welcome to do so and a discussion may take place as the skaters verbalize the changes they feel in themselves and see reflected in their art work.

Verbalization helps the participant understand the changes that have taken place on an intellectual level, connecting the mind, emotions, and body. This is an important step toward transition out of the workshop and back to the real world. The skater may, through the reflective discussion process, gain insight about what may have been

blocking her creativity before the workshop helped free it up. By gaining self-awareness the participant can take the beneficial effects of the workshop with her, ready for application to non-skating situations. Of course this also provides informative feedback for the workshop leader.

The drawings were scored, with the aid of a brief manual (see Appendix B) by a third party who was unfamiliar with the study's purpose, for qualities indicative of positive feelings, creative release or fluidity, and confidence levels. The drawings were shuffled so that the scorer could not tell that there were before and after drawings, nor that each person drew two. The results were analyzed for difference between the ratings of the ones drawn at the start and the ones done at the end of the workshop. A reliability check was done on manual question number 3 which asks the scorer to rate the drawing as negative, neutral, or positive, and also on question number 4 which asks the scorer to rate the fluidity of line in each drawing on a seven point scale of 'constrained' to 'free'. This check was deemed necessary because of the subjective nature of the scoring of these items. Correlations of .40 - .63 were obtained indicating less consistency between raters than what I had hoped for. The final data used were the averages of the two.

The questionnaire (see Appendix C) which was filled out by each skater at the close of the workshop asked about previous skating experience and lesson taking, general energy level, things learned during the workshop, and stress level changes before and then during the session. Finally, space was also provided for general comments.



## Results

There are three sets of statistical data, as well as remarks from participants regarding their experiences, which provide evidence of the effectiveness of the Creative Skating workshop in meeting its goals. The first set contains data from the PANAS tests that were given before and after the workshop (see Table I). This allows us to look at the difference in means of the pre-workshop affect scores and the post-workshop affect scores. What we find is that these differences are consistent with my hypothesis and are (or are nearly) statistically significant. Specifically, for the positive adjectives the difference in mean scores was 4.4, with a p-value of .06. For the negative adjectives the difference in mean scores was -2.8, again consistent with my hypothesis, but in this case statistically significant, having a p-value of .039. In summary, these figures suggest that the participants' moods were positively affected by the Creative Skating Workshop.

The second set of data with which we can investigate the efficacy of the Creative Skating program consists of the correlations between the PANAS scores and the questionnaire results (see Table II). Drawing results could not be included in this because individual participant identities associated with each drawing were lost. The highly correlated items can be enumerated:

1. I found that, in general, stress levels after the workshop were lower than those reported before the workshop for all attending, and the greatest decrease in stress levels occurred in those skaters who had had the highest number of lessons before participating in the workshop ( $r = -.847$ ), even though their pre-workshop stress levels were lower than those who had not had many lessons. This suggests that

the workshops especially benefit, in terms of stress reduction, the skater who has been taught by standard methods.

2. Another finding was that those who reported that they felt they had learned a lot about movement on the ice also felt they had learned a lot about musical interpretation ( $r = .836$ ). This suggests that improving musical interpretation skills can help to improve movement skills. Neither skill was taught specifically in the workshop, instead skaters were encouraged to experiment with musical interpretation and movement on their own. So, even unguided musical interpretation exploration can lead to better movement skill learning.
3. Participants who felt that they had learned the most about movement on the ice also felt they had learned the most about trusting themselves and their bodies ( $r = .811$ ). This shows a relationship between self trust and movement skill learning. It is important for a skater to trust herself and her body in order to learn about moving on the ice.
4. Further, learning to trust oneself was linked with a high positive difference on the PANAS ( $r = .786$ ) indicating that trusting oneself is important for lowering stress levels and increasing positive feelings.
5. Positive scores on the PANAS filled out after the workshop were higher for those who felt it was likely that they would participate in future workshops ( $r = .796$ ), showing that feeling good about an activity leads to greater willingness for further participation (Amabile 1996).

The final set of relevant statistical data is the results of the drawing scores (see Table III). Comparing the drawings done before with those done after the workshop

yielded several interesting results, all consistent with my hypothesis in direction and all but one statistically significant. There was an increase in fluidity of line 4.1 to 5.4 ( $p=.008$ ), in overall positive characteristic 2.25 to 2.65 ( $p=.053$ ), and in greater use of the page .70 to .925 ( $p=.010$ ). There was also an increase in number of colors used but it was not statistically significant, although in the right direction. These data fit with expectations that participation in the workshop would increase freedom of movement and expression (fluidity of line), general positive mood (overall characteristic) and feelings of confidence (use of the page).

The final data are the general comments offered by participants at the bottom of the questionnaire form:

1. "I felt embarrassed at first because everybody was so good. Then I realized it didn't matter. Loved it!"
2. "Should have done it years ago. Tonight was fun."
3. "I had lots of fun! I didn't really feel like this was a lesson per se- I felt like this was a chance to play and experiment. It wasn't so much on technique."
4. "I think I learned the most about speed. I skated faster and turned faster when I was worried about keeping a kite in the air. This was way fun! This was different than my other lesson- no one told me I was dropping my free side in my back spin!"
5. "It was fun and exciting to play on the ice. Lessons are fun too but more focused. Actually this was kind of like my logic/set theory class. Very unstructured. Not worrying about doing things right is nice."

6. “This workshop provided an opportunity for me to blossom, grow, radiate, explore, and – most of all, learn about the lack of limits of my body. Extant strengths emerged as might have been expected, but confidence, grace and even new talents that emerged surprised me.”
7. “This experience is one of the best eye-opening, self-awareness exercises I have ever been involved in. It was about a lot more than skating.”
8. “This workshop gets me back in touch with the joy of skating - what I daydreamed about when I started and what I forgot in trying to learn a new jump or skill.”
9. “I thought it was terrific.”

These results too, are supportive of my hypothesis regarding the benefits of the Creative Skating workshop to the skater.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Discussion

The positive results obtained through the PANAS, the drawings, and the questionnaire give reason to believe that the Creative Skating workshops positively address some of the problems present in the standard training methods and that a need exists that they might help satisfy. Additionally, the comments written by participants at the bottom of the questionnaire offer positive, though unscientific, endorsement for the program. Specifically, response number one (“I felt embarrassed at first because everybody was so good but then I realized it didn’t matter. Loved it!”) expresses the type of change in attitude I theorized could occur from participation in the workshop. Number four (“I think I learned most about speed. I skated faster and turned faster when I was worried about keeping a kite in the air.”) shows an identification of the connection between fun and skill learning that is at the root of the Creative Skating philosophy. Number six (“This workshop provided an opportunity for me to blossom, grow, radiate, explore, and – most of all, learn about the lack of limits of my body. Extant strengths emerged which might have been expected, but confidence, grace and even new talents that emerged surprised me.”) brings up the important quality of surprise, which has been deemed the essence of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1996) and the value of the workshop for releasing and discovering potential. Number seven (“This experience is one of the best eye-opening, self-awareness exercises I have ever been involved in. It was about a lot more than skating.”) touches on the transfer value of the workshop as an experience that goes beyond the confines of the ice and has personal meaning. Finally, number eight

(“This workshop gets me back in touch with the joy of skating – what I daydreamed about when I started and what I forgot in trying to learn a new jump or skill.”) speaks to my original goal for Creative Skating: to reestablish the joy of skating and to keep skaters focused on the most meaningful reason for their participation in the sport.

Although the results from this small study were positive, I discovered several flaws in my methods. For instance, the wording on the drawing score manual should be emended as question two, regarding the type of color used, was not specific enough to be helpful. Also, the scorers sometimes misinterpreted drawings as neutral or negative that the artists themselves had described in the discussion section of the workshop as positive. Perhaps including the personal comments of the artists on their own work would be helpful in future studies. A final note regarding the drawings is that the individual identities of the artists was lost so that, although I was able to properly group “befores” with their corresponding “afters”, I was unable to cross correlate the drawing scores with the questionnaire results for each participant. This would have been an interesting test to do as past skating experience or ability may have been linked to greater changes in drawings done before and after the workshop.

### Conclusion

Based on the results and feedback of this small study, it would seem that further exploration into the use of creativity to help lower stress levels and to boost confidence and intrinsic motivation levels in figure skaters is merited. We also need to explore the possibility of long term benefits. Experimentation on a larger population and over a longer period of time, including follow-up studies of the effects of workshop

participation on overall skating performance would yield more definite evidence. Future studies might look at the range of preferred learning styles for creative work within the sport, based on Howard Gardner's work in the area of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1993), developing ways to work to enhance creative learning for each individual. For instance, one skater may have a preference for visual learning indicating a reason for the workshop leader to incorporate greater use of demonstration and video taping, while another may have greater verbal or rhythmic strengths which would require the leader to focus her presentation on description and imagery, or on musical interpretation and movement. Then within each learning style preference there may be certain forms of instruction that work better for some than for others. Different styles of creative work may be more effective for some skaters than for others and discovering individual preferences would make the Creative Workshop experience more valuable.

## APPENDIX



**APPENDIX A**  
**THE PANAS**

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at this precise moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

\_\_\_ interested

\_\_\_ irritable

\_\_\_ distressed

\_\_\_ alert

\_\_\_ excited

\_\_\_ ashamed

\_\_\_ upset

\_\_\_ inspired

\_\_\_ strong

\_\_\_ nervous

\_\_\_ guilty

\_\_\_ determined

\_\_\_ scared

\_\_\_ attentive

\_\_\_ hostile

\_\_\_ jittery

\_\_\_ enthusiastic

\_\_\_ active

\_\_\_ proud

\_\_\_ afraid

**APPENDIX B**

**Drawing Score Manual**

**Number of colors used(circle one)** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Type of colors used(circle one)** dull or pale bright or bold dull and bright

**Overall characterization of image(circle one)** negative neutral positive

**Fluidity of line** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
(constrained)-----(free)

**Use of page** (about)1/4 ----- 1/2-----3/4----- whole page

**Any words written (circle one)** Yes No

**Please list**

**APPENDIX C**  
**Questionnaire**

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. Number of years skating \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. Number of lessons taken \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Most recent lesson \_\_\_\_\_

For the following questions please circle the number that best describes your current feeling.

8. Present energy level      1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
                                                           Low-----Med-----High
9. During this workshop how much do you feel that you have learned about:
- |                                |                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Body positioning?              | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|                                | (very little)----- (very much) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Musical interpretation?        | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Movement on the ice?           | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| The use of edges?              | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| General control while skating? | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Trusting yourself, your body?  | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
10. After this workshop do you feel more or less excited about skating?  
       1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
       (less)----- (same)----- (more)
11. How likely is it that you will take more skating lessons within the next year?  
       1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
       (not likely)----- (very likely)
12. How likely is it that you would participate in another Creative Skating workshop?  
       1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
       (not likely)----- (very likely)
13. Please indicate your level of stress or anxiety just before this workshop.  
       1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
       (low)----- (high)
14. Please indicate your level of stress or anxiety as you "got into" the workshop.  
       1      2      3      4      5      6      7  
       (low)----- (high)
15. Please describe your feelings about this workshop compared to other lessons you have had. If you have not had other lessons, please give some general comments about the workshop.

**TABLE I**

**Mean Scores on PANAS (n=10)**

	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Diff</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Positive Adjectives</b>	31.0	35.4	4.4	2.129	.06
<b>Negative Adjectives</b>	13.5	10.7	-2.8	-2.409	.039

**TABLE II**  
**Correlation Coefficients for PANAS and Questionnaire Results**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>
Post workshop stress & Number of lessons	-.847
Learned about movement on the ice & Learned about musical interpretation	.836
Learned about movement on the ice & Trusting self and body	.811
Trusting self and body & Positive post PANAS	.786
Positive post PANAS & Would participate again	.796

**Table III**  
**Mean Scores on Free Drawing (n=10)**

	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Diff</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Measures</b>					
<b># of Colors</b>	3.4	4.1	.7	1.172	.271
<b>overall character</b>	2.25	2.65	.40	2.228	.053
<b>fluidity</b>	4.1	5.4	1.3	3.407	.008
<b>use of page</b>	.70	.925	.225	3.25	.010

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albright, Tenley. 1999. Personal Communication
- Amabile, Teresa. 1998. "How to Kill Creativity," Harvard Business Review. September, v76 n5 76
- Amabile, Teresa. 1996. Creativity in Context. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Amabile, Teresa. 1983. "The Social Psychology of Creativity: A Componential Conceptualization," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. August, v45 n2 357-376
- Caine, Renate and Geoffrey. 1994. Making Connections. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.
- Cameron, Julia. 1996. The Vein of Gold, New York, New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihalyi 1996. Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention. New York: Harper Collins
- Davis, Gary A. 1992. Creativity is Forever. Debuque: Kendall Hunt/Hunt
- Dulberg, Harvey. 1997. Personal Communication
- Freire, Paulo. 1997. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Gardner, Howard. 1993. Multiple Intelligence Theory and Practice. New York, New York: Basic Books
- Gawain, Shakti. 1983. Creative Visualization. : Bantam Books
- Gordon, Ira J., Guinagh, Barry; Jester, Emile. 1973. Child Learning Through Child Play. London, England: Sidgwick and Jackson.
- Herrmann, Ned. 1991. "The Creative Brain," Journal of Creative Behavior. v25 n4 275
- John-Steiner, Vera. 1985. Notebooks of the Mind. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press
- Jones, Tudor Powell. 1972. Creative Learning in Perspective. London, England: University of London Press.

- Kagan, Jerome. 1967. Creativity and Learning. Houghton Mifflin.  
Toronto, Ontario:
- Kwan, Michelle. 1999. Television Interview
- Laban, Rudolf. 1992. The Mastery of Movement. Plymouth,  
England: Northcote House Publishing.
- Matlin, Margaret. 1998. Cognition. New York: Harcourt Brace College  
Publishers.
- Michael, William B. 1968. Bold New Venture. Indiana University Press.  
Bloomington, Indiana:
- Mosely, Benita. 1997. "Striking the balance: in the struggle with  
eating disorders, athletes have a lot on their side," Women's Sports and  
Fitness. May v19 n4 p29
- Nash, Grace. 1974. Creative Approaches to Child Development  
with Music, Language, and Movement. Van Nuys, California: Alfred  
Publishing Company.
- Naumann, Katherine. 1996. Thinking and Learning Through Creative  
Movement in the Classroom. Thesis for the Critical and Creative Thinking  
Program, December, University of Massachusetts, Boston.
- Pike, Robert W. 1994. Creative Training Techniques Handbook.  
Lakewood Books. Minneapolis, Minnesota:
- Powell, Mary Clare. 1994. "On Creativity and Social Change," The Journal of  
Creative Behavior. v28 n1 21
- Ryan, Joan. 1996. Little Girls in Pretty Boxes. New York: Warner  
Books
- Tardif, T.Z. and Sternberg, R.J. 1998. The Nature of Creativity. New York:  
Cambridge University Press
- Thompson, Myra K. 1993. Jump for Joy. West Nyack, New York: Parker  
Publishing Company.
- Torrance, Paul. 1965. Rewarding Creative Behavior. Englewood,  
New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.



- Torrance, Paul. 1970. Encouraging Creativity in the Classroom. Dubuque, Iowa: WM.C. Brown Co. Publishers.
- von Oech, Roger. 1986. A Kick in the Seat of the Pants. New York, New York: Harper Perennial.
- von Oech, Roger. 1998. A Whack on the Side of the Head. New York, New York: Warner Books, Inc.
- Warren, Bernie. 1984. Using the Creative Arts in Therapy. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Yardley, Alice. 1973. Young Children Thinking. London, England: Evans Brothers Limited.