5-2018

# A Qualitative Exploration of Unconditional Positive Regard and its Opposite Constructs in Coach-Athlete Relationships

Lauren Kelly McHenry
*University of Tennessee,* lmchenr1@vols.utk.edu

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Lauren Kelly McHenry entitled "A Qualitative Exploration of Unconditional Positive Regard and its Opposite Constructs in Coach-Athlete Relationships." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Counseling.

<div align="right">Jeffrey L. Cochran, Major Professor</div>

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Leslee A. Fisher, Rebecca A. Zakrajsek

<div align="right">Accepted for the Council:<br>Dixie L. Thompson</div>

<div align="right">Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School</div>

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

A Qualitative Exploration of Unconditional Positive Regard and its Opposite Constructs in

Coach-Athlete Relationships

A Thesis Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Lauren Kelly McHenry

May 2018

**Dedication**

For my Grandpa Keith McHenry and Grandma Esther Lou McHenry

**Acknowledgements**

**Abstract**

Person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959) offers a framework for helping relationships (e.g. parent-child, teacher-student, counselor-client). From this theoretical lens, unconditional positive regard (UPR) is considered a key construct for nurturing growth processes and adaptive psychological development, while its opposite constructs – conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, and disregard – are suggested to undermine adaptive development. Researchers have demonstrated that the coach-athlete relationship may serve as a helping relationship (e.g. Jowett, 2007; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), or that it could function as a controlling relationship (e.g. Bartholomew, Ntoumani, & Thogerson-Ntoumani, 2010). Scholars have also emphasized the need to draw from relational theories from other disciplines to deepen our understanding of the coach-athlete relationship (Pocswardowski, Barrot, & Jowett, 2006). Thus, the current study aimed to extend the theoretical constructs of UPR and its opposites to the coach-athlete relationship context by interviewing 11 retired elite-level figure skaters' about their past relationships with coaches. Using Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier, 2012) procedures, five dimensions were constructed: (1) *descriptions of perceived components of UPR from a former coach,* (2) *descriptions of perceived opposites of UPR from a former coach,* (3) *perceived influence of coach regard* (4) *interaction of influence between coach regard and contextual conditions*, and (5) *coach regard and use of power*. Participants who described the perception of UPR from former coaches reported that their coaches' regard contributed to their confidence, passion for the sport, and persistence through challenges. Those who described perceptions of the opposites of UPR from former coaches reported that their coaches' regard contributed to lowered confidence, decreased enjoyment in sport over time, and burnout.

**Preface**

*"…I wish you all the best as you head to Ohio. Your absence from my "line-up" will leave a huge hole in my life, but I am so thrilled that you will continue to pursue your dreams on the ice. You deserve to achieve every one of them! I look forward to seeing you and working with you over breaks, both to see how you've grown and changed as a skater, AND to learn from you. Always know that you can call or email me anytime, night or day, skating or otherwise."*

[August 10, 2008]

These words were written to me when I was eighteen years old, in a letter from the woman who served as my lead figure skating coach for eleven years at that point. I was moving nine hours away from home to start my freshmen year of college, where I would try out for one of the most elite-level synchronized skating programs in the country. I will never forget the day I left for college. I skated a morning training session before my parents and I started the long drive. At the end of the session, my coach began to cry. Through tears she joked that our goodbye was harder than dropping her first-born son off at kindergarten (which she had done earlier that morning). In that moment, I could sense that she was genuinely proud of who I was, proud to know she had played an important role in raising me. It is hard to describe what that was like as an athlete in a sport I cared *so* much about, to feel from a coach I respected to the nth degree that she found so much value in *me* as an athlete and as a human being.

Two years later, I sat in my collegiate coaches' office in Ohio, asking for answers as to why I had been cut from the varsity team. I had made the team my freshmen year and received positive feedback throughout that season. The cutthroat nature of such an elite program made every day in practice feel like a competition, but I had trusted my potential to improve and do well in that environment. I had earned the team's most improved skater award and trained harder

than ever before that summer, but it was not enough. With little expression or emotion, I was told

that it came down to numbers. More women trying out, not enough spots, hairline mistakes in

my tryout, and none of my efforts from the previous year were taken into account in their

decision. I could try again next year.

Everything positive about the relationship I thought had been built with these coaches the

year prior seemed to be washed away, my confidence depleted. When I took the risk to attend

Miami, my coach from home had suggested that if I could make the cut freshman year then those

coaches would get to know me, see my work ethic and passion, and would want to keep me on

their team. She helped me believe I could go far because of my effort, drive, and personhood.

Yet, those traits held little significance when I left the coaches meeting sophomore year. I

walked out of their office not really knowing who I was, how any of the positive qualities about

myself mattered, or what to do next. I will never forget the phone call to my coach at home after

that moment, fighting back tears as I told her what happened. She cried with me then, too.

My relationships with the varsity coaches became practically non-existent that year, and

it was painful every time the head coach avoided eye contact when we found each other in

passing. Many other coaches, skaters, and parents offered immense support in that time but, for a

while, their opinions did not matter. They did not have the power to decide the team roster. Only

the varsity coaches' opinions of me mattered if I wanted to be on a national championship team,

and it seemed clear they were not concerned with my potential to contribute to their team.

Sport coaches in my life have been more than teachers of physical skill and technique;

more than conductors of training regimes or conditioning drills. I did re-gain a spot on the varsity

team junior and senior year. I earned two National Championship titles with my teams in those

years, stood on the podium as team captain senior year, and was hired to skate professionally

shortly after. It took effort on both sides to rebuild the relationships with my coaches who had

cut me. I ultimately chose to work with them as I decided the chance to achieve my personal

goals in skating would be worth it. The coaches, in turn, slowly warmed back up to me and

extended their gratitude for my choosing to come back. I feel that process was crucial for my

success along with the relational support I received from my lead coach from home and other

individual coaches with whom I was working or staying in touch with throughout that time.

In fact, I can count *eighteen* different coaches that I have personally worked with

throughout my figure skating career, some long-term, some only in college, and some short-term

at various training camps. As I reflect on *why* I am so drawn to researching coach-athlete

relationships, I am astounded to identify the extent to which every single coach I have worked

with from age five to twenty-five has influenced me in positive or negative ways.

What I have come to believe is that genuinely positive, whole-hearted, all-accepting

relationships are powerful in producing inner strength and courage in each individual involved.

When this happens in a coach-athlete relationship, it seems there is hardly room for negative

outcomes. Of course, I failed many times in my skating career and faced numerous setbacks.

Yet, I can reflect on my career as a whole with great pride. The ultimate outcome lies in the

strength I gained from rising after each of those failures and overcoming each of those setbacks.

I believe it was my relationships with certain coaches that guided me to successful and effective

outcomes in sport and life, particularly with those coaches who believed in me, accepted me,

respected my worth as a human being, and challenged me to keep chasing my potential.

It has been almost 10 years since I first left for college. I still keep that letter where I can

easily pull it out to read when I need a boost of confidence, a source of inspiration to press on in

the direction of my dreams, and most importantly, a reminder of how fortunate I am for those

significant people in my life who wholeheartedly love, support, and believe in me.

# Table of Contents

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

*"I won 1,098 games, and eight National Championships, and coached in four different decades. But what I see are not the numbers. I see their faces." -Pat Summitt*

The coach-athlete relationship (CAR) has proven to be instrumental in the success and development of both athletes and coaches (Jowett, 2005). In fact, researchers have suggested that the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete is the foundation, or heart, of coaching (Becker, 2009; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Yang & Jowett, 2013a). Jowett (2005) suggests this relationship begins as soon as a coach and athlete begin to work together in a sport context, where both members become interdependent in meeting each other's unique, specific needs. Athletes rely on coaches for expertise and knowledge to help them excel in their sport beyond a level they could achieve on their own (Jowett, 2005; see also Short & Short, 2005). Coaches, in turn, rely on athletes to follow direction, and put all of their effort and energy into becoming the best athletes they can be (Jowett, 2005).

The CAR can be examined in two ways, either by performance success or by interpersonal effectiveness. For example, a successful CAR will result in positive performance outcomes that are typically measured in comparison to others. When a coach and athlete reach a certain level of palpable achievement, their relationship could be considered successful; and, when comparative standards of achievement are not met, the relationship will be unsuccessful (Jowett, 2005). In a different tone, Interpersonal effectiveness will result in positive growth and personal development. An effective relationship is said to be founded in "empathic understanding, honesty, support, mutual liking, acceptance, responsiveness, friendliness, co-operation, caring, respect, and positive regard." Ineffective relationships, however, display "lack

of interest, proximity, care, power imbalance, deceit, abuse, and exploitation" (Jowett, 2005, pp. 14).

Any CAR has the potential to be successful and effective, successful and non-effective, or effective and non-successful. Ineffective relationships (no matter how successful) have been shown to deter continued sport participation (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003), diminish self-determined motivation and enjoyment (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavallee, 2014), decrease perceived efficacy (Hampson & Jowett, 2014), contribute to athlete dissatisfaction of self and psychological maladjustment (Gearity & Murray, 2011), and serve as a specific source of distress for athletes (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). A growing body of evidence supports the importance of an interpersonally effective CAR for the overall satisfaction of athletes and coaches in their sport experiences (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Jowett, 2005).

Jowett (2005) suggests that a CAR is effective when it resembles a helping relationship, in which coaches may promote the positive growth and development of their athletes in sport and life beyond sport; and, both coach and athlete experience enhanced psychological well-being. In this chapter, I first provide a brief review of the literature that will guide the present study, including that of the CAR, person-centered theory, and the theoretical concept unconditional positive regard (UPR). I then state problems within existing literature that the present study will attempt to address, the purpose of the present study, and the research questions that have guided the empirical process. Finally, I note definitions of key concepts that are discussed in the literature review.

## A Brief Review of Literature

To provide a brief review of the literature, I begin with current understandings of the coach-athlete relationship. I then introduce person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959) with specific

attention to the concept of UPR. Finally, I bring attention to researchers' criticism of the use of the terms "athlete-centered" coaching without actually being grounded person-centered theory (Nelson, Cushion, Potrac, & Groom, 2014, pp. 514), and suggest ways in which several components of person-centered theory and UPR itself have been addressed in CAR research without being fully connected to or grounded in person-centered theory.

**Understandings of the CAR**

Poczwardowski, Barrott, and Jowett (2006) suggest that the CAR can be analyzed through the lens of two different units of analysis – individual and interpersonal – and across multiple variables which include behaviors, personal characteristics, psychological needs, social dynamics, or dyadic interactions. The following literature review addresses three distinct approaches to understanding the CAR: Jowett's (2005) 3+1Cs model, Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) motivational model, and Nicholls' (1984, 1989) achievement goal theory. Each approach examines either interpersonal or individual units of analysis and emphasizes different variables of interest. All three approaches are reviewed because each holds concepts that potentially align with UPR, the primary concept of inquiry in the present study.

The first approach, Jowett and colleagues (2005) 3 + 1Cs model, examines dyadic interactions through an interpersonal unit of analysis, and demonstrates the importance for both coaches and athletes to have mutual feelings of closeness, commitment, and complementarity (Jowett, 2005; Jowett & Nezlek, 2013; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). The second approach, Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) motivational model, is rooted in self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) and examines psychological needs through an individual unit of analysis. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) established specific autonomy-supportive behaviors that, when employed by coaches, have been found to nurture athletes' self-determined motivation. The third

approach, Nicholls' (1984, 1989) achievement goal theory, examines social dynamics and personal characteristics through an individual unit of analysis. Through this lens, scholars have demonstrated that coaches will better influence athletes' satisfaction and motivation in sport by fostering a mastery-climate. In such a climate, athletes are positively reinforced for maximum effort and personal progress as opposed to comparative success (Walling, Duda, and Chi, 1993).

**Person-Centered Theory**

While the present study is informed by coach-athlete relationship literature, its primary lens is through the concept of regard, specifically UPR and its three opposites – conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, and unconditional positive disregard. UPR and its opposite constructs stem from Rogers' (1959) person-centered theory which indicated there are specific conditions in a helping relationship that, when genuinely provided by a helper and perceived by an other, are necessary to influence personal growth and change. These "core conditions" are the provision and perception of genuineness, empathy, and UPR. The theory was initially developed in the context of therapeutic relationships in counseling. However, Rogers (1959) expanded the range of relationships for which he felt it could be applicable to that of parent-child, teacher-student, and leader-group.

**UPR**

UPR has been described as the "acceptance of every momentary experience of the other. The good, the bad, and indifferent momentary experiences are accepted with equality" (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001a, pp. xii). Yet, it goes beyond mere acceptance to show genuine care for another "as a *separate* person, with permission to have his own feelings, his own experience" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 59). An orientation of UPR toward an other will encompass the following: respect for the other's core worth as a human being, acceptance of the other's state of being and

feeling in each moment, consistent belief in the other's potential, and a call to challenge the other to continue to grow toward her potential (Bozarth, 2001; Rogers, 1959, 1994; Schmid, 2001; Van Ryn & Heaney, 1997). In the context of person-centered theory, scholars have suggested that UPR is *the* change-influencing factor out of all of Rogers' core conditions (Bozarth, 2001; Freire, 2001; Moore, 2001). Wilkins (2001) stated that empathy and genuineness merely foster an atmosphere in which UPR can be accurately provided and perceived.

### "Athlete-Centered" Discussion

Recent dialogues surrounding effective CARs and positive coaching education have utilized the terms athlete-centered coaching (Nelson et al., 2014). However, Nelson and colleagues (2014) argued that these discussions have occurred without actually drawing on theory. In addressing the similarities between coaching and teaching, and recognizing the effective application of person-centered theory in teacher-student relationships, Nelson et al. (2014) called for further research to assess where and how Rogers' (1959, 1969) person centered theory could be similarly applied to the CAR.

Two of Rogers' (1959) core conditions (genuineness and empathy) have been discretely addressed in the existing CAR research. The extent to which athletes perceive their coaches' words and actions as genuine and sincere has been evidenced to be significant (Becker, 2009; Keegan et al., 2014). Empathic understanding has been deemed critical for coaches and athletes to be highly co-oriented in their feelings of closeness, commitment, and complementarity (Yang & Jowett, 2013b). Empathic listening has also been included as an autonomy-supportive behavior, important in advancing self-determined motivation (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

In addition, certain components of UPR have been addressed in CAR research. Coaches' belief and trust in their athletes, and coaches being accepting of their athletes regardless of

performance outcomes have both shown to be important (Becker, 2009; Keegan et al., 2014). Kanat-Maymon, Roth, Assor, and Raizer (2016) indicated that conditional positive regard (an opposite of UPR) may counter autonomy-supportive behaviors and contribute to inhibited self-determined motivation (see also Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Thus, it appears UPR may be a contributing factor to effective CARs while its opposites may contribute to ineffective CARs. However, UPR in its conceptual entirety is seemingly absent from our current understandings of CARs in sport psychology and coaching science literature.

**Statement of the Problem**

Despite evidence that effective CARs are important for many positive outcomes within the sport context, coaching typically focuses on technical skills and tactics and performance success outcomes in sport. Consequently, not enough emphasis is put toward the actual relationship (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). The pressure and stress associated with winning can lead coaches to exploit the power differential that already exists in the CAR and defer to controlling behaviors that might yield short-term success outcomes but might also lead to detrimental consequences associated with ineffective relationships (Cranmer & Goodboy, 2015).

Additionally, there is a need for deeper understanding of the relational mechanisms that lie beneath observable behaviors in the CAR and their influence on both effectiveness and success outcomes (Poczwardowski et al., 2006). Qualitative researchers have revealed that athletes can infer how their coaches are evaluating them without receiving specific feedback from those coaches, suggesting that coach-to-athlete communication and influence goes beyond verbal feedback and observable behavior (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavelle, 2009, 2014). Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) indicated significant variance among different athletes' perceptions of the same coach, suggesting that the CAR experience is not "one-size-fits-all"

within the variables that scholars have addressed so far. When focused solely on observable instruction, behavior, and individual characteristics, research can only address part of the multidimensional experience within a CAR (Poczwardowski et al., 2006).

Finally, Poczwardowski and colleagues (2006) called for researchers to (a) further explore the relations between descriptive concepts that have already been identified within the CAR, (b) seek a better understanding of the abstract mechanisms that underlie relationships, and (c) consider both positive and negative aspects in the relationship between coaches and athletes. While the body of existing knowledge regarding the CAR is significant, there is a need to expand the variables studied, and to integrate major theories of interpersonal relationships from other disciplines to inform and broaden our knowledge.

Thus, it seems there is a great opportunity to draw from UPR, as a central concept of person-centered theory, to better understand the complex, multifaceted components of the CAR. Extending the theoretical concept of UPR and its opposite constructs to sport contexts may contribute to our knowledge of the underlying relational mechanisms of both effective and ineffective CARs, and provide deeper understanding of *how* coaches might foster positive growth and change through effective relationship with their athletes. UPR may contribute to *why* or *how* coaches arrive at the specific communications, behaviors, or methods of instruction that previous researchers have proven effective, as it is encompassed in a person's *way of being* (Rogers, 1959, 1980).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to extend the theoretical concepts of UPR and its opposites to the CAR context by seeking to understand retired elite figure skaters' experiences of UPR or its

opposite constructs and their perceptions on how their coaches' regard influenced their sport experience and development of self-regard.

## Guiding Research Questions

A. How do retired elite figure skaters describe their perceptions of the components of UPR in their relationships with former coaches?

B. How do retired elite figure skaters describe their perceptions of the opposites of UPR in their relationships with former coaches?

C. How do retired elite figure skaters perceive that their experience of UPR or its opposites from former coaches have influenced their experience in sport?

D. How do retired elite figure skating perceive that their experience of UPR or its opposites from former coaches have influenced their development of self-regard?

## Definitions

**Coach-Athlete Relationship (CAR):** A significant and intentional helping relationship in which a coach and athlete become interdependent, exchanging coach expertise, influence, and guidance with athlete effort and compliance to achieve personal growth and development and/or performance success in the sport domain (Jowett, 2005, 2007; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007; Yang & Jowett, 2013b).

**Positive Regard:** A universal, persistent, and pervasive human need that is related to one's satisfaction of needs for relatedness. Positive regard includes attitudes of warmth, respect, and acceptance. Those who perceive positive regard from another will feel as though they have had a positive influence on that other person's experience. (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001a; Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954).

**Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR):** When perceived, UPR indicates that a person's self-experiences cannot "be discriminated by (another) individual as more or less worthy of positive regard" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 209). When provided, an orientation of UPR involves "prizing" or valuing another person, regardless of whether one values or approves of that person's specific behaviors (pp. 209); also described as "acceptance of every momentary experience of the other" (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001a, pp. xii), caring for the other as a "*separate* person, with permission to have his own feelings, his own experience" (Rogers, 1957, pp. 59), and "profound respect for, and belief in (the other person's) core worth" (Van Ryn & Heavey, 1997, pp. 692).

**Conditional Regard (Positive, Negative):** The act of offering positive regard only when someone fulfills a particular expectation or requirement and negative regard when someone fails to fulfill an expectation (Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Deci, & Ryan, 2009; Wilkins, 2001).

**Unconditional Negative Regard:** The act of consistently withdrawing regard, attention, or affection no matter what the recipient does, as if he or she can never measure up (Wilkins, 2001).

**Unconditional Negative Disregard:** A refusal to enter into relationship with another person, sometimes beneath awareness, to where one does not acknowledge the other person's existence (Wilkins, 2001).

**Self-Regard:** Satisfaction or denial of positive regard toward the self that is "independent of positive regard transactions with social others" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 209), to where positive or negative regard have become associated with particular self-experiences and integrated into the self-concept. Self-regard can be equated to a person's sense of self-existence or self-worth (Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954).

**Conditions of Worth:** Internalization of the denial of self-regard in certain conditions, so that a "self-experience or related set of self-experiences is either avoided or sought solely because the

individual discriminates it as being less or more worthy of (positive) self-regard" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 209).

**Incongruence:** A state of tension and internal confusion due to discrepancy between a person's actual experience and his or her perceived self-concept (Rogers, 1959).

**Congruence:** Integration of a person's "accurately symbolized" self-experience with his or her own self-concept, so that one's experience and sense of self align; also described as "integrated, whole, genuine" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 207).

**Unconditional Positive Self-Regard (UPSR):** Consistent satisfaction of positive regard from oneself, where an "individual perceives himself in such a way that no self-experience can be discriminated as more or less worthy of positive regard than any other" (Rogers, 1959, pp. 209).

**Self-Determination Theory:** A theory stating that motivation fluctuates on a continuum from a-motivation to intrinsic motivation, and the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are essential to maintaining or enhancing intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000).

**Autonomy:** Having one's activity and external actions align with one's "integrated sense of self," to where that person experiences freedom through the integration of self and experience (Deci & Ryan, 2000, pp. 231).

**Self-Determined Motivation:** Includes identified, integrated, and intrinsic motivation, which represent a continuum of motivation where one is freely self-motivated to engage in chosen actions or behaviors because those actions are integrated with one's personal values and self-concept (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**External Regulation:** A type of non-self determined motivation where a person acts a certain way in order to gain an external reward or avoid punishment from another person or entity outside one's own self (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**Introjected Regulation:** A type of non-self determined motivation where a person acts a certain way to avoid self-administration of contingent consequences, including feelings of worthlessness, shame, or guilt (Deci & Ryan, 2000); also described as an internal compulsion to engage in a behavior that develops as the methods of external regulation from others are partially integrated into the self (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Roth, et. al., 2009).

**3 + 1Cs model of the CAR:** A model of the CAR which indicates that effective CARs will have mutually high perceptions of closeness, commitment, and complementarity in both coach and athlete (Jowett, 2005).

**Closeness:** Feelings of interpersonal liking, trust, respect, belief, and felt appreciation that an athlete may feel toward a coach and a coach may feel toward an athlete (Jowett, 2005).

**Commitment:** A feeling that occurs when coach and/or athlete see a long-term future working together in sport (Jowett, 2005).

**Complementarity:** Cooperative action between coach and athlete, to where both are working together with a clear understanding of the same goals (Jowett, 2007, 2009).

**Co-Orientation:** The measure of accuracy to which coach and athlete perceive their own and each other's experience of closeness, commitment, and complementarity in their relationship (Jowett, 2005).

**Achievement Goal Theory:** A theory stating that individuals can approach a task with an ego-orientation (evaluation is based on comparison to others) or a task-orientation (evaluation is based on personal improvement, effort, or perceived mastery of the task) (Nicholls, 1984, 1989).

**Motivational climate**: The way in which one's environment might foster task or ego orientation (Ames & Archer, 1988; Walling et al., 1993).

**Mastery Climate:** An environment that influences task orientation by emphasizing individual mastery of skills, controllable effort, persistence towards self-improvement, and mutual support (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002).

**Ego Climate:** An environment that influences ego orientation by emphasizing social comparison as the judgment of success, external reward outcomes, public recognition, and interpersonal competition (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007).

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*"Regard those you lead in sacred awe;*

*Coach and serve them in love.*

*Cultivate and teach in an environment of heart;*

*And watch as they grow into*

*Something extraordinary."*

*-Jerry Lynch, Coaching with Heart*

**History of UPR**

In Rogers' (1951) publication presenting his theory of human personality change, the term UPR was absent from his verbiage. Rather, he discusses the closely related notion that a client experiencing acceptance and warmth from a clinician will, in turn, develop self-acceptance and self-love. Rogers' doctoral student, Stanley Standal, challenged this postulation, and is credited for developing the concept of UPR in his 1954 unpublished doctoral dissertation (see also Moon, Rice, & Schneider, 2001). In 1957, Rogers fully integrated UPR and its theoretical implications into his theory as a necessary and sufficient condition for therapeutic personality change.

Rogers continued to research, discuss, and write about UPR (e.g. Rogers, 1961, 1980, 1986) as did others (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001a), adding depth to its meaning. In 1986, Rogers expanded his work beyond psychotherapy to explain that UPR (in the context of Rogers' other five conditions for helping relationships) applies in any situation in which the development of a person is the goal. Specifically, he wrote that his theoretical conditions produce a "growth-promoting climate" (pp. 2) in the context of any relationship and his theory became one of

interpersonal relationships beyond just personality and therapy. Rogers' (1957) definition of UPR (pp. 59) states that it is,

> As much of a feeling of acceptance for the expression of negative, bad, painful, fearful, defensive, abnormal feelings as for expression of good, positive, mature, confident, social feelings. It means caring for the client, but not in a possessive way as simply to satisfy the therapist's own needs. It means caring for the client as a *separate* person, with permission to have his own feelings, his own experience.

Bozarth and Wilkins (2001a) defined UPR as the "acceptance of every momentary experience of the other. The good, the bad, and indifferent momentary experiences are accepted with equality" (pp. xii). Words to describe UPR have included: care, non-possessive love, compassion, non-judgment, acceptance, nurturance, valuing, prizing, and respecting (Prouty, 2001). Van Ryn and Heaney (1997) simplified the foundational components of UPR into a three-part definition. They suggested that the provision of UPR to others first requires approaching those others with a "profound respect for, and belief in, their core worth" (pp. 692); then maintaining empathic and open acceptance toward their perspectives and feelings; and finally expressing a "sincere belief" that they "have what it takes to reach their goals" (pp. 692).

In this chapter, I first review the theoretical literature of UPR and its components. I then define and review the theoretical literature of UPR's opposite constructs. Next, I review theoretical literature of positive regard and outcomes related to the ways in which positive regard might be provided or withheld. I then review outcomes that theorists have suggested the perception of UPR can accomplish and discuss UPR in the context of Rogers' (1959) core conditions in person-centered theory. From there, I review outcomes that researchers have demonstrated related to UPR or its opposites in counselor-client relationships, teacher-student

relationships, and parent-child relationships. I then discuss the unique challenges that sport context and figure skating context might present in the face of providing or withholding positive regard. Finally, I review the literature of three existing models for the CAR, noting ways in which UPR may potentially align with or inform each of the models and ways in which all three models may intersect in fostering an effective CAR and positive development through sport.

## Components of UPR

The research and practice of Rogers' (1959, 1961) person-centered approach over the past fifty years has expanded to discover deeper understanding of the components that constitute UPR and how an orientation of UPR toward another might be possible. Misconception of the concept has led some to contend that UPR is impossible to accurately provide (Sanford, 2001), and will negate positive reinforcement for effective behavior development (Lietaer, 1984, 2001). Thus, clarification regarding each separate component of UPR can be helpful in building an accurate understanding the concept as a whole. These components are *unconditional* which constitutes acceptance of another's state of being in any moment, *positive* which constitutes non-possessive caring and warmth, and *regard* which constitutes being counter, practicing acknowledgement, and offering confirmation.

### Unconditional

Unconditionality indicates a consistent acceptance of another's experience (Rogers, 1957). It recognizes the other's experience as it is, accepting it without any constituting condition of an "if" or a "but". To be *unconditional* requires the provider of UPR to maintain openness (Watson & Steckley, 2001) toward whatever the recipient might be experiencing in any given moment, without prior assumption of what that experience might be (Schmid, 2001). In other

words, a provider of UPR will assume the recipient is the expert of his or her own experience, and will consequently allow the recipient to be however he or she is.

It is important to distinguish that unconditionality does not encompass an attitude of unlimited tolerance (Schmid, 2001). It does not mean the provider will "welcome all behavior equally" (Lietaer, 2001, pp. 92), and it does not even require agreement or liking (Wilkins, 2001). Rather, it does not ignore any part of the inner experience or surrounding circumstance of others. Unconditional acknowledges others' momentary experiences as important contributions to whatever their presenting behaviors are, and accepts the *experiences* as they are, independent of evaluation (Wilkins, 2001). The provider might not tolerate or agree with a certain behavior or outcome, but can still accept the recipient's inner experience in the midst of that behavior. Such an acceptance allows the provider to maintain a commitment to the recipient and to their working relationship, remaining "by their side" even when they might not on be "on their side" or in agreement with their behavior (Mearns, 1994, pp. 2-3).

**Positive**

Positive regard is distinguished by the communication of non-possessive caring and warmth. In caring, the provider holds genuine, personal concern regarding what happens to the recipient (Prouty, 2001). The non-possessive descriptor takes it a step further, to recognize that controlling or manipulating another to satisfy one's own needs actually opposes the interest of positive growth and development for every person involved (Schmid, 2001).

It is important to note that when describing non-possessive caring, Rogers was not opposed to influence. Rather, he specifically differentiated influence from control, manipulation, and abuse of power (Rogers & Skinner, 1956). In any helping relationship, Rogers' noted that influence is likely a mutually desired process (Rogers & Skinner, 1956). The helper must have

the desire and expertise to influence some sort of growth process, and the recipient must have an openness and desire to be influenced in her growth. Non-possessive caring allows the recipient to be influenced while also allowing her to ultimately decide, act, and exist as an independent person. This is only possible when the helper lets go of any personal stake in the recipient's outcome, and is essential to foster true personal growth in any process (Schmid, 2001).

Additionally, the term warmth is often mistaken by the idea of sugar-coating, or being overly nice (Wilkins, 2001). Freire (2001) suggests that warmth is actually manifested by the helper's fully focused presence when communicating with and relating to the recipient. Thus, warmth may not always offer warm feelings. Rather, it offers assurance that the recipient is worthy of the helper's full attention and focus in their moments of working together (Iberg, 2001). Cornell (1996) suggested that such full engagement or warmth, will allow the helper to be better positioned in a state of focused mindfulness to unconditionally accept whatever inner experiences the recipient brings to the moment.

**Regard**

Regard is said to communicate the following: "You are worthwhile. I take you seriously. Change is possible for you, too" (Lietaer, 2001, pp. 102). The influence of various philosophical views of relating to others are evident in descriptions of regard. Particular concepts that have progressed the understanding of regard in literature include *being counter*, practicing *acknowledgement*, and *confirmation* (Schmid, 2001).

Guardini (1955) and Büber (1986) both discussed the idea that being counter, or "meeting face-to-face" and "opposite to the other" is the birthplace of a unique and autonomous sense of self. Being counter to someone recognizes the reality of that person as separate and free from oneself, but also "worthy of being dealt with" (as cited in Schmid, 2001, pp. 52). Being counter

calls for a sense of amazement in the other person's existence, as though that person provides a sense of "enjoyable beauty" or awe (Iberg, 2001, pp. 122). It does not hold expectations about or adopt possession of the other person (Guardini, 1955). Rather, it requires one to prize the other person, simply for being a unique individual human being (Rogers, 1959).

Schmid (2001) utilized the word *acknowledgement* as a synonym for regard, and suggested that it is at the core of effective human communication and relationship. Acknowledgement is described as "saying yes" to the other and allowing that person to be her own "separate and worthy" individual at face value. It is a recognition and acceptance of who the other actually is, and not what the acknowledger might imagine her to be, requiring genuine interest in and empathic understanding of the other person.

Finally, a person offering confirmation will accept the other as she is, while also challenging her to "become what she may" (Rogers & Büber, 1960, p. 219). Rogers' (1959) incorporation of this concept suggested that UPR requires both "acceptance of what is" and a challenge of what could become, "rather than a demand of what ought to be" (Truax & Mitchell, 1971, pp. 316). Thus, there is an emphasis both on what is, and on what is possible when regarding an other (Schmid, 2001).

### Opposites of UPR

While Rogers' (1959) theory focuses on UPR, succeeding theorists have indicated that there may be just as much to learn by identifying opposite experiences of UPR. Wilkins (2001) classified three discrete opposites of the concept and their possible effects in relationships. These are: conditional positive regard, unconditional negative regard, and unconditional positive disregard. More recently, researchers have identified conditional positive regard and conditional

negative regard as separate concepts, calling the experience of both *conditional regard* (Assor & Tal, 2012; Roth et al., 2009).

**Conditional Regard**

Wilkins (2001) suggested that often, positive regard is offered only when someone fulfills a particular expectation or requirement, as if to say, "'I will only approve of, like, favor you if you do this, give me this, or act in this way'" (pp. 37). Researchers of the parent-child relationship have mirrored this explanation of conditional positive regard, and concurrently suggested that conditional negative regard is the act of withdrawing regard, attention, or affection when someone fails to fulfill an expectation (Assor & Tal, 2012; Roth et al., 2009).

Conditional regard (both positive and negative) has been suggested, by some, to serve as a right way to raise, teach, or train a child, to reinforce wanted behaviors and negate unwanted behaviors via offering or withholding positive regard. Several theorists have even promoted conditional regard as an effective parenting practice (e.g. Aronfreed, 1968; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). However, supporters of the person-centered approach have pointed out that conditional positive regard will foster temporary change at best, causing receivers to become dependent on providers for the evaluation of their own experiences and sense of personal worthiness (Cochran & Cochran, 2015; Wilkin, 2001). Further, supporters of self determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) have suggested that conditional regard serves in opposition to autonomy-supportive behaviors and inhibits self-determined motivation (Roth et al., 2009).

**Unconditional Negative Regard**

Wilkins (2001) suggested there are two types of unconditional regard that oppose UPR. First, unconditional negative regard occurs when people find themselves having to relate to someone for which they can never "measure up." This type of regard indicates that no matter

what the recipient does, he or she will never be worthy of positive regard from the provider. Unconditional negative regard is said to be at the root of extreme racism, homophobism, and sexism (Wilkins, 2001, pp. 38).

**Unconditional Positive Disregard**

Second and perhaps most harmful, unconditional positive disregard is a refusal to enter into relationship with another person, sometimes beneath awareness, to where a person does not even acknowledge another person's existence. Wilkins (2001) stressed that the effect of this type of regard, "…can be so powerful that receivers of it come to doubt their right to life" (pp. 38). Cochran and Cochran (2015) indicated that burnout, stress, and contextual pressures on someone in a helping role may foster disengagement to the point of offering unconditional positive disregard without even realizing it.

## Understanding Positive Regard

Standal's (1954) dissertation motioned a profound argument for why positive regard, whether offered unconditionally or withheld in any fashion, plays an important role in psychological well-being, adaptive development, and sense of autonomy. Rogers fully integrated Standal's position into each of his subsequent theoretical publications (Rogers, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1980, 1986), reiterating that positive regard is a fundamental human need that can be tied to any domain in life, and serves as a precursor to the development of self-regard.

While Rogers (1959) did not offer concern for whether the need for positive regard is innate or learned, he did suggest that it becomes deeply associated with the basic human need for social connection. Its perception provides a sense of love and belonging as a human being grows (Rogers, 1959). In this way, theorists have considered positive regard to be a universal,

persistent, and pervasive basic human need (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001a; Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954).

From the moment of conception, parents' positive regard toward a pregnancy is essential for them to choose to nurture the life of an infant (Watson & Steckley, 2001). From infancy to young childhood, reception of positive regard is associated with meeting the need for acceptance, warmth, and basic care (Standal, 1954; Watson & Steckley, 2001). In order for the need for positive regard to be met, it must be perceived by the recipient. Thus, a person might think she is providing it, but that does not matter unless it is actually felt by the recipient (Moon et al., 2001). In addition, a person must receive positive regard from someone else before he is able to develop positive regard for himself or offer it others (Standal, 1954; Moon et al., 2001). Thus, it is possible for inconsistencies in the satisfaction of positive regard to repeat across generations.

Finally, positive regard can be domain-specific. That is, the reception or denial of positive regard can become internally associated with any experience in life (Standal, 1954). For example, one who is denied positive regard when he does poorly on a test at school will internalize denial of positive self-regard each time he does poorly on a test at school. This leads to a fear of failing in school, *because* that experience is associated with denial of positive self-regard. "Failing in school" can be replaced by virtually any behavior or experience as it becomes associated with either reception or denial of positive regard.

Therefore, one might ask how the ways in which positive regard are offered or withheld impact a person's functioning. What makes positive regard a fundamental human need? What influence does the perception of positive regard (or its opposites) from a significant other have on one's self perceptions? Standal (1954) and Rogers (1957, 1959) suggested that the answers to

these questions lie in the influence that perception of positive regard from others will ultimately have on the development of self-regard.

## Outcomes Related to Positive Regard

Over time, a person will begin to feel or deny positive regard for oneself, even without the presence of the initial provider, when doing a behavior that has been consistently associated with the reception or denial of positive regard. When positive regard is consistently offered, the human organism will develop a consistent self-regard, and will ultimately be able to satisfy its own need for positive regard without relying on others' evaluation or any certain condition. The significance of self-regard is that it can be equated to self-existence or self-worth (Rogers, 1957; Standal, 1954). Standal (1954) and Rogers (1957, 1959) proposed two outcomes that would derive from an inconsistent self-regard and hinder the process of self actualization toward optimal functioning. These outcomes are called *conditions of worth* and *incongruence*.

### Conditions of Worth

When positive regard is only offered in certain conditions (conditional positive regard) and withheld in others (conditional negative regard), a person will learn to accept or deny one's own worth when experiencing those respective conditions. In this way, the conditions themselves become a deep threat to the self. Standal (1954) and Rogers (1957) considered the denial of self-regard under certain conditions to be maladaptive development, and named it *conditions of worth*. Consequences of conditions of worth include thwarted basic needs, persistent losses of self-regard, and recurrent anxiety for fear of losing self-regard (Standal, 1954, pp. 72). Fear, anxiety, and self-inhibition are all products of conditions of worth (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001).

It seems that conditions of worth may also coincide with Deci and Ryan's (self-determination theory; 2000) explanation of introjected regulation, in which one's motivation to

perform or avoid certain behaviors is based on an internal pressure that one *must* behave in certain ways to consider themselves worthy and will feel shame if they act otherwise. Assor, Roth, and Deci (2004) suggested that introjected regulation is fostered in adolescents by the perception of conditional regard from parents.

**Incongruence**

Conditions of worth are also said to create a discrepancy between self-concept (all parts of the self) and self-experience (momentary experience of being), labeled *incongruence* (Rogers, 1957; Standal, 1954). When conditions of worth are present, the desire to avoid any exhibition of those conditions is so strong that a person may go so far as to deny any part of herself that could warrant rejection of positive regard.

Rogers (1957) posited that this level of denial may occur below one's conscious. When any part of the self is denied by the self, then one's total self-concept will never be able to be fully present in the momentary experiences of life. Lux (2010) likens incongruence to "inconsistency between explicit and implicit neural systems" (pp. 278). In this state, the connection between one's neural pathways of conscious and unconscious experience is poor. An incongruent person has less autonomy over himself, because he is subconsciously denying or inaccurately symbolizing conscious experience. Person-centered theorists have considered incongruence to be a source of anxiety, malfunction, and a block in people's innate tendencies to grow toward their fullest potential (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001). In short, incongruent living prevents people from being or becoming their true selves.

<center>**What UPR Can Accomplish**</center>

According to person-centered theory, a consistent perception of UPR from a significant other, in the context of empathy and genuineness, will correct conditions of worth and

incongruent living (Rogers, 1957; Wilkins & Bozarth, 2001). Perception of UPR in early years of life will lead to the development of similarly unconditional self-regard (Standal, 1954). Perception of UPR's opposite constructs in early life, however, will foster incongruence, conditions of worth, and in the most extreme case, a sense that oneself is not worthy at all (Wilkins, 2001). Cozolino (2010) suggested that experiences of UPR contribute to an interpersonal environment that is essential for initial brain growth and continued brain development on a molecular level.

Rogers (1959, 1961, 1986) and others (e.g. Bozarth, 2001; Watson & Steckley, 2001) have offered great hope in showing that the perception of UPR from a significant other can reverse previously developed conditions of worth and incongruence at any point in life. Specifically, UPR contributes to a climate that will foster increased unconditional positive self-regard (UPSR), decreased conditions of worth, positive personal growth and change, congruence and autonomy, enhanced capability for self-awareness and focus, and enhanced self-regulation.

**Increase in UPSR**

Iberg (2001) wrote, "the importance of UPR lies in its power to build up UPSR" (p. 110). Increasing UPSR is the crux of all other outcomes related to UPR. UPSR is said to allow people to be fully open to their experiences, to fully rely on themselves for evaluation of their self-concept and worth, and to satisfy their own need for positive regard (Rogers, 1959). No matter what they are experiencing or what is going on around them, people with UPSR can rely on their own self-acknowledgement of their worth and potential as a source of strength to live to their highest potential (Rogers, 1959; Schmid, 2001).

The perception of UPR from a significant other accomplishes an increase in UPSR by creating a safe environment where any denied parts of the self are allowed to come to surface

without external judgment of the whole self-concept (Rogers, 1961; see also Lux, 2013). Lux (2013) suggested that mirror neurons may link to this process. Mirror neurons function by automatically simulating the neural patterns of observed behavior in another person. Thus, if a person denies a part of himself, but sees another person accepting that same part, he may shift toward accepting it himself in response to mirror neuron activation. Simply put, when a person recognizes that someone of importance to him can accept all parts of himself, then it becomes increasingly okay for him to follow suit in accepting all parts of himself (Lietaer, 2001).

**Decrease in Conditions of Worth**

An increase in UPSR will likely occur in conjunction with a decrease in conditions of worth. While conditions of worth will cause one to feel deeply threatened by particular experiences, a person with UPRS will be able to accurately recognize and evaluate their experiences without threat to self (Iberg, 2001); this fosters freedom to be and accept oneself in each momentary experience, state, or feeling (Sanford, 2001). Both increased UPSR and decreased conditions of worth are said to ease defense reactions, allowing one freedom to choose her response to any experience, as experiences are no longer connected to conditions of worth and denial of positive self-regard (Watson & Steckley, 2001).

The safe environment created by perceived UPR, again, allows conditions of worth to break down. Neuroscientists have hypothesized that feelings of safety in a relationship activate the social engagement system and deactivate the sympathetic nervous system. These neural functions enhance one's openness to honest interpersonal connection and reduce physiological and emotional symptoms of stress (Lux, 2013; Porges, 2007; 2011).

**Positive Growth and Change**

There has been debate among researchers in counseling literature as to whether UPR itself is a change-agent (e.g. Bozarth, 2001; Freire, 2001; Moore, 2001) or whether it is a precursor to growth and change (e.g. Hendricks, 2001; Prouty, 2001; Watson & Steckely, 2001). Regardless, there has been no disagreement as to whether UPR, experienced by a significant other, is an essential factor to foster positive growth and change (Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001).

Rogers (1961) initially indicated the ironic influence that UPR and subsequent UPSR have on change, saying, "When I accept myself as I am, then I change… We cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly accept what we are" (pp. 17). Cochran and Cochran (2015) expanded on this to say that we must know ourselves in order to accept ourselves, and we must know "what it is we might want to change" (pp. 99) before it will be possible to change. All the aspects of the self that have been denied due to conditions of worth must be brought into the conscious awareness before any sort of change is possible. Cochran and Cochran (2015) have found that in this process of increased self-regard and awareness, "we will either reduce the self-expectations that we find unreasonable or change the ways of being that we find unacceptable" (pp. 99). Thus, it seems that as defense reactions and threat to self-worth are counteracted through UPSR, a person may be able to accurately evaluate and confront herself, and take responsibility for deep personal change.

Neuroscientists have provided additional support for this process, proposing that optimal human growth occurs as neural networks develop, connect, and integrate, while dysfunction occurs when neural networks experience blocks or disconnection (Cozolino, 2010; Silani, Zucconi, & Lamm, 2013; Schore, 2003a, 2003b). The deactivation of the sympathetic nervous system associated with a safe relationship is also associated with opening the channels of

integrative brain regions (Lux, 2013). Thus, it seems possible that the safety felt in a relationship where UPR is provided and perceived may enhance connection and integration in neural networks to foster optimal growth.

**Increased Autonomy and Congruence**

Deci and Ryan (self-determination theory; 2000) defined autonomy as freedom gained by the integration of one's self and one's experiences. It seems their understanding of autonomy parallels Rogers' (1959) understanding of congruence. Lux (2010) proposed that congruence occurs when implicit and explicit systems are fully connected, to where a person can accurately perceive and interpret his external experience within his self-concept. With congruence, a person's goals that drive explicit action will be consistent with his internal evaluations, motivations, and implicit needs.

Lietaer (2001) indicated that independence and self-responsibility are fostered when external judgment is absent, as one will have to rely on herself in making decisions and taking action. In this way, increased UPSR is associated with gaining an internal locus of control (Rogers, 1959; Bozarth, 2001), to where one's own experience is the main basis for self-evaluation rather than what others might think, expect, or demand (Lietaer, 2001). Rogers (1959) viewed self-responsibility and self-determination as key aspects of optimal living (see also Lietaer, 2001; Rogers & Skinner, 1956); and, thus as byproducts of increased UPSR and decreased conditions of worth.

**Increased Ability for Self-Awareness and Focus**

Rogers' (1959) believed that freedom from conditions of worth allowed one to achieve a state of full functioning (see also Bozarth & Wilkins, 2001). In a 1959 chapter, Rogers presented a host of outcomes that occur within a full functioning person. These included: greater accuracy

in symbolizing one's experiences, ability to recognize when the self-concept is out of line with self-experience, and more objective, realistic, and adaptive perceptions of experience. All suggest greater self-awareness in the midst of experience (see also Bozarth, 2001). Rogers (1959) also included increased ability to engage the entire self in activity and greater openness to experience; both of which suggest a greater capability to maintain focus on a present-moment experience or task (Bozarth, 2001).

**Increased Ability for Self-Regulation**

Rogers (1959) suggested that the core conditions will foster outcomes that are directly related to self-regulation. These include greater reliance on the self for evaluation, lowered reactions of defense toward threatening experiences, and greater acceptance of critical feedback (Bozarth, 2001; Rogers, 1959). Neuroimaging studies have also suggested a link to UPR and self-regulation. For example, Silani et al. (2013) hypothesized that accurate perception and acceptance of one's experiences (fostered by UPR and UPSR) may produce similar interacting structures and patterns in the prefrontal cortex as is seen when a person is actively regulating their emotions. The hypothesis suggests that the activation of these neural structures indicate mastery of cooperation between emotion and cognition.

The safe social connection fostered by UPR has also been suggested to increase levels of oxytocin (Lux, 2010, 2013). Oxytocin is known to lower blood pressure, enhance generosity and trust, decrease stress, and increase pain tolerance (Uvnäs-Moberg, 2003; Zak, Stanton, & Ahmadi, 2007). In contrast, Eisenberger (2012) demonstrated that the same neural networks activated during experience of physical pain are activated during social rejection. Thus, it seems UPR may contribute to some of the cognitive mechanisms that appear foundational for emotion

regulation, while experiencing denial of positive regard may align with an experience of physical pain (Silani et al., 2013).

## UPR and the Person-Centered Approach

While the focus of the present study is on UPR and its opposite constructs, it is important to also address the co-occurring conditions established in Rogers' person-centered theory. Rogers' theoretical contributions (Rogers, 1959, 1961, 1980, 1986) indicated a set of six conditions that will foster a growth-promoting climate and promote positive change toward self-actualization. The first three conditions are the provision of empathy, UPR, and genuineness by one person to another. The second three conditions maintain that the recipient must perceive that empathy, UPR, and genuineness are being provided. Together, these conditions were said to create a way of being or a presence, which has shown to be effective across many settings of relationship (Schmid, 2001).

There has been debate among scholars as to which of the three primary conditions (empathy, UPR, genuineness) are most important. Bozarth (2001a) presented UPR as "the 'curative' feature" (pp. 12) in the therapeutic relationship, and suggested that empathy and genuineness merely provide the context in which UPR can be credibly received. One cannot provide UPR toward another person's experience without knowing and understanding that inner experience. The knowing and understanding is derived from empathy. Schmid (2001) denotes the connection between UPR and empathy by saying, "You can only accept what you understand… and only understand what you accept" (pp. 50).

## Impact of UPR across Settings and Relationships

While it has been difficult to quantify the impact of UPR in practice, there is strong evidence for its importance across settings. Scales that have been used to assess effects of

positive regard in various relationships include the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI; Barrett-Lennard, 1986), the Truax Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967), and the Therapist Warmth and Friendliness subscale of the Vanderbilt Psychotherapy Process Scale (VPSS; Suh, Strupp, & O'Malley, 1986).

Additionally, the Domain-specific Perceptions of Parental Conditional Regard Scale (DPCRS; Assor et al., 2004) was developed to assess parental conditional positive and negative regard in the domains of academic success, emotion expression, prosocial behaviors, and sport success (DPCRS; Assor et al., 2004). An example item for sport domain conditional regard is, "As a child or adolescent, I often felt that my mother's affection for me depended on my practicing hard for sports." (Assor et al., 2004, pp. 61).

Conditional negative regard has also been assessed as one of four controlling coaching strategies in the Controlling Coach Behaviors Scale (CCBS; Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2010). Example items include, "My coach is less accepting of me if I have disappointed him/her," "My coach is less supportive of me when I am not training and competing well," and "My coach is less friendly with me if I don't make the effort to see things his/her way" (Bartholomew et al., 2010, pp. 202).

Limitations of these scales and the existing research must be noted, as it is challenging to differentiate the influence of positive regard from that of empathy and genuineness together. Variance in scales and descriptive language has also demonstrated that is is difficult to agree on a single way to define and measure UPR (Farber & Doolin, 2011). Regardless, through evidence in therapy settings, scholars have suggested that there is no research-driven reason to withhold UPR, and that at the very least, UPR "sets the stage" for other change-producing interventions (Farber & Doolin, 2011, pp. 62). Through reported experiences of the person-centered approach

in other disciplines, scholars have suggested that this may also be true in non-therapeutic settings (Cornelius-White, Motschnig-Pitrik, & Lux, 2013).

**Counselor-Client Relationship**

Several meta-analyses have demonstrated that client perception of UPR has at least had a moderate effect on positive outcomes in counseling and psychotherapy (Farber & Doolin, 2011; Farber & Lane, 2001; Orlinksy, Grawe, & Parks, 1994; Orlinsky & Howard, 1986). Truax and Carkhuff (1967) found that eight out of 10 studies that utilized the Truax Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967), assessing UPR in terms of "non-possessive warmth," demonstrated associations between positive therapeutic outcomes and UPR alone (Farber & Doolin, 2011, pp. 60).

Orlinksy and colleagues (1994) reviewed 76 studies that utilized various methods for assessing UPR, and found that 74% of client participants who rated their therapist's positive regard as high also rated their therapeutic outcomes as high. In addition, 80% of those participants' therapists rated the therapeutic outcome as high. Clients' sense of their therapists' positive regard contributed to a 65% higher rate of positive therapeutic outcomes.

Farber and Lane (2001) reviewed 16 studies, finding a modest effect of client-perceived positive regard in relation to therapeutic outcome and a stronger effect when related to client-perceived positive regard and length of stay in therapy. This suggested that positive regard may be an important factor in facilitating long-term working relationships (see also Najavits & Strupp, 1994). Farber and Doolin (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of eighteen studies using strict criteria for how each study distinguished positive regard in therapeutic relationships. They found that overall, positive regard accounted for 27% of the variance in therapeutic outcomes, demonstrating a moderate effect.

Bratton, Ray, Rhine, and Jones (2005) reviewed 93 controlled studies on UPR, empathy, and genuineness together in child-centered play therapy and found an average effect size of 0.80 in treatment conditions, demonstrating more positive outcomes than non-person-centered treatments. Flanagan, Patterson, Hume, and Joseph (2015) measured unconditional positive self-regard (UPSR; Patterson & Joseph, 2006) across clients who had experienced trauma and found it to correlate with increased perceived and actual increments of post-traumatic growth over the course of a treatment period. Finally, but not exhaustively, Sarpe and Ladea (2011) presented a case study demonstrating how the presence of UPR could foster a more accurate diagnosis in psychiatry.

**Teacher-Student Relationship**

Beyond the counselor-client relationship, Rogers (1969, 1983) and Rogers and Freiberg (1994) extended person-centered theory to education with what is now considered "classic learner-centered" teaching. UPR, empathy, and genuineness are emphasized to foster positive teacher-student relationships, with the goal of enhancing intrinsic motivation and developing students into full-functioning people (Rogers, 1969, 1983; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). McCombs, Daniels, and Perry (2008) studied 2,097 students and 124 teachers from seven states, and found that students who perceived their teachers to be frequently engaged in "classic learner-centered" practices (fostering positive interpersonal relationships with UPR, empathy, and genuineness) demonstrated higher perceptions of self-competence and interest for the learned subject.

Cornelius-White (2007) synthesized 119 studies that were conducted in approximately 2,439 schools across six countries between 1948 and 2004. The meta-analysis included 1,450 findings from approximately 355,325 students that represented Caucasian, African American, Latino, and Filipino ethnicities, and 14,851 male and female teachers. Variables related to

Rogers' "classic learner-centered" practice in these studies (including UPR or warmth, empathy, and genuineness) were compared to students' cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Overall, warmth and respect (the descriptive terms utilized for UPR) demonstrated a moderate correlation, $r=.32$, to positive student outcomes in both cognitive and behavioral domains. This was only slightly lower than the correlation of all composited variables of positive teacher-student relationships to positive student outcomes, $r=.36$. When comparing teacher-student relationships to specific student outcomes, positive relationships held a strong correlation with student participation and initiation ($r=.55$), satisfaction ($r=.44$), and self-esteem ($r=.35$) and a negative correlation with dropout ($r=.35$) and disruptive behavior ($r=.25$).

**Parent-Child Relationship**

Lastly, researchers have examined UPR in the parent-child relationship. Filial therapy takes on the task of training parents to provide UPR, empathy, and genuineness in interactions with their children. Studies have demonstrated its positive outcomes across cultures, including interventions with Korean, Jamaican, German, and Israeli parents (Edwards, Ladner, White, & Armstrong, 2007; Grskovic, Goetze, & Leblanc, 2008; Jang & Glazer, 2000; Kidron, Landreth, & Leblanc, 2010). For example, Landreth and Lobaugh (1998) evidenced filial therapy interventions for children with incarcerated parents, demonstrating significant increases in parent acceptance of their children, respect for their feelings, appreciation of their uniqueness, and recognition of their need for autonomy. Additionally, Bratton et al. (2005) demonstrated an average effect size d = 1.05 in a meta-analysis of 26 studies, and a greater effect (d = 1.15) in the studies that encompassed parent training without any involvement of psychotherapists. For further support, Landreth and Bratton (2006) exclaimed that both parents and children

experienced positive change through parent understanding and implementation of UPR, empathy, and genuineness.

Researchers have also demonstrated negative consequences of the opposites of UPR within the parent-child relationship, specifically those of parental conditional regard through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Assor et al. (2004) indicated that parental conditional positive and negative regard does lead children to enact desired behaviors, but through the rigid and compulsive mode of introjected regulation. Much like Rogers' (1959) conditions of worth, introjected regulation occurs as one internalizes the ways in which a significant other offered or withheld positive regard by contingently offering or withholding self-worth for the same conditions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Roth et al. (2009) described introjected regulation as the enactment of parental desired behaviors only because children feel an "internal compulsion" (pp. 119) to behave in such way, to avoid denial of self-regard and experience of shame or guilt.

Researchers have supported this notion with numerous studies. For example, Assor et al. (2004) assessed self-reports of 110 male and female university students and found a positive correlation between perceived parental conditional regard and introjected regulation in all four tested domains (academic achievement, sport achievement, prosocial behavior, and emotion regulation). Positive correlations also appeared between perceived conditional regard and short-lived satisfaction following success, shame and guilt following failure, and fluctuations in self-esteem. Curran, Hill, and Williams (2017) further evidenced these outcomes as they found that perceived parental conditional regard correlated with adolescent self-critical perfectionism in the sport domain across 345 male and female adolescent athletes.

Roth and colleagues (2009) utilized structural equation modeling for 169 Israeli male and female ninth-grade student self-measures and teacher reports. They found that perceived parental conditional positive regard in domains of emotion expression and academic success predicted introjected regulation, which then predicted suppressed negative emotions and grade-focused (as opposed to interest-focused) engagement in school. Conversely, perceived parental conditional negative regard predicted introjected regulation in these domains and parental resentment, as well as dysfunctional emotion regulation and a-motivation (avoidance of challenges) in school.

Finally, Assor and Tal (2012) offered consistent findings with 153 Israeli 10th and 11th grade students when they examined perceived conditional regard in the academic domain. They also found that parental conditional positive regard predicted feelings of superiority and grandiosity following success and feelings of self-devaluation and shame following failure. This offered support that conditional positive regard may lead to a conditional sense of self-worth.

## Sport Context

To consider UPR or its opposite constructs in the coach-athlete relationship, it is important to distinguish sport context from that of counseling, school, or home environments. While UPR has not been studied in sport, researchers have demonstrated that conditional negative regard is a common practice used by sport coaches, as perceived by athletes and coaches in individual and team sports. Additional common controlling strategies include the use of tangible rewards, excessive personal control, and intimidation (Bartholomew et al., 2010). One may ask why such strategies are utilized when their negative impacts are known and the "win at all cost" nature of sport may provide an answer (Occhino, Mallett, Rynne, & Carlisle, 2014).

Just as conditional regard is promoted by some as an effective parenting strategy to manipulate behaviors in children (e.g. Aronfreed, 1968; Sears et al., 1957), a coach's incentive to potentially employ UPR's opposites lies in the need to have control. The pressure to win can lead to coach-controlling behaviors (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) and coaches' career advancement is often directly related to their athletes' performance successes (Gervis & Dunn, 2004). Thus, it could prove really difficult for coaches to let go of any personal stake in their athletes' outcomes as UPR requires (Schmid, 2001).

Occhino et al. (2014) suggested that competing expectations of many stakeholders in high-level sport can lend to significant pressure on coaches to prioritize performance success over positive development and holistic wellbeing of their athletes. Further support of this pressure was demonstrated by interviews with 18 NCAA Division I coaches, in which the pressure to win (in order to keep their job) emerged as a main limitation for coaches' demonstrating care for their athletes (Fisher et al., 2017).

Gervis and Dunn (2004) blatantly stated that, "all that is acknowledged in sport is the winning of performances, not the methods involved in achieving them" (pp. 217). This notion becomes evident in the normalization of emotionally abusive tactics in sport coaching which include belittling, shouting, scapegoating, rejection or ignoring, and isolating (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Gervis, Rhind, & Luzar, 2016; Stirling, 2013; Stirling & Kerr, 2007). Additionally, interviews with nine elite-level coaches found that even those who express genuine care for their athletes may still engage in emotionally harmful tactics to control their performance in some way. Coaches' reasons for employing tactics of emotional harm included exposure to other coaches' harmful practices, lack of knowledge regarding alternative strategies, and the simple fact that these behaviors were allowed and accepted by their athletes (Stirling, 2013).

Enmeshed within sport culture is the unique context of figure skating. Characterized as an early entry sport, it is common for sport participation to begin as early as five years of age and specialization to occur by eight years or even younger (Monsma, 2008). In 2017, the highest percentage of U.S. Figure Skating memberships were in the seven- to 12-year age group at 35 %. Memberships drop to 14% for ages 13-18, and six percent for ages 19-25 (U.S. Figure Skating, 2017) suggesting high rates of dropout or burnout in adolescence. National champion figure skaters interviewed by Gould, Jackson, and Finch (1993) indicated that a significant sources of stress included expectations to make it to the top in a short amount of time and deterred improvements due to growth and maturation during puberty. Monsma, Malina, and Feltz (2006) suggested that the figure skating context, being both an early specialization and an aesthetic lean sport, "may elicit or magnify negative self-perceptions during puberty" (pp. 2006).

Figure skating is also an aesthetic lean sport, which suggests thinness is often perceived as necessary for peak performance (Coelho, Gomes, Riberio, & Soares, 2014; Krentz & Warschburger, 2011) and may be favored by judges (Feder, 1995; Monsma et al., 2006). Researchers have demonstrated an influence of the thin ideal on the CAR and other power-ridden relationships in figure skating with athletes' reported perceptions of pressures from their coaches, judges, or male partners to maintain a certain body physique or weight (Gould et al., 1993; Kong & Harris, 2014; Muscat & Long, 2008; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). Thus, figure skating culture seems to cultivate risk factors for distorted body image, dysfunctional eating, lowered physical self-perceptions and the development of self-critical perfectionism (Dunn, Craft, Dunn, & Gotwals, 2011; Gould et al., 1993; Monsma, 2008; Monsma et al., 2006).

Additionally, figure skating is predominantly an individual sport. Pairs skating, ice dancing, and synchronized skating all allow opportunity to compete in partners or on teams, but

these skaters often still spend time in private lessons to hone their individual skills. Monsma et al. (2006) also pointed out that the sport is still highly individually competitive for females who compete on pair or ice dance teams, as there are a significantly higher number of female skaters vying to skate with few male partners. Thus, partner tryouts are their own form of competition. While some scholars have stated that coaches and athletes in individual sports are likely to develop a stronger bond within their relationship than in team sports (Rhind, Jowett, & Yang, 2012), others have suggested that coach expectations, failure to meet coach expectations, and coach criticism all served as significant sources of stress within the one-on-one CAR, specifically in figure skating (Scanlan et al., 1991; Gould et al., 1993). Such close one-on-one relationships may also allow greater chances for coaches to manipulate their athletes and engage in exploitation of power, even to the point in which athletes do not feel they can leave an undesired coaching relationship. Scanlan et al. (1991) found loyalty, lack of money, and the perception that a coach is the best possible for performances success. One participant in their study stated,

> There were times in my career when I'd get into the car and drive away from the rink and say the only way I can get out of this situation is if he dies. And I can't leave him because he's the best coach for me. I can't get another coach because I couldn't hurt him (pp. 116).

Finally, media coverage of figure skating is highly gendered, emphasizing femininity and downplaying athleticism in the "ladies" discipline. The artistic, subjective aspect of judging requires extreme athleticism in disguise, to where women must make each element look effortless, elegant, and feminine (Feder, 1995). In discussing hegemonic femininity in sport, Krane (2001) plainly stated that "figure skating is considered acceptable for females" and

suggested that female athletes inherently *know* the importance of portraying themselves as heterosexually feminine due to socially constructed expectations, despite the juxtaposed demand to be athletically strong in order to perform well in their sport.

Taken as a whole, this context could impact the extent to which a coach offers UPR or its opposites. It may be difficult to accept slower rates of progression and tempting to give up on skaters' potential once they reach a certain age, level of maturation, or body shape. The pressures to produce athletes with adequate physical and mental strength to give near perfect performances and adhere to gendered standards of femininity may kindle "conditional coaching" regarding skaters' appearance, performance, and persona.

### The Coach-Athlete Relationship (CAR)

There is no doubt in the empirical literature that the CAR is a significant relationship. Neal and Tutko (1975) went so far as to liken the CAR to that of a parent-child relationship. Bloom, Durant-Bush, and Salmela (1998) presented the CAR as a helping relationship, to where it often goes beyond teaching skills or tactics, and requires genuine reciprocity of trust. Côté and Gilbert (2009) suggested that the CAR is the most important of all relationships that exist in the sport context. Jowett (2005) specified that a coach will "likely serve as helping provider in times of difficulty, crisis, and life transition" (pp. 14). Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen (2002) suggested that it is crucial for coaches to demonstrate some amount of care for their athletes.

Jowett and colleagues (e.g. Jowett, 2005, 2007; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Yang & Jowett, 2013b) defined the CAR as a state in which both "coach's and athlete's interpersonal feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are interdependent" (as seen in Jowett, 2007, pp. 17). Scholars have suggested that the relationship fostered between a coach and an athlete is an essential aspect of both effective and successful coaching (Yang & Jowett, 2013b) and indicated that athlete

perceptions of their relationship with their coach can contribute to attitude, motivation, and affect (Choi, Huh, & Cho, 2013). Jowett (2005) distinguished the CAR as an integral factor in athletes reaching their potential.

Considering its significant importance, the CAR has gained attention in sport psychology and coaching science (Poczwardowski et al., 2006). For the purpose of this study, three lines of research will be reviewed to set the stage for extending the theoretical concept of UPR to the context of the CAR. These lines of research are: the 3 + 1Cs model of the CAR (Jowett, 2005); self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985, 2000; Mageu & Vallerand, 2003); and achievement goal theory and motivational climate (Nicholls, 1984; Ames & Archer, 1988).

**3 + 1Cs model of the CAR**

The 3 + 1Cs model (Jowett, 2005) indicates that effective CARs will have mutually high perceptions of closeness, commitment, and complementarity. Jowett (2005) defines closeness as interpersonal liking, trust, respect, belief, and felt appreciation. Commitment refers to coach and athlete seeing a long-term future together in sport participation. It includes a willingness to make sacrifices for the other, honest communication, and mutual understanding. Complementarity refers to cooperative action in which coach and athlete clearly work together toward the same goals (Jowett, 2007, 2009). Put simply, closeness relates to emotional connection, commitment relates to cognitive connection, and complementarity relates to behavioral connection (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

Co-orientation is the measure of accuracy to which coach and athlete perceive each other's experience of the three Cs in their relationship. Mutually accurate perceptions imply high co-orientation and suggest that a CAR embodies open communication and common ground between coach and athlete (Jowett, 2005; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

Jowett (2005) suggested there are three dimensions of co-orientation. These are (1) assumed similarity, in which athlete trusts coach and assumes that coach trusts athlete; (2) actual similarity, in which athlete trusts coach and coach trusts athlete; and (3) empathic understanding, in which athlete trusts coach and coach understands that athlete trusts coach. Jowett and Cockerill (2002) indicated that "open channels of communication" (pp. 23) between coach and athlete indicated that acceptance and trust have been established in a CAR, and were also related to higher levels of all three co-orientation dimensions.

The three Cs may align with the concept of UPR. The sense of trust, respect, and belief that define closeness are likely to be nurtured through acceptance, non-possessive caring, focused attention, and acknowledgement. Confirmation (accepting others' current states and also challenging them to work toward their potential) may also influence one's sense of commitment. Finally, coaches who listen with empathy and awe (as acknowledgement calls for) are likely to work more cooperatively with their athletes, fostering complementarity.

Yet, Jowett's model seems to assume that coaches and athletes will have an egalitarian relationship, such that coaches might routinely and willingly dispense their power. This notion indicates that UPR (if experienced) would be mutually provided and perceived by coach and athlete. While this could be possible, the innate power differential in CARs and normality of coaches abusing their power cannot be ignored (e.g. Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Occhino et al., 2014; Stirling, 2013). Rogers' primary applications of UPR include relationships in which someone in a position of power (i.e. counselor, teacher, or parent) relates to their subordinate (client, student, child) with an orientation of UPR, insinuating that the influence of UPR to nurture UPSR is possibly enhanced by the fact that a subordinate is experiencing such acceptance, belief, and trust from someone they view as powerful. Thus, it can be suggested that those in power have a

greater responsibility to influence their subordinates in growth-promoting ways. Jowett's model fails to acknowledge the clear power differential in CARs, and thus does not recognize coaches' responsibility to foster a climate conducive to high co-orientation of the three Cs. UPR may serve as an orientation from which coaches can derive a purpose and way of being that leads them to dispense their power so that high co-orientation of the three Cs might be nurtured.

Despite limitations to the 3 + 1Cs model, a collective body of research using quantitative methods (CART-Q, Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Yang & Jowett, 2013b), and qualitative semi-structured interviews (Jowett, 2003; Philippe & Seiler, 2006) has demonstrated that high co-orientation regarding the three Cs is associated with a multitude of positive outcomes. These include athletes' satisfaction with the CAR, sport participation and their performance (Sagar & Jowett, 2012). Outcomes have also included enhanced sport passion and motivation, positive affect, and effective resolve of interpersonal conflict (Yang & Jowett, 2013b). For example, Hampson and Jowett (2014) compared measures of the 3 + 1Cs, coach leadership style, and collective efficacy across 150 soccer plays at varying levels. They found that closeness (from the perspective of the athletes about their coaches) had the greatest influence on athletes' feelings of collective efficacy on their teams. Jowett, Shanmugam, and Caccoulis (2012) supported the notion that CARs relate to collective efficacy which may moderate athlete satisfaction. Their findings from 135 Greek-Cypriot athletes showed that an effective CAR was related to higher measures of athlete-perceived unity, persistence, preparation, effort, and athlete satisfaction with strategy, personal treatment, and team integration.

Jowett and Nezlek (2013) then assessed the co-orientation of 276 junior- and senior-level coaches and athletes (representing 138 coach-athlete dyads) in relation to competition level, relationship length, and gender composition. Overall, they found greater interdependence was

related to higher satisfaction for both coaches and athletes; and, the association was higher for senior athletes than junior, for lengthier relationships, and for female coach-female athlete dyads. Additionally, efforts to validate the CART-Q (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004) across cultures, and a series of cross-cultural qualitative studies suggested that the experience of coach-athlete relationships may be universal across sport and culture (Yang & Jowett, 2013a, 2013b).

**Self-Determination Theory**

Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) introduced the self-determination theory of motivation which proposes that satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are essential to maintaining or enhancing intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation. Similar to Rogers' stance on self-actualization, Deci and Ryan (2000) believed that the human organism has an innate tendency toward growth-oriented activity and will naturally pursue psychological growth, coherence, and wellness when the necessary psychological needs are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Concurrently, dysfunction occurs when these basic psychological needs are not met (pp. 230).

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that autonomy is more about freedom from self-experience integration than independence or individualism. Self-determination theory defines autonomy as having one's activity be in concordance with one's integrated sense of self, which resembles Rogers' (1959) definition of congruence. Relatedness is defined as being "loved and cared for" and feeling connected to others which is generally demonstrated through UPR. Finally, competence is defined as an experience in which one can view himself as effective in what he is doing (Deci & Ryan, 2000; White, 1959) which may also be expressed through UPR in demonstrating belief in an other's potential.

Intrinsic motivation occurs when one does an activity purely for the enjoyment and satisfaction that she gains in the midst of that action (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Deci and Ryan (2000) presented an internalization process in which external outcomes become integrated into one's personal values and self-concept. When this happens, they suggest that a person's extrinsic motivation will be self-determined. Strong evidence indicates that both intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation are important for enhanced effort, focus, persistence, and performance in sport (Goudas, Biddle, Fox, & Underwood, 1995; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; McAuley & Tammen, 1989; Vallerand & Rousseau, 2001) while non-self-determined extrinsic rewards can be detrimental for motivation and performance (McGraw & McCullers, 1979; Orlick & Mosher, 1978).

Non-self-determined or controlled motivation includes a-motivation, external regulation, and introjected regulation. External regulation occurs when one enacts a behavior to gain an external reward or avoid punishment. Introjected regulation is slightly more internalized to where contingent consequences of behavior are administered by oneself (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Roth, et. al., (2009) indicated that introjection is a superficial type of internalization, when children place the same contingencies on their self-regard, -worth, or -approval that they've experienced from significant others, much like Rogers' (1959) concept of conditions of worth. Introjected regulation has been demonstrated as a mediating factor between perceived parental conditional regard and behavior enactment in academic achievement, sport achievement, emotion regulation, and prosocial behavior domains (Assor et al., 2004).

Mageau and Vallerand (2003) presented a model for the CAR in context with self-determination theory in which autonomy-supportive coach behaviors are differentiated from controlling coach behaviors. The model suggested that traditional controlling and authoritarian

coaching styles may thwart psychological needs. In contrast, they identified seven coaching behaviors that may foster the satisfaction of athletes' psychological needs in the CAR, labeled "autonomy-supportive behaviors" (pp. 893) and demonstrated how each has a positive impact on athletes' perceived autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Autonomy-supportive behaviors include providing choice within specified rules or limits, providing rationale for tasks, acknowledging the others' feelings and perspectives, providing opportunities for initiative-taking and independent work, providing non-controlling feedback, avoiding controlling behaviors, and avoiding emphasis on external rewards (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Together, these behaviors indicate that athletes are "regarded as individuals deserving of self-determination, and not mere pawns that should be controlled to obtain a certain outcome" (deCharms, 1968 as cited in Mageau & Vallerand, 2003, pp. 886). Mageau and Vallerand (2003) proposed that a coach's controlling or autonomy-supportive behaviors will impact athletes' levels of intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation in sport.

In efforts to define exactly what controlling coaching behaviors are in order to avoid them, Bartholomew et al. (2010) empirically validated a scale to measure four distinct, common, and easily identified controlling coaching behaviors. Sure enough, conditional negative regard proved a valid and consistently reported perceived coaching behavior across three studies that utilized exploratory factor analysis. Also, researchers of parenting practices have assessed autonomy-supportive behaviors as parenting alternatives to conditional regard, both positive and negative (Assor et. al, 2004; Assor & Tal, 2012; Roth et. al., 2009).

Considering these findings, it can be suggested that UPR – the opposite of conditional regard – could serve as a coaching orientation or philosophical approach to athlete relationships through which autonomy-supportive behaviors are cultivated and enhanced. For example,

empathy and focused attention (warmth) may allow for perspective-taking and acknowledging feelings; respect, belief in potential, and confirmation may provide reason for allowing athletes opportunities to take initiative; and, non-possessive care would likely foster non-controlling feedback and the avoidance of controlling behaviors.

Additionally, an orientation of UPR in sport context could potentially enhance the provision autonomy-supportive behaviors that are sometimes construed. Researchers who have examined both autonomy-supportive and controlling perceptions of athletes have found that they can co-occur with the same coach, and even in the same moment (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch, & Thogerson-Ntoumanis, 2011; Occhnio, et. al., 2014). For example, a coach could express conditional negative regard as a form of discipline, and also offer a rationale for requested behavior or choices for the day's training activities (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thogersen-Ntoumanis, 2009). Perhaps UPR may offer an autonomy-supportive way of being that is deeper than surface-level behaviors and could influence *why* and *how* coaches employ autonomy-supportive behaviors in a consistent, genuine, and truly growth-promoting way.

Regardless of any challenges within Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) model, there is strong evidence to show that coaches who demonstrate autonomy-supportive behaviors contribute to the satisfaction of athletes' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Researchers have also shown that needs satisfaction, in turn, contributes to enhanced self-determined motivation and increased performance in sport. For example, Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2007) had 581 high school and college athletes rate the extent to which they believed their coaches employed autonomy-supportive behaviors. These athletes also completed measures of their own personal sense of autonomy, competence, relatedness, and motivational orientation. Findings revealed that satisfaction of all three needs were significantly related

athletes' levels of self-determined motivation. Furthermore, perception of coach autonomy support was significantly related to the extent to which the athletes felt their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness were satisfied in the CAR.

Additionally, Coatsworth and Conroy (2009) examined 119 youth swimmers (ages 10-17), comparing quantitative measures of two perceived autonomy-supportive behaviors (seeking athlete input and praising autonomous behavior) and psychological needs satisfactions with identity development and initiative of personal goal-setting over a six-week season. Findings revealed that praising autonomous behaviors was significantly related to satisfaction of competence and relatedness, and that perceived competence was related to self-esteem, identity reflection, and initiative goal-setting.

Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura, and Baldes (2010) then examined 101 French athletes in the sport of judo, comparing their perceptions of coach autonomy-support, contextual motivation, and situational motivation several hours prior to competing in a tournament. Results were compared with each athlete's competition ranking in the event as an objective measure of performance. Findings revealed that perceptions of coach autonomy-support were significantly related to contextual and situational self-determined motivation; and, situational self-determined motivation had a significant positive impact on performance outcome. Lastly, but not exhaustively, Choi et al. (2013) connected self-determination theory to Jowett's (2005) 3 + 1Cs model. They sampled 328 collegiate athletes in Korea and found that commitment and closeness correlated with competence and autonomy, and complementarity correlated with competence and relatedness.

**Achievement Goal Theory and Motivational Climate**

Nicholls (1984, 1989) introduced a theory of achievement motivation which differentiates ego-involvement orientation (where one evaluates himself in comparison to others) from task-involvement orientation (where one evaluates herself based on personal improvement, effort, and perceived mastery of the task at hand). While individual differences in task- and ego-orientations can be assessed (Duda, 1989; Duda & Nicholls, 1992), it is also understood that certain environments or situations can influence task- or ego-oriented mindsets for those involved (Walling et al., 1993). Ames and Archer (1988) coined the term "motivational climate" to describe the type of achievement orientation in classroom environments, and their work was later replicated in the sport environments (Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992; Walling et al., 1993).

A mastery climate influences task orientation by emphasizing individual mastery of skills, controllable effort and persistence towards self-improvement, and mutual support among coaches and teammates (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). In a mastery climate in sport, athletes receive reinforcement for challenging themselves, giving maximum effort, persisting through setbacks, and encouraging teammates (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). A mastery climate is associated with lowered performance anxiety (Smith et al., 2007), increased enjoyment in sport (Seifriz et al., 1992), heightened senses of autonomy and relatedness among athletes (Keegan et al., 2014), and increased intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation (Brunel, 1999; Ntoumanis, 2001).

Conversely, an ego climate influences ego orientation by emphasizing social comparison as the locus of evaluation and judgment of success (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). In an ego climate in sport, winning and public recognition are stressed along with other external reward outcomes, interpersonal competition is supported, and positive reinforcements are focused on

athletes who seem most contributory to winning in the short-term (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Smith et al., 2007). An ego climate is associated with performance anxiety (Yoo, 2003) and lower degrees of self-determined motivation (Ntoumanis, 2001).

It is reasonable to suggest that athlete perceptions of UPR from a coach may contribute to a mastery climate, while perceptions of UPR's opposite constructs may contribute to an ego climate. For example, a coach who maintains acceptance of athletes' current states of being and challenges them to continue striving toward their potential is probably more likely to reinforce effort and persistence through challenges (characteristics of a mastery climate). On the contrary, a coach who approaches athletes with conditional regard based on performance is probably more likely to focus on winning. Offering positive reinforcements only to athletes who demonstrate the most performance success (characteristics of an ego climate) seems to align with conditional positive regard in itself. In fact, parenting literature has shown that perceived conditional regard can promote ego-oriented achievement in academic settings via teacher reports of grades-focused engagement in the classroom (Assor & Tal, 2012; Roth, et. al., 2009).

Researchers have offered evidence that coaches have a strong influence on the motivational climate in sport contexts. Smith et al. (2007) conducted a cognitive behavioral intervention with coaches to promote a mastery approach to coaching and assessed measures of athletes' sport performance anxiety. The intervention group demonstrated higher coach-initiated mastery climate than the control group, and athletes in this group experienced significant reductions on all measures for sport performance anxiety. Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) conducted interviews with nine Olympic skiers from the same team which assessed athletes' perceptions of the impact their coach had on the team climate. While there was variance in each

athlete's responses, an overall agreement surfaced that the coach plays a significant role in determining climate.

Keegan et al. (2009) conducted focus groups with forty youth athletes (ages seven to eleven) to examine the influences of coaches, parents, and peers on athlete motivation and climate. Findings revealed that coaches have a strong influence and were especially motivating in the following situations: athletes perceived coaches to be fair, coaches ensued one-to-one coaching, drills and practices were task-oriented in nature, and coaches emphasized effort, improvement, and skill mastery. Athletes reported that coaches who used selection to promote competition for team placement and that coaches who seemed to "fault find" (pp. 368) in their feedback had a negative impact on motivation.

**Integration of CAR Models**

Finally, integration of the above models has been demonstrated in the research. Keegan et al. (2014) conducted focus groups and interviews with twenty-eight elite-level athletes to assess the roles of coaches, peers, and parents on motivational climate. Utilizing inductive content analysis, they did not attend to any one specific theory in the analysis process. Rather, they utilized open coding, focused coding, and constant comparison methods to draw out categories and themes from the data. Then they attempted to critically consider similarities and differences between their findings and the tenets of existing theories. Findings supported the notion that coaches have a dominant influence on motivation, especially as related to type of feedback, evaluation, and instruction (the highest order themes) and also related to coaches' leadership styles and affective or emotional responses (the next ordered themes, respectively). Examples of coach-specific themes that supported athlete motivation include "one-to-one" feedback, "honesty and transparency" in evaluation, and "mastery-based evaluation" (pp. 103).

Keegan and colleagues (2014) connected their findings to both self-determination theory and Jowett's (2005) 3C's model. For example, an autonomy-supportive leadership style was found to be related to increased motivation with themes including "allowing the athletes to make choices, collaborating over decisions, 'empowering' athletes with knowledge… and being responsive to athlete input" (pp. 103). Additional themes supported the importance of closeness, commitment, and complementarity for athletes' satisfaction and motivation. Closeness was reflected by "mutual respect" and the coaches' "understanding" each individual athlete; commitment was reflected by "personal time and effort" invested by the coaches and coaches "creating opportunities for their players;" and, complementarity was reflected by coaches' "knowing their players" and "adapting their approach" (pp. 101) for individual needs of the athletes. Finally, affective responses of coaches that supported athlete motivation included a "positive affective style" and "tolerance" which was described as acceptance in the face of mistakes or defeat. These findings indicate that components of UPR (acceptance and positive regard in all circumstances) may play an important role in the motivational influence of coaches.

In summary, it seems possible that each of the CAR models reviewed may intersect in ways to foster a motivating sport climate that satisfies participants' needs to promote positive growth, development, and self-determined motivation. It also seems possible that UPR may precede, inform, and enhance the tenets of and contribute to gaps within these other models. While an orientation of UPR in sport context might prove difficult, there seems reason to suggest that a greater understanding of UPR or its opposites in sport might offer significant contribution to the current understandings of effective CARs and beneficial sport experiences for all involved.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**METHODOLOGY**

Maxwell and Reybold (2015) suggest that those with "epistemogical quality" recognize the impact of perspective, subjectivity, and interpretive meaning in a qualitative investigation (pp. 688), and that a full awareness of one's own worldview and research lens can provide quality for one's research interpretations. Thus, I will begin this chapter by stating my positionality as a researcher, especially as it is central to the present study. I will then discuss my ontological and epistemological framework and describe the chosen methodology and method for the present study, all of which stem from my personal worldview. From here, I will discuss in detail methods of reflexive practice, coding team selection, participant selection, data collection, and procedures for data analysis and reporting.

**Positionality**

I am a twenty-seven-year-old Caucasian American retired figure skater. I am a heterosexual female and currently live with my male partner of five years, though his work requires him to travel about half time. I believe the efforts we take to continually grow together and thrive while being part-time long distance speaks to my value of supportive and committed relationships. I was raised in a Caucasian middle-class nuclear family, the youngest of three children to parents who remain happily married. I continue to be privileged in the chance to seek post-graduate education while also affording to pay for my basic needs.

I have a clear value for education, as I hold a Bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in sport coaching, will soon graduate with a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling, and will begin a PhD program for sport psychology & motor behavior in the coming

year. I also value sport participation and travel. For three years between my bachelor and master's education, I performed professionally worldwide on touring figure skating shows.

I grew up in a highly privileged sport, for which significant financial resources are necessary (upwards of $12,000 per year for my family from sixth to twelfth grade, though skating at an elite level may cost twice as much in a bigger city or training center). As a young adult I cringe to see those numbers, but my parents stand by their choice to spend the money because they saw my passion and dedication to the sport, and I am truly grateful for their support. They raised me to take full advantage of every opportunity I was given and never let me take the opportunity to skate competitively for granted. Its important to note that the early death of my grandparents left my parents with an inheritance that made it possible for them to afford skating. Without this, my family would have had to sacrifice a comfortable lifestyle for me to skate at the level I did. As I have grown, my realization of the significant impact my grandparents' lives had on mine through skating has led me to feel a sense of spiritual connection to them every time I step on the ice.

Unlike typical overly-involved skating parents, mine put no performance expectations on me aside from giving my best effort. They let my coach be my coach, and while they did put a lot into supporting me (i.e. my mom sewed all of my costumes herself), they still made it clear that life did not revolve around me. They certainly influenced me by their values of family, faith, relationships, service, social justice, and education and were careful to keep me grounded in a sport culture that can prompt egocentrism. I always knew skating would be the first thing to go if my grades slipped or I got into trouble, and this motivated me to work hard in all areas of my life. While my research focuses on CARs, I must acknowledge the positive influence of my parents' unconditional love on the development of my own self-regard. I recognize that coaches

may only be one of many significant relationships through which to receive or be denied positive regard, and this will be important to note in our representation of the data.

It is also important to note that my travels to twenty-seven different countries and forty-eight states were very formative for me. I identify as a Christian, raised in the Episcopal church, and am someone who values relationships above all else in my life. My personal faith influences my research interests, as I believe UPR is manifested in God's love for us and informs a way of being that we are called to from a higher power. Yet, my travels and sport involvement have led me to engage in strong relationships with people of different spiritual beliefs, cultural contexts, and countries of origin than me. Through these experiences, I have come to believe that the Christian faith (though it fits well with me), may not be the only way toward human connection with each other and with that higher power. Specifically, I believe that Christ's death and resurrection served the purpose of salvation for the world, rather than salvation for the accepting individual. While many evangelical Christians believe the individual must personally accept Jesus Christ in order to be accepted into heaven, I really struggle to see any conditions in God's love and openness. Rather, I feel I have seen the power of God's love transcend differences in relationships with Buddhists, Muslims, and agnostics; and, I think this is only possible with some level of unconditional respect for and awe of others as their own, separate human beings with no need to control them in order to "save" them by conversion.

From fourth to tenth grade, I competed as a singles skater through the Novice level. Then, throughout high school and college, I competed both as a singles skater and on synchronized skating teams at the Junior and Collegiate levels. For three years of my college career, I competed with Miami University's varsity synchronized skating teams. During my freshmen

year, I competed internationally for Team U.S.A. in the junior division, and in my final two years of competing I earned two synchronized collegiate national championship titles.

Across this time, I can count eighteen different coaches that I worked with. Being coached amongst twenty other skaters at once by my team coaches felt different than being in a twenty-minute private lesson every day with my lead or an assistant singles coach. Naturally, my relationships felt stronger with the coaches I worked with one-on-one than on teams. In addition, my relationship with my collegiate team coaches looked and felt different during the year I was cut from the team, to the year they took me back, to the year I was named a team captain. Then, there have been the coaches that I've worked with for short periods of time at various training camps or seminars, some of who instilled a sense of worth and athletic competence within me that has proven invaluable across time. Despite our limited time together, several of these coaches were most positive in their influence and they still keep in touch and maintain relationship with me.

I hold a deep and unique relationship with my lead coach who remained my guide through the world of figure skating from day one at age seven to retirement at age twenty-five. To this day, she continues to be a support and mentor for my professional and personal endeavors. Her influence in my life, skating, development, and persistence is paramount. Throughout our time together, I often felt the same sense of care, respect, and support regardless of my performance. For example, I remember getting off the ice after one of my worst ever performances in the eighth grade. As I was on the brink of tears, she quietly handed me my water bottle and shrugged her shoulders with a small, empathetic smile. She was disappointed for me because she knew I was disappointed, yet she never expressed disappointment *at* me. We both knew I was capable of performing better and she took my failure as a challenge to figure out how

I could be better next time. Two years after that season, I reached a point of defeat during which I felt it might be better just to quit the sport. but my coach never stopped believing in me. She saw potential in me when I could not and this helped me persist.

I think UPR was often present in my lead coach's attitude toward me, but the nature of figure skating is conditional. Thus, I think I developed some conditions of worth from the implicit messages within figure skating, especially throughout adolescence. I struggled with feeling a "need" to be perfect and developed a black and white idea of success (success being near perfect if not perfect in performance and appearance). I think the process of my coach offering consistent acceptance, care, respect, and belief in me over time carried me through the moments I rejected myself and eventually transferred to an internal belief that I was worthy, capable, and strong as a skater and person, regardless of my outcomes on a given day.

I carried that belief with me to college, but it was rocked after being cut from the team sophomore year. I had so strongly integrated my identity to the team freshman year that I think one of my conditions of worth became "being a member of the varsity team." As a freshman, I looked up to the varsity coaches as legacies in our sport, though they had a generally cold affect and their provision of one-on-one attention was intermittent at best. I found myself doing everything possible to demonstrate my work ethic, passion, and skill, striving to be seen. By the end of the season I did receive quite a bit of positive feedback, but their method of withholding attention and care was confusing when all I wanted was to be acknowledged as a valuable contributor to their program, to have some indication that they might want me back next year.

When I was cut the next year, I think I rejected myself in the face of that reality as much as they literally rejected me. However, from the other end of the phone, my long-time coach from home shared my emotions of anger, heartbreak, and frustration as she wholeheartedly

accepted me in the midst of that reality. She brainstormed ways I could continue to grow my skating on the club team that year, carrying me through and helping me persist. Many other coaches and skaters did the same, showing me acceptance, care, respect, and belief even after being cut. Feeling that from others was powerful beyond words. It led me to believe I was worthy of offering myself acceptance, care, respect, and belief in *any* situation, especially in the sport domain.

I truly think this belief in my own worthiness enhanced my ability to perform my best under pressure in my last two years of competition and then as a professional skater. I specifically remember feeling empowered each time I took the ice during my tryout for Miami's varsity program the year after I was cut. It was as if, for the first time since high school, I could skate with total abandon because I was no longer at risk for losing my worth as an athlete. The worst outcome (in my mind) had already happened and the coaches who remained by my side through that time helped me to see that I was still a worthy athlete, no matter what team I was or was not on.

The empirical literature and accounts shared around figure skating, in some ways, paint a negative picture of the sport (e.g. Feder, 1995; Dunn et. al., 2011; Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993). I can fully recognize some of that as truth in my own experience. I have also have witnessed coaches who seek control of their athletes by shaming their character, pressuring them to maintain an unrealistic body weight, and forbidding them from working with any other coach. I have seen the skaters of these coaches burn out, quit, and shift from intrinsic love for the sport to bitter hatred. Yet the process of acknowledging and exhibiting these negative aspects of the culture through literature review has been really difficult for me, because figure skating has always been and will always be a sport that I love deeply.

Even now, I remain involved in the sport as a coach. I began teaching learn-to-skate group classes in high school, served as an assistant coach for a youth synchronized skating team in college, and currently work as assistant coach for a youth synchronized team in Knoxville and teach basic classes. Figure skating will always be a part of me. Thus, I recognize I have some desire to fight for the sport by presenting it in a positive light, and it is important to remember part of fighting for the sport requires shining light on the negatives.

Finally, I sit with several critical assumptions. Because I value quality, caring relationships, I might assume every athlete's relationship with their coach is a key factor in their sport experience, when this may not be the case for all. Some athletes might draw from strong relationships with peers, family members, and teammates, and remain successful in their sport experience without much care about their coach. Because I grew up in a nuclear, middle class, Caucasian household with parents who are still happily married, I have my own assumptions of what a healthy relationship looks like. However, some athletes might not have experienced my perception of a healthy relationship, or may have a different perception of how a relationship should look and feel. As a heterosexual, I will likely view the dynamics of same-sex or opposite-sex coach-athlete relationships differently than someone who identifies as homosexual or transgender. Coming from a privileged sport, I may be slow to recognize how cultural or financial barriers could impact other athletes' relationships with their coaches.

Additionally, as someone who has seen athletes be personally put down by their coaches; as someone who has known athletes to become entirely fearful of or frustrated with their coaches, I might be too quick to assume from a few behaviors that an athletes' coach does not care about the athlete as a person. If an athlete appears to have a low sense of self-worth, I might assume it is the coaches' fault, when one's self-regard may come from any other relationship.

Lastly, a coaches' provision of positive regard for an athlete could manifest in ways that are different from how I may think it should look and feel. The multifaceted impact of the various relationships I have had with coaches, my observation of many coaches over time, and my current role as a coach all place me very clearly in the center of this research domain. My position provides both the lens through which I will discuss my ontological and epistemological framework, methodology, and the method for the present study.

## Ontological and Epistemological Framework

The theoretical concepts that have guided the research questions of the present study include UPR, conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, and unconditional positive disregard (Rogers, 1959; Wilkins, 2001), all of which stem from Rogers' (1959) theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, I have drawn from Rogers' (1955) philosophical underpinnings to guide the ontological and epistemological framework for this study. Rogers (1955) acknowledged tensions between positivist and constructivists paradigms, as he considered the construction of knowledge from two different self perspectives – that of the "Scientific" and that of the "experientialist" (pp. 277). From his Scientific perspective, he acknowledges his own positivist thinking, calling himself a "fact-finder" (pp. 267) and stating that, "hypotheses can be formulated and put to test… this seems to be the only sure road to improvement, self-correction, growth in knowledge" (pp. 272).

Yet at the same time, Rogers (1955) presented his experientialist perspective of coming to know through *being* in relationship, emphasizing that "becoming" occurs through a "unity of experiencing" (pp. 267-68). In this way, Rogers (1955) wrestled with the fact that testing hypotheses of relationships from a positivist perspective would require that people be studied as objects, Rogers (1955) suggested that in an experienced relationship, "all that is subjective,

inward, personal… is lived, not examined, and a person, not an object, emerges; a person who feels, chooses, believes, acts, not as an automaton, but as a person" (pp. 274). In spite of acknowledging perceptions that there may be some benefit from positivist logic and describing experiences in operational terms, Rogers (1955) reconciled his lived tensions by stating a shift in his own paradigm – from the belief that science is "out there" as something that is "existing in space and time" to be found, to the belief that "knowledge, even scientific knowledge, is that which is subjectively acceptable" (pp. 274). Rogers (1955) described a shift in his own paradigm as a researcher, informed by his development of interpersonal relationship theory, to that of a relativist ontology through his recognition that multiple perspectives and realities exist (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and a constructivist epistemology through his recognition knowledge is constructed through lived experience in relationship to others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

As a researcher, I too must acknowledge the ways in which positivist beliefs, ingrained within our culture, have influenced my own understanding of what knowledge is and how we come to know it. From my subjective stance, I want to believe there are *some* universal truths, specifically related to fundamental human needs that begin with water, food, and shelter, and include needs for connection, love, and belonging through relationship (Rogers, 1959; Maslow, 1970). I personally believe that, as Rogers (1959) posits, humans have a natural tendency to self-actualize, or continually grow toward one's own unique and greatest potential (Rogers, 1959). This notion is central to understanding potential experiences of UPR or its opposites in the present research, yet it is also guided by theory and not entirely objectively known. Smith and McGannon (2017) argued that a researcher cannot hold both positivist beliefs, that "theory-free knowledge" exists and can be found through empirical control, and constructivist beliefs, that "theory-free knowledge" is not attainable (pp. 5).

Smith and McGannon (2017) also made a strong argument for their stance that, because research is always conducted by people who have unique individual perceptions, knowledge developed through research will always be intertwined with the perspective of the researcher. As Rogers (1955) recognized his own relativist, constructivist paradigm, I also hold a relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology. Through a relativist ontology, I believe multiple realities exist in each person's unique perceptions and experiences of the world based on previous life experience, culture, social context, setting, and (most importantly to this study) the relationships in which they engage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Through a constructivist epistemology, and in line with Rogers' (1955) philosophical underpinnings, I believe that human beings come to know their own experience and their own self through their relationships with others (Creswell, 2013) and that knowledge is constructed and shaped through reciprocal interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The constructivist epistemology and relativist ontology, in line with Rogers' (1955; 1959) theoretical underpinnings, has guided the design, analytical methods, and procedures of the present study. Through this lens, it is acknowledged that each person's experience in sport and process of coming to know who they are and how they regard themselves will look different and will be influenced by the significant relationships in their own unique context.

## Methodology

The aim of this study design was to extend the theoretical concepts of UPR and its opposites to the CAR context by seeking to understand retired elite figure skaters' experiences of UPR or its opposite constructs and their perceptions on how their coaches' regard influenced their sport experience and development of self-regard. To support the constructivist

epistemology and relativist ontology guiding this study, a basic interpretive qualitative study design (Merriam, 2002) has been deemed most appropriate for the present study.

Further, sport psychology scholars have called for expansion in methodology, types of sports assessed, and application of existing theories in other fields to the sport context (Poczwardowski et al., 2006). Poczwardowski and colleagues placed an emphasis on qualitative methodology and methods to "do justice to" the CAR, as it is a "socially constructed phenomena" in which each member's experience is multifaceted and process-oriented (pp. 130). Multiple researchers have posited that UPR is a concept that must be perceived in lived experience in order to have any effect (Rogers, 1959; Cornelius-White et al., 2013; Wilkins, 2001). Merriam (2002) states that basic interpretive qualitative research seeks to "discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of people involved, and a combination of these" (pp. 6). Thus, this study design also supports the call for an expansion in methodology – particularly qualitative methodology – and works well for the pursuit to understand a set of constructs within the context of the CAR.

Basic interpretive methodology encompasses all characteristics of qualitative research, to where the researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the process of analysis is inductive, and the findings are descriptive. It has also been acknowledged that prior research may guide a basic interpretive methodological study, and that existing literature may be incorporated in the presentation of findings (Merriam, 2002). The aim of this study was to extend the theoretical concepts of UPR and its opposites to the CAR context by seeking to understand retired elite figure skaters' experiences of UPR or its opposite constructs (the phenomena of interest) and their perceptions on how their coaches' regard influenced their sport experience and development of self-regard. The researcher served as the primary instrument conducting semi-

structured interviews, and existing literature on the concepts of UPR and its opposites guided study procedures and has been incorporated into the analysis and descriptive findings.

## Methods

Grounded in basic interpretive methodology (Merriam, 2002), the present study then utilized a qualitative content analysis (QCA) analytic method that included inductive and deductive coding of interview transcripts (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012). QCA is a systematic yet flexible approach for describing the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2012). It is important to note that, while the underlying study design (Basic Interpretive Methodology; Merriam, 2002) calls for an inductive analytical process, QCA scholars suggest that utilizing an inductive-deductive combined coding process may be an optimal choice when existing theory and/or prior research exists about the concepts being studied and will help ensure that the research questions are fully addressed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012). Thus, a directed approach (involving both inductive and deductive coding) to QCA was deemed a most appropriate analytic method to provide an empirically supported structure in which existing theory has guided study procedures (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

To support the constructivist nature of this study, its basic interpretive qualitative design, and qualitative content analysis method, it is important to offer transparency in each process of the study, from developing research questions to reporting analsyis, as if to leave a visibly documented trail. Such transparency enhances validity by allowing readers to see all aspects of influence on how data is interpreted and conclusions are made (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Thus, I will now discuss methods of reflexivity and issues regarding credibility and consistency in the research process.

**Reflexivity, Credibility, and Consistency**

When conducting interviews, the interviewer serves as the primary instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2013). As the interviewer, I have given specific attention to radical reflexivity which is defined as "awareness of self-awareness" regarding the researcher's position in the data and personal influence on the study (Rennie, 2007, pp. 53). Reflexivity was especially important considering my close proximity to the research (Rennie, 2007) as a current coach and former competitive figure skater. In this process, I engaged in the processes of analytic memo-writing (Saldaña, 2016) throughout the entire research process – from the conceptualization phase to data collection, analysis, and reporting (see Appendix E). Qualitative scholars have suggested that analytic memo-writing allows the researcher to think critically about the data, challenge her own assumptions, and increase awareness of how her position within the research shapes what she sees (Mason, 2002; Saldaña, 2016). Memos have also contributed as reflections on anything that came to mind throughout the coding process or interpretation of data (Saldaña, 2016).

For further support of reflexivity, I also engaged in bracketing (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997) by taking part in a "bracketing interview" (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997) prior to data collection, in which I was interviewed by my advisor with the interview-guide that I would be utilizing with participants. After this interview, I listened to its recording and wrote memos regarding awareness of my biases and own experiences, especially as they related to interview questions (see Appendix F). After the bracketing interview, I conducted two pilot interviews, listened to the recording of each and wrote additional memos regarding my biases and comfort level in both asking the interview-guide questions and also probing further (see Appendix G). I discussed the memos from both my bracketing interview and

pilot interviews with my advisor, reviewed them before conducting each main study interview, and continued to discuss biases with my advisor throughout data collection and analysis, in effort to set my biases and position aside and allow participants' own experiences to come through in their interviews and in the data interpretation and analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Tufford & Newman, 2010).

In efforts to maintain participant confidentiality and validity, I conducted member checking of transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Culver, Gilbert & Sparkes, 2012) by emailing each participant's transcript to them prior to data analysis, with the opportunity to respond with feedback, additions, or changes to their interview responses. Three of the eleven participants responded with requested changes, which were recorded and included in the data. Changes primarily involved correcting grammatical errors and removing personal information stated about their coaches or peers.

There has been recent debate among qualitative scholars in sport and exercise psychology as to whether member checking can truly serve as a method of credibility, validity, or trustworthiness. Culver, Gilbert, and Sparkes (2012) indicated that member checking is an important method of validity in sport psychology literature and involves both obtaining participant feedback regarding accuracy of transcripts, and then seeking participant feedback on the final analysis. However, Smith and McGannon (2017) contended that member checking cannot ensure validity because "theory-free knowledge cannot be achieved," and both a researcher and participant's participation in the process will be guided by their own perceptions of their experiences. In remaining true to the constructivist epistemology and relativist ontology guiding this study, it must be acknowledged that the process of member checking has likely not influenced the validity or credibility of study findings.

However, Smith and McGannon (2017) and Sparks and Smith (2014) both indicated that member checking might be useful to ensure that participant confidentiality is not breached, especially when rich descriptions might unintentionally reveal a participant's identity within a unique population. Considering the fact that more than one participant did remove information from their transcript that could have potentially revealed their identity, the value of the process can at least be noted to support participant confidentiality and ethical responsibility.

Finally, consistency (often termed reliability) is most considered to be established, within the QCA method, by multiple coders coming to consensus (Schreier, 2012). This method of rigor has also been challenged by Smith and McGannon (2017), as they suggested that the range of multiple perspectives of coding team members will never allow for an "agree-upon threshold" for effective inter-coder reliability and that power structures within a coding team can lend certain members to yield to dominate members in a group. However, to remain true to the QCA method a three-member coding team took part in data analysis, and met three different times to discuss and come to consensus on the development of the coding frame.

Schreier (2012) suggested that differing perspectives among coders would allow interpretation to rise above individual understanding of the data. Thus, members of the research team were chosen based on differing criteria of expertise and experience. In addition to the myself, one coding team member holds expertise in sport psychology and the second member holds expertise in person-centered theory. One coding team member also served as a "critical friend" (Smith & McGannon, 2017; also see Cowan & Taylor, 2016), being of a different racial identity, from a different sport, and having been a coach herself. Discussions among the coding team with intentionally different perspectives on the team allowed for further reflexive practice, as team members would point out times at which my close position in the research was likely

influencing interpretation and analysis. Smith and McGannon (2017) suggest that this process of discussion may likely better lead to a deeper exploration of "multiple and alternative explanations and interpretations" as they emerged in both data and writing (pp. 13).

## Instruments and Procedures

In the following section I discuss the instrument of data collection, procedures of participant selection, and detailed procedures of QCA data analysis.

### Participant Selection

Participants were selected first through network sampling and then through purposive, snowball sampling. Network contacts were asked to recruit initial participants and participants were then asked to recruit additional participants who met explicit, predetermined criteria (Patton, 2002; Flick, 2014). Network contacts sent an initial recruitment flyer via email in which interested, qualified people were prompted to email the primary researcher at her secure university email address. Criteria for participation included being over the age of eighteen and being a retired elite competitive figure skater. Elite was defined as having competed at the junior or senior level by International Skating Union standards in the singles, pairs, or ice dance disciplines. This study focused on former elite athletes because it increased the likelihood that participants would have spent a significant amount of time in the sport with at least one coach.

The purpose for sampling retired athletes was to attain a minimally biased reflexive perspective. It was deemed possible that athletes still immersed in competitive sport might provide biased data due to the desire to present their current working coach-relationship in a positive light. Further, sampling retired athletes minimized the risk of interview questions having a negative impact on participants' present sport experiences or current coach relationships. Additionally, participants' perspectives on their experience of termination from sport, whether

positive or negative, allowed for the emergence of important implications on the nature of the coach-athlete relationship (Isoard-Gautheur, et. al., 2016).

Eleven North American females who met the criteria agreed to take part in the study. They ranged in ages from 21 to 33 and all identified as White or Caucasian, female, and heterosexual. Most participants did not differentiate between race and ethnicity, nor between gender and sexual identity when asked about each as a separate construct. Participants' families' financial status ranged from lower middle class to upper middle class, though all spoke of sacrifices they or their families made to afford competitive figure skating (see Table 1 for participant demographics).

Throughout data collection, participants discussed both primary and assistant coaches, but only perceptions of primary coaches were utilized in the analysis. Two participants described their relationship with a team of two primary coaches as if it was one relationship, and three participants spoke of their relationships with two separate primary coaches. Thus, across the eleven participants, perceptions of fourteen former coach relationships were included in the analysis (see Table 2). Table 2 provides information about each coaching relationship described and the highest level of competition each participant achieved. It is important to note that coach gender was not clearly related to whether or not the participant perceived that coach as maintaining UPR or employing its opposites.

**Informed Consent**

Prospective participants then received a second recruitment email with additional information about the study and a consent form (see Appendix A) and were given one week to review it. During that time, participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions regarding consent prior to signing an agreement for participation. No participants asked any

**Table 1.** Participant Demographics

| Pseudonym | Age | Race | Ethnicity | Gender | Sexual Identity | Family's Financial Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anastasia | 30 | White/ Caucasian | U.S. and Russian Citizen | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Lower Middle Class |
| Alex | 33 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Lower Middle Class |
| Bailey | 21 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Middle/Upper Middle Class |
| Brittany | 27 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Upper Middle Class |
| Cassie | 21 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Upper Middle Class |
| Emma | 26 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Middle Class |
| Kelly | 24 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Middle Class |
| Lynn | 25 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Middle Class |
| Maureen | 27 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Middle Class |
| Samantha | 25 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Lower Middle Class |
| Sarah | 25 | White/ Caucasian | North American | Female | Straight/Heterosexual | Upper Middle Class |

**Table 2.** Participant Competitive Skating and Coach Demographics

| Pseudonym | Highest caliber competition (level & discipline) | # Primary Coaches | Coach(es) Gender | Length of coach-athlete relationship | Primarily UPR or opposites |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anastasia | International (Senior Singles) | 1 | Female | childhood – adulthood | UPR |
| Alex | International (Junior Pairs) | 1 | Female | childhood – adolescence | opposites |
| Bailey | Sectional (Senior Singles) | 1 | Female | childhood – adulthood | some of both |
| Brittany | Sectional (Senior Singles) National (Intermediate Pairs) | 2 | Female/ Male Team | childhood – adulthood | UPR |
| Cassie | Sectional (Junior Singles) | 2 | Female/ Female Team | childhood – adulthood | UPR |
| Emma | National (Senior Singles) | 2 | Male | adolescence – adulthood | UPR |
| | | | Female | adolescence only | opposites |
| Kelly | National (Intermediate Singles) Sectional (Senior Singles) | 1 | Female | childhood – adulthood | some of both |
| Lynn | National (Junior Ice Dance) | 1 | Male | childhood – adulthood | UPR |

**Table 2.** Participant Competitive Skating and Coach Demographics (continued)

| Pseudonym | Highest caliber competition (level & discipline) | # Primary Coaches | Coach(es) Gender | Length of coach-athlete relationship | Primarily UPR or opposites |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maureen | National (Intermediate Singles) | 2 | Female | childhood – adolescence | opposites |
| | Sectional (Senior Singles) | | Female | adolescence – adulthood | UPR |
| Samantha | Sectional (Senior Singles) | 2 | Female | childhood – adolescence | UPR |
| | | | Male | adolescence – adulthood | opposites |
| Sarah | International (Senior Singles) | 1 | Male | childhood – adulthood | opposites |

*Note.* Childhood ≤11-years-old, Adolescence = 12–17-years-old, Adulthood is ≥18-years-old

questions during this time. All participants communicated that they understood the steps taken to protect their confidentiality and their right to terminate participation in the study at any time.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection in attempt to directly address the research questions and gain in-depth understanding of each participant's own unique experience. The primary researcher conducted all interviews, and the same interview guide was utilized for all participants. To protect confidentiality, all participants were asked to choose a pseudonym at the end of their interview. Three of the eleven participants chose their own pseudonym and the rest asked that it be chosen for them.

The interview guide was developed in direct relation to the research questions and based off review of the literature of both UPR and the CAR (see Appendix B). Patton (2002) indicated that interviews are suitable for a constructivist framework to allow for in-depth understanding of participants' inner world. One-to-one interviews provide extensively rich, descriptive data through which participants can provide explanation, detail, and meaning regarding their experiences. Researchers are encouraged to probe for greater depth in participant answers, to ensure that the topic of interest embodied in the research questions are addressed (Patton, 2002).

The semi-structured interview allowed for open-ended questions and targeted, theoretically-based questions as directly related to the research questions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and checked over by reading the transcript while re-listening to the interview. Recordings and transcripts have been kept in a university secured GoogleDrive. Interviews continued via purposive snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) until the primary researcher felt that sample saturation was met. Saturation was considered to be met when information in interviews became redundant or repetitive, indicating a point at which it was unlikely for new data to warrant any new themes. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggest there is no standard method to reaching data saturation, though reaching a point of repetition in the data and a balance of both richness in depth and quality and thickness in quantity are preferred. The primary researcher felt that enough repetition had occurred in conjunction with significantly rich responses from each interview by the end of the eleventh interview.

## Data Analysis

The research team followed the procedures laid out for QCA (Schreier, 2012; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Flick, 2014), a flexible yet systematic method through which large groups of texts are reduced into *content categories* (Weber, 1990; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Schreier, 2012). QCA entails the following steps: (1) deciding on the research question, (2) selecting materials, (3) building a coding frame, (4) dividing material into units of coding, (5) trying out the coding frame, (6) evaluating and modifying the coding frame, (7) main analysis, and (8) interpreting and presenting findings (Flick, 2014; Schraier, 2012). After the research questions were established and selected materials were decided to be semi-structured interview transcripts, steps three through eight were carried out in three phases: preparation, organization, and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

**Preparation Phase**

The preparation phase began with the primary researcher building a deductive (concept-driven) coding frame and the coding team developing a pilot inductive and deductive combined coding frame (Schreier, 2012). The deductive coding frame was derived directly from the literature review and interview guide (Schreier, 2012). The initial concept-driven coding frame (see Appendix C) included four dimensions (one dimension per research question): (1) perceptions of UPR, (2) perceptions of UPR's opposite constructs, (3) perceptions of coach regard on sport experience, and (4) perceptions of coach regard on the development of self-regard. Within each dimension was an initial set of concept-driven categories and sub-categories developed from the literature review.

Schreier (2012) stresses that the concept-driven coding frame is flexible and will likely change throughout analysis to ensure that all relevant data are systematically included in the analysis (Schreier, 2012). The primary researcher sought consistency by discussing the concept-driven coding frame with the coding team after all members had read the literature review, and the team came to consensus based on understanding of the concepts of interest (Schreier, 2012). Members of the coding team then worked individually with all of the data to develop their own inductive and deductive combined coding frame, meeting three separate times to compare and discuss main categories and subcategories.

Schreier (2012) states that there is not one right way to go about developing the combined coding frame, as long as it captures all relevant data and fully addresses the research question. Because of the inductive nature that is fundamental to Basic Interpretive methodology and Schreier's suggested method to adopt portions of grounded theory coding as a way to initiate the inductive portion of the coding frame. Thus, the coding team individually conducted first

cycle In Vivo coding (developing codes from the direct language of participants; Charmaz, 2014; Schreier, 2012; Saldaña, 2016), second cycle Provisional coding (utilizing concept-driven codes; Dey, 1993; Miles, et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016), and third cycle focused coding (comparing In Vivo codes with Provisional codes; Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016; Schreier, 2012). The team then determined emerging concepts from both inductive and deductive codes, combined concepts to develop categories, and finally structured categories into a hierarchical structure to serve as the final coding frame (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Schreier, 2012).

**Organization Phase**

Once the combined initial inductive and deductive coding frame is developed, the primary researcher then divided data into units of analysis, units of coding, and units of context through a process called segmentation. Segmentation of the data is an important process in QCA for several reasons. First, it helps ensure that all material is initially read through and taken into account. Second, it helps researchers to maintain a clear focus on the research questions. Third, it allows the research team to directly compare codes within the same segments of data, fostering consistency (Schreier, 2012).

Each interview transcript served as a unit of analysis (Shreier, 2012). The primary researcher then went back through the data and marked sections as units of coding and units of context. Each unit of coding represented a subcategory in the coding frame and includes phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or passages that relay a similar, central meaning (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003; Schreier, 2012). Units of coding varied in length and were not continuous. Finally, units of context were marked and most often served as the portion of text surrounding the unit of coding that was deemed important for understanding meaning (Schreier, 2012).

The organization phase continued with testing out the coding frame in a pilot phase, revising of the coding frame, and conducting the main analysis (Schreier, 2012). The research team decided to utilize three transcripts in the pilot analysis, such that variability within the data was adequately represented. Coding team members then re-coded each of the specified material individually according to the coding frame. The team utilized email correspondence to discuss issues in placing segments of text into the coding frame, and to discuss interpretation of any units for which members disagreed (Schreier, 2012).

The research team then discussed and evaluated whether that the coding frame measured what it is supposed to measure (face validity) and covered all dimensions of the concepts of interest (content validity). A coding frame with high face validity will generally capture the meaning of the data. Low face validity may be represented by high frequency of codes in one subcategory or a residual or irrelevant subcategory (Schreier, 2012). When this was the case, the coding team shifted the placement of subcategories within categories and came to consensus on combining some subcategories and categories to more fully capture the data with the coding frame. Once the coding frame has been evaluated and modified as needed, the primary researcher finalized the coding frame to include five dimensions with multiple categories and subcategories within each dimension (Schreier, 2012).

**Reporting Phase**

QCA requires the researcher to simplify the data in a reliable and trustworthy way (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Reporting results include sharing the final coding frame. This includes dimensions, main categories, all levels of subcategories, and examples of codes. Participant quotations and rich data are incorporated to describe the meanings of categories and subcategories within the coding frame, and evidence of the connection between raw data and

findings are presented (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Findings will be presented in the following

chapter.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to extend the theoretical concepts of UPR and its opposites to the CAR context by seeking to understand retired elite figure skaters' experiences of UPR or its opposites and their perceptions on how their coaches' regard influenced their sport experience and development of self-regard. Five final dimensions have been compiled by the inductive-deductive combined coding processes of QCA (Schreier, 2012; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Dimensions first align with the research questions and then include emergent themes that have been deemed relevant to the research questions. Within each dimension, multiple categories and subcategories are presented to best represent the data and fully address the research questions (See Appendix D for full coding frame). Final dimensions include: (1) descriptions of perceived components of UPR from former coaches, (2) descriptions of perceived opposites of UPR from former coaches, (3) perceived influence of coach regard, (4) coach regard and mediating factors, and (5) coach regard and use of power.

**Dimension 1: Descriptions of Perceived Components of UPR from Former Coaches**

Similar to the way in which UPR is defined by each term in existing literature (e.g. Friere, 2001; Schmid, 2001; Rogers 1959), components of UPR are represented in three main deductive categories: *unconditional*, *positive*, and *regard*. Seven out of 11 participants described coaches whom they perceived to primarily support these categories, and one other described a coach who she perceived to support these categories in some, but not all instances (see Table 2). Within these categories, participants described their perceptions of *unconditional* by speaking about times in which they felt their former coaches had offered consistent acceptance, openness, and consistent presence. They described perceptions of *positive* through examples in which they

believed their former coaches offered focused attention and athlete-centered care. Finally, participants indicated that perceptions of *regard* from their former coaches first required that their coaches knew them deeply as athletes and people. Then, they described feeling regarded when they perceived that their coaches demonstrated actions of respect and valuing, believed in their potential as athletes and people, and continually challenged them to reach that potential. Regard was also perceived when participants' felt as though their coaches allowed an increasing sense of autonomy as they grew older.

**Category 1.1: Unconditional**

Participants described a sense of *consistent acceptance and presence*, to where they felt their coaches accepted them as both athletes and people in the moment of any circumstance, and indicated that they knew their coaches would always be there for them. Words used often to qualify feelings of acceptance and that their coaches were there for them were *always*, *no matter what*, *all the time*, and *even when*. Lastly, participants shared examples of coach *openness*, in which they perceived their coaches to be flexible in support of their individual needs as opposed to taking a "my way or the highway" approach.

**Subcategory 1.1A: consistent acceptance and presence.** Participants indicated that consistent acceptance was communicated the most during a performance setback or failure, as Cassie stated, "Of course they'll accept you at your strongest, so if they're willing to accept your weakness, I feel like that really shows that they're always going to be there for you." Anastasia, Cassie, Maureen, Brittany, and Emma each described a sense of acceptance even in the middle of a poor performance. For example, Emma said,

> If I did miss a jump, I knew it wasn't going to be an end-of-the-world thing. I'd always
>
> look back at my coach and she would always be standing at the boards, head tilted, no

reaction, just watching the program. So, her wheels were turning and your wheels were turning, but it was never anything negative.

Participants also spoke of feeling that their coaches accepted them as people and athletes and showed a consistent level of acceptance of everyone in their skating community. Cassie said, "Just treating everyone equal was really nice, and showed acceptance to not only me, but everyone." All eight participants who perceived UPR from their coaches also indicated that they felt accepted because they knew their coach would "always be there for" them. They described the sense that their coaches were consistently "present" both throughout their competitive skating career, and for some after they stopped competing. For example, Lynn said, "He was always there no matter if (my performance) was terrible," and Anastasia said,

> She was there with me during those nervous times, those anxious times, those very extreme emotional times – like an educator – a figure that's just constantly there. She was so present for such a long time in my life, really.

Further, Maureen shared how her coach gave her lessons on "how to coach" once she had decided to stop competing herself. She said,

> I knew I wasn't going to compete anymore, and I guess we still had lessons but she would like prepare me for other things. She was like, 'Okay, well if you're going to coach, you need to know how to teach somebody an axel.' And so my lesson for the day would be her teaching me how to teach an axel. You know, so I felt like she was prepping me for the future.

A final aspect of consistent acceptance and presence was participants' perception that their coaches maintained acceptance of them while not always tolerating behaviors that the they could learn to control. Behaviors described included times when participants would "mouth

back," "throw and attitude," "kick the ice," and generally lose composure during or after a bad practice. Brittany, Emma, Lynn and Kelly all shared instances in which they felt their coaches enforced consequences for such behaviors, but that their coaches' intolerance was never – as Brittany stated – "a matter of acceptance." Rather, they described a sense of *knowing* that their coaches' consequences were meant to help them become better people and athletes. For example, Emma described one of her consequences for kicking the ice and throwing a fit after falling on a jump. She said,

> My coach went to get all of my stuff that I had laid on the boards and threw it out the door and when I did get up to go get my stuff, she shut the door behind me and I couldn't get back on the ice for the day. And she taught me, really, the meaning of privileges. Skating was a *privilege* and I didn't *need* to be there.

Emma later said of this same instance, "She never made me feel like I wasn't accepted – she's probably one of the *biggest* mentors in my life."

**Subcategory 1.1B: openness.** Participants also recalled times in which they believed their coaches adjusted coaching tactics for their individual needs, shifted the focus to a different aspect of training if another aspect was not working, and evaluated them based on personal improvement as opposed to comparative success. These instances all seemed to reflect the perception of coach openness, which required acceptance of momentary experiences or difficulties. Maureen and Bailey spoke of their coaches explaining things differently when they could not understand something. For example, Maureen recalled,

> If I didn't understand the way she was explaining something, she would come back the next day and say, 'I was up all night thinking about it and now we're going to try it with

me explaining it this way.' So, there was never any frustration. It was always, 'Well, if it isn't working this way then we're going to try it a different way.'"

Kelly, Brittany, and Cassie all shared recollections of their coaches adjusting a practice plan or focusing on a different skill when one skill was not working. Kelly said,

On those days where I just had 'Jell-O legs,' they'd be like, 'Well, why don't you do more stroking and try to warm-up your legs? Do you not want to have lesson today? Do you just want to focus on working out the kinks?' And other times it'd be like, 'Okay, well, you need to work through it and you need to learn how to do this because maybe you'll have these legs on the competition day.' So it was a variety of responses, which was really nice that they were willing to compromise on different things to make it work.

Openness was also perceived when participants felt their coaches' evaluated them based off of personal improvement as opposed to comparative success. For example, Brittany said, "They would always push me to be a better me, whatever that was going to be, just be the best version of me that I could be." In addition, Anastasia, Lynn, Bailey, and Emma spoke of feeling as though their coaches were open when they allowed them to work with other coaches. Anastasia recalled,

I remember my coach would always say, 'If you want to try a different coach, go for it!' Like, 'I'm your main coach, but if you want to take a lesson somewhere else or try something else, go for it.' She was always very open.

**Category 1.2: Positive**

The component labeled *positive* was initially identified deductively, based on descriptions from prior literature that have portrayed positive as including *fully focused attention* (Freire, 2001) and *non-possessive care* (Schmid, 2001). For the participants who primarily

perceived UPR, the perception of non-possessive care was best depicted as *athlete-centered care*, to where they could sense that their coach put their best interest athlete over his or her own personal aims. Thus, the two subcategories to describe positive are: focused attention, athlete-centered care, and the perception of guidance as opposed to control.

**Subcategory 1.2A: focused attention.** Focused attention was perceived when participants felt like a priority to their coaches. Participants described feeling this way in instances when their coaches made extra time for them or shifted their lesson schedule to attend to something important. They also indicated the perception of focused attention when they spoke about their coaches maintaining attention within the timeframe of their scheduled lesson and also keeping an eye on them throughout a practice session even when they were not in a lesson.

Cassie said, "I feel like they would make more time for me even if it was skating at another rink during the day, just so we could work on things one-on-one more." Lynn said, "Well, he just listened. Even if we needed extra time, he would just shift stuff around, and sometimes lessons run over because you're in a serious conversation." Bailey perceived her coaches' full attention when her coach could tell how she was feeling by her body language. She said, "She could pick up on things that I wasn't being clear about. Like, she could tell if I was having a rough day before I even said anything."

For some participants, focused attention seemed to occur as a default, because they were their coach's only student competing at a certain level, and therefore going to certain competitions. Anastasia said, "I would say probably 80% of the competitions I went to, I was her only student. So, it was obviously 100%; I got all her attention. And I think the advantages for that in my case are endless." Kelly, Emma, and Cassie all said they appreciated their coaches demonstrating an even spread of attention for all of their students and "keeping an eye" on them

both in and outside of their lessons. In a different fashion, but with a similar feeling of focused

attention, Brittany, Lynn, and Maureen spoke of having complete and full attention in a lesson

and knowing that others got that same attention in their lesson time. For example, Kelly said,

> When she was with other skaters, she would be watching me skating, and I'd come by to
>
> get a drink of water and she'd be like, 'That was a really nice double axel. Good job. That
>
> looked really good.' You know, stuff like that where she was clearly coaching somebody
>
> else but had an eye on you. And that meant a lot to me because, you couldn't always
>
> perform in lesson, so it was really good to get the satisfaction and the positive feedback
>
> from the coach throughout. And she did the same thing with some other skaters too –
>
> everybody kind of knew that that's how we operated.

While Brittany said,

> In my lessons they definitely gave me their full attention. I felt like I was the only one
>
> they'd be paying attention to and they'd be so focused on me during mine and other
>
> people during their lessons. They wanted to make sure you were getting the most out of
>
> your time with them.

**Subcategory 1.2B: athlete-centered care.** Just as participants distinguished that their

coaches accepted them as an athlete and as a person, they spoke as though their coaches cared for

their personhood beyond their athletic success. This was perceived when participants felt that

their coaches' supported their goals outside skating, particularly related to academics or other

types of extracurricular activities. In the simplest form, all eight participants who perceived UPR

felt cared for when their coaches asked about their lives outside of skating, or their school

responsibilities, and allowed them the space to fulfill those responsibilities. Maureen noted, "She

would ask me about life outside the rink and she cared about 'How are my grades? How's the studying?' She would ask the questions, so I knew that she cared," and Kelly said,

> I think she cared about me a lot as a person and not just as a skater. She asked me how school was to understand if I was stressed out from school or something. I think that was something that really made her feel like another support network outside of my parents, outside of school – a caring, like, 'Let me understand what's going on in your life, because it matters to me, so that I can help you better.'

On a larger scale, Emma, Lynn, Maureen, and Bailey described feeling that their coaches encouraged them to pursue the activities they wanted to outside of skating, or to give back to the local community. For example, Emma said,

> She put focus on so many other things outside of the training aspect. She wanted us to be good kids. And respectful. And she wanted us to do service or benefit events, so we could reach out to the community and everything. So, that was good.

As another example, Bailey said,

> She was really interested in what I was doing outside of skating. She helped me start a learn-to-skate program for kids with special needs, so that was a really cool experience working with her, you know, not necessarily just as an athlete-coach.

Participants also felt care was demonstrated when coaches made efforts to help them in ways that were not "on the clock" as Lynn said or "beyond the job description" as Bailey described. For Cassie, Lynn, and Bailey, this was perceived when coaches would help with transportation to and from the ice rink at times when it was beneficial for their families. On one occasion Lynn lived with her coach for a short period of time before her parents could find jobs in that area. As an example, Cassie said,

Since the rink was just near my school, I would usually have to run from school to

skating, but my coach would always pick me up on the way to drive me to skating, which

was really really nice. It was always nice that she was willing to help me out.

Athlete-centered care seemed to be felt or known when the business aspect of the coach-athlete

relationship was not salient. Emma, Maureen, and Anastasia spoke of times at which their

coaches would "cut some slack" on payments. Anastasia said,

It was never about the money. It definitely didn't feel that way, and like I said, we

weren't super well-off, so I know there were times where the money was just kind of like,

'Eh. It's fine.' Even though there was obviously business involved, I didn't ever think of

that or see that. It wasn't at the forefront of our relationship.

Finally, Anastasia, Cassie, Maureen, Brittany, Emma, and Lynn all described feeling as

though their coaches ensured that they received credit for their successes, as opposed to coaches

wanting the credit all for themselves. For example, Emma said,

She didn't want the credit. She would say that the skaters take the credit. They're the

ones that do the work and put the energy into it, she was just kind of there to guide along

the way.

**Category 1.3: Regard**

Regard did not seem to be able to be fully perceived unless participants felt that their

coaches knew them deeply. Beyond this, participants described feeling regarded by their former

coaches when they perceived their coaches' actions to have demonstrated respect or valuing.

Participants also described the perception of coach regard when their coaches' explicitly stated

their belief in the athlete's potential, when they felt they were continuously challenged them to

become their best selves, and when they believed that their coaches maintained a balance between providing guidance and allowing autonomy.

**Subcategory 1.3A: deep knowing.** Five participants spoke of a sense or feeling that their coaches knew them deeply and believed that their coaches utilized this deep knowing to help best develop them into athletes and people. For example, Emma said,

> Every skater she worked with, she knew like the back of her hand. She knew what motivated them, what frustrated them, and she would never be hurtful. It was always like, if I needed a kick in the butt, she was going to give it to me. And she knew what was going to upset me, so she would avoid doing anything that was going to frustrate me further. She took the time to understand us as people, versus just as skaters, and to understand how our lives were and how we were feeling and how we operated. That was part of what made her such a good coach, and what made me feel like I was able to get so far in skating.

> In addition to simply feeling known as people and athletes, deep knowing was also perceived when participants felt their coaches expressed empathy. This was especially important for participants after a poor performance in competition, when they described their coaches being disappointed *with* them, not *at* them. Anastasia said,

> I knew that when I came off the ice crying, she would be upset, but she wouldn't be mad. Like I wouldn't get in trouble for not doing well. If I skated badly, there would be disappointment overall, so her disappointment was not something I feared.

Kelly said, "For the most part, she didn't change how she treated me if I wasn't doing well at competitions. We were pretty good about keeping calm. We were both kind of disappointed if things didn't go well." Brittany said,

They would be disappointed that I wouldn't have been able to give my all or I didn't do

as well as *I* wanted to do, but they were never disappointed that I didn't do well. It was

that they were disappointed because I was upset.

**Subcategory 1.3B: actions of respect and valuing.** Participants felt respected and

valued when they perceived their coaches to utilize positive reinforcement in the midst of

providing technical feedback and tactical guidance. Participants – across the board – wanted to

be challenged and pushed to improve (as Bailey said, "I didn't need their fake positivity or paid

claps"), but described what felt like genuine positive reinforcement as a key component to

feeling respected and valued by their coaches in the process. Maureen, Brittany, and Bailey

emphasized that they experienced positive reinforcement through their coaches' acknowledging

and celebrating small successes. For example, Bailey said,

> Even if I would go and fall for the next 30-minutes straight, they would definitely make
>
> me feel like I made progress in some way. Obviously a good coach will recognize the
>
> bad, but they would also recognize the good and tell me, like, 'Okay, you're so close.
>
> You can do this.'

Additionally, positive reinforcement was described as participants' coaches deservedly

praising them, getting excited for them and being excited to work with them, and displaying

positive body language. For example, Emma recalled the first time she landed a triple jump, "She

lost it and was going crazy. And therefore – I mean, of course I was already excited – but I was

more excited because she was excited." Maureen compared experiences with two coaches,

noting that the recognition of an improvement was important for her. She said,

> We spent so many lessons on like simple stroking. But then in doing that, when I made
>
> the improvement she recognized it, she would give me the, 'Good job. This is good.' The

positive reinforcement whereas before it was just like, 'Do it again, do it again, do it again,' with no direction on how to make it better.

Emma spoke of her coach's positive body language right before taking the ice at competition saying, "She would pat us on the back and tell us to go skate. But just that little pat on the back – it was something so simple, but it made you feel like you had people there for you." Finally, Cassie, Brittany, and Lynn also spoke of feeling respected and valued in instances when they perceived that their coaches trusted them to serve as an example for others, either with their sport ability or personhood. For example, Brittany said,

> They actually acknowledged several times that the younger skaters were kind of looking up to me, not because I was working on triples all the time, but because I was one of the nicer skaters. I was like right in the middle age-wise of all their students, so I could get along with the older and younger students.

**Subcategory 1.3C: belief in potential.** All eight participants who perceived UPR from a coach indicated that they *knew* their coaches' believed in their potential – both as athletes and in life beyond figure skating – because their coaches would directly communicate that belief. Kelly shared how "comments would add up to mean something," saying,

> Almost every week, they would say something like, 'You're so close to getting this. Once you do it'll bump up your technical value – just little motivational things that add up. It was always *that close,* because that was digestible. It was never *that much*, you know?

Brittany shared a time when her coach had told her mom that she had an "inner lion," and her mom relayed that statement to her. She stated,

I will always remember that quote because that made me feel like there was just something that she saw in me. That – even if I wasn't aware of it – it was like my inner fighter that was going to go out and kick butt.

Emma also shared,

To have a coach that believed I could make it, when I had never done – I didn't do anything prior to that year. I didn't qualify for anything. I didn't make it out to anything. And then to have this coach sit me down and just say, 'I believe that this is a possibility.'

Participants also indicated that they felt their coaches often believed in them more than they believed in themselves. Emma said, "Even if I thought it was a far-fetched goal, she didn't. She kind of brought it back and put it within my realm of possibilities." In a similar manner, Lynn spoke of the time at which she had stopped competing and was auditioning for professional skating opportunities. She said, "At one point I thought, 'Well, maybe I'm not good enough, really.' So, just the constant reminder (from my coach) of, 'You are good enough. Its just timing.' He always said that, and that constant reminder was needed." Bailey said,

I was not allowed to give up on myself. Even if – lets say I fell horribly on something. They'd make me walk through it and maybe attempt it once more before I got off the ice. And they would still be there the next day ready to start again fresh and would look for *any* sort of improvement. So, that helped. I never, ever, ever felt like they were going to give up on me and that made me not want to give up on myself.

Similarly, Anastasia said,

I think she saw my potential in skating. I always thought, 'I would love to be a great skater,' but I was never one of those people who dreamed about going to the Olympics or anything. I knew – or I *thought* I knew I couldn't ever be *that* good. I had a ceiling to my

expectations of my earned successes in skating. And I think she – her ceiling was much

higher than mine. She believed in me. She really thought that if I really – gave it my all –

I could be one of those people.

**Subcategory 1.3D: challenge to become.** Perceptions of coach belief in participants'

potential seemed to be paired with the perception that their coaches' also challenged them to

become better versions of themselves in the sport context. All participants described feeling as

though their coaches guided them to focus on ways to improve, set goals, and take action toward

achieving those goals. Yet for the eight participants who experienced UPR, their coaches'

*challenge to become* seemed to occur after *both* good and bad performances, which in turn

seemed to require a focus on how to improve "next time" every single time, no matter whether

the current performance was good or bad. Maureen described this as she said,

> Everything was in steps. I never had wonderful competitions every single time, but when
>
> they were bad, it was like, 'okay well that wasn't the best,' but again, 'what are we going
>
> to do to make it better?' Not dwelling on the fact that it was bad.

Brittany offered another example as she said,

> When things were going well, they would still push me to go past that. They would
>
> acknowledge and praise when I was doing something well and succeeding, but they
>
> would always ask for a little bit more – stretch my boundaries, stretch my limits, see how
>
> far I could actually go with it.

Bailey spoke of both her and her coach reflecting on how they each could improve. She said,

> At the end of every season, we would sit down and review what worked and what didn't
>
> work, really trying to find – you know – the silver lining in things. We'd talk about what
>
> I could take away from that and what we could do together, not just me, but what both of

us could do to be better for the next season or the next competition or the next run-

through, even. So, she would help me reflect on that.

**Subcategory 1.3E: increasing autonomy with age.** Eight of the eleven participants

described coaches they worked with from very young age through to adolescence, and in some

cases adulthood, and six of these participants primarily perceived UPR from that coach (see

Table 2). For those six and two others who switched to coaches with whom they experienced

UPR later in their careers, an important component of regard was the perception that their

coaches allowed for and encouraged them to have autonomy over their sport experience.

Participants felt they needed more guidance and were less concerned with autonomy when they

were younger, but appreciated less guidance and an increased sense of autonomy as they grew

older. The occurrence of this shift seemed especially important to participants feeling respected

by their coaches as they developed into teenagers and adults. In essence, they felt regarded

positively as their coaches seemed to acknowledge their growth and development.

Cassie depicted this as she said, "I think since they were the ones who started coaching

me in the beginning and saw me through until I was older, they saw my growth… and so, I think

our relationship grew." Brittany laughed as she said "I feel like they always respected me as an

individual. I don't think that they trusted me with responsibility when I was younger," but later

also said, "They always found a way to let me choose the direction of the lesson within the

bounds of what they knew we needed to work on." Anastasia shared that her coach "definitely

treated me differently when I was older," saying,

> (When I was younger) my coach was like a triple threat. She was my coach, she
>
> choreographed my programs, and she sewed all my skating dresses. It was full on. But as
>
> I got older, she would say, 'Branch out! Maybe you want someone else to choreograph

your programs. Maybe you want a different style.' So, she understood that I was getting

older and evolving in my own style and ideas, and she didn't need to do all these things

for me.

Bailey said, "When I got older, she would let me set my schedule and my practice times. And then she would work around that. So, I think she respected me at that point." As a final example, Maureen shared how she felt her coaches supported her own decisions for what she wanted to do after retiring from competitive skating. She said,

I think she knew I was self-motivated and she knew that whatever I decided to do I was

going to be good at and I would push myself. So she just kind of aided that. And that's

how I felt respected – she helped me get to where I wanted to be, she didn't impede that

or block it, or try to make me go in a different direction. It was 'She is a skater, she is a

teenager, she has all these opportunities, *she* gets to decide what she wants to do and I'm

going to help her do whatever that is.'

**Dimension 2: Descriptions of Perceived Opposites of UPR from Former Coaches**

The opposites of UPR are categorized into three deductive categories, each representing

one of three opposite constructs: *conditional regard*, *unconditional negative regard*, and

*unconditional positive disregard*. Both conditional negative regard and conditional positive

regard seemed to be perceived in conjunction with each other, and are thus represented by one

combined category. Unconditional negative regard was perceived when athletes felt they could

never be good enough for their coaches – whether as a person or in their sport performance.

Lastly, unconditional positive disregard was depicted as the perception of disregard *for the*

*person beyond the athlete*. Participants who experienced this described feeling that their coaches

disregarded their right to autonomy through attempts to control them for the sake of their own

aspirations. They also described a retrospective perception that their coaches' disregarded their best interest as people for the sake of athletic success.

**Category 2.1: Conditional Regard**

Some participants described the perception that actions of acceptance, respect or valuing, focused attention, and non-possessive care occurred only during certain conditions. In these instances, there was less of a sense of security that one's coach would "always be there" for them, and more of an acute sense of knowing that their coaches accepted them, engaged with them, or respected and valued them only "if…" or "when…" they did something that their coaches liked and wanted them to do. In these instances, participants described perceptions of negative regard from their coaches when those conditions were not met. Thus, conditional positive regard and conditional negative regard are presented together as *conditional regard,* with the notion that positive regard was perceived when conditions were met and consequently negative regard or disregard were perceived when conditions were unmet.

**Subcategory 2.1A: coach accepted me if.** Some participants only spoke of feeling accepted by their coaches if they were able to perform well or execute elements on the ice, if they did what they were told, and if they prioritized skating over everything else. Samantha gave a percentage for the amount of time she felt accepted as both a person and an athlete, saying "40%. Yeah. I mean, I think he would give some compliments. Like, 'You did a good jump,' or 'That was good.'" She said she felt accepted at times, "when he was not being mean and just talking to me as a person, and not as an eight-year-old." Similarly, Sarah said, "When things were going well, it was good," but if she skated badly at a competition she said, "I'd be terrified. If it wasn't good, I knew I had to go home and work harder. And that meant more run-throughs, more yelling, more 'Do this, do that.'" Alex said she felt accepted as a skater,

When I did – when I landed my stuff. I think I would just know, she would be more light and happy. It was really just success. I remember landing my triple loop for the first time and her freaking out and screaming and jumping up and down and being super happy. So I know that was good. When I would land everything.

In addition, Kelly and Alex spoke of feeling accepted as people, but not always as skaters depending on how they were doing on the ice. Yet Alex spoke about acceptance on the ice was

I mean, I feel like she always fully accepted me as a person… as a skater, that was different, because she was really good at separating on the ice and off the ice. We'd spent so much time together off the ice and talked about all different kinds of things, and then when we got on the ice it was work time. But I wanted her attention when I was on the ice. And I didn't understand what was going on there. Because I also didn't understand the separation – now that I'm more mature, I do.

**Subcategory 2.1B: actions of conditional acceptance.** Participants who described feeling accepted only at certain times indicated that what felt like methods of positive reinforcement seemed to be more superficial, not always developmentally appropriate, and exclusively when they did something well. In particular, participants' descriptions of feeling accepted contained less length and depth when these actions were perceived to be conditional or non-consistent as opposed to when they were perceived to be unconditional or consistent. For example, Sarah said, "I think encouragement. encouragement. Like, 'Okay, that was good.' Um, 'Nice jump.' He would clap."

When a performance or practice did not go well, participants did not indicate that they felt their coaches "found the positive" in the midst of a mistake or failure. Rather, they described feeling as though their coaches would focus on the fact that something had gone wrong. Sarah,

Samantha, and Alex perceived non-acceptance when it felt as though their coaches expressed significant frustration and were disappointed *at* them for making a mistake or failing in some way. Sarah spoke of her coach being mad at her for not performing well at both the youth and elite levels of competition. She said,

> I remember when I was little, too, I missed a jump in juvenile or something. And he got so mad at me. He was like, 'You're not going to place or anything,' and I got second. I'm like, 'What?' Its so weird to get yelled at but then still place.

Later, talking about a later competition at the elite level, she said,

> I probably ended the worst I ever had before, and he just kind of sat with me and didn't say anything. Normally he'd give you a hug after you compete and say, like, 'Okay, good job.' He didn't say anything. He hadn't even gotten my guards. He was like, 'Well. That was okay.'

As another example, Alex described knowing that she was not accepted by her coaches' negative body language and irritation when she was not landing jumps or executing elements well, saying

> I just remember her being kind of intense and a little bit – not necessarily angry – but irritated that I wasn't doing my stuff. And she would be really serious and not smile or laugh. Yeah. She would get very serious, less positive, less fun. But in her mind I just wasn't doing what she told me to do, you know, 'lift your left side up' or 'jump higher' or whatever. So, I think she was frustrated maybe with my not doing what she told me to do and not understanding why.

**Subcategory 2.1C: coach engaged with me less or more if.** Most participants felt that their coaches' level of engagement fell on a continuum as opposed to being perceived as entirely all-or-nothing. Participants indicated that they felt their coaches' attention toward or engagement

with them was mediated by their position on a hierarchy of athletes. When they perceived less

attention and engagement, they felt they were lower on the hierarchy in comparison to their

training mates or that they were doing something the coach did not want them to do. For

example, both Alex and Sarah felt that they had their coaches' full attention at competitions or

practice sessions when they were the only or highest-level skater there. Sarah said,

> If I was one of the top skaters at that competition with his students, I would get more
>
> attention than somebody lower than me. He always saw potential, which was nice, but if
>
> people were out of town and I was still one of the top people, then I would get more of
>
> the attention. After I won he put more effort in, but then that was only when other people
>
> were out of town.

> Although Maureen and Bailey had perceived components of UPR from their coaches at

other times, they both also described times as which it felt they were getting more or less

attention based on their performance success. Emma also described a coach she had at the start

of her skating career, who blatantly stopped giving her lessons because she had other skaters at a

higher level. As an example, Baily said,

> At one point, I was doing really, really well during the season, on such a good path.
>
> And… more than anything else, I felt like she gave me her undivided attention. I was the
>
> one she was watching during other people's lessons, and I felt really bad about that, but it
>
> was clear to me that she changed the way she approached my lessons when I was
>
> performing well… and I think it changed back when my friend became better. And then
>
> she did that for her.

Samantha spoke of her coach intentionally giving more attention to other skaters, saying

He was trying to make it feel like one of the other girls was better than you. You know, he'd be watching her more than you or if he'd only be talking to one of the other girls. That was an underhanded way to show that he's not paying attention to you. And I think the week after a competition if I skated badly, he would just be less engaged. But if you did do well then he would treat you better and try to make the other girls jealous of you.

While some skaters felt this "hierarchy of attention" was a result of coaches having too many skaters, Sarah and Alex both shared that they felt it was a coaching tactic to shape behavior. Alex provided a pure example of how her coach's philosophy informed this tactic, saying

Since my coach's business had already started booming, I just fell to the wayside. My partner had quit, my body started changing, I wasn't able to land the jumps that I'd had before, and then I started getting injured, and that was really rough. So other students started getting into their lime light, and I swear to god, they just forgot about me. And I didn't understand that it was *because* I was bringing them success that they were giving me attention. So when I wasn't landing the jumps or going to the competitions or maybe bringing them business or *whatever*, then they weren't giving me attention and I was so confused. I felt like I was doing this [waving arms] on the sidelines, and they just didn't give me any attention. And, I see now that my coach's philosophy is, 'If you work hard, you get attention.' 'If you show me that you want it, then I'll give you attention,' and I get that psychology about it, but I don't agree with it. I mean I do agree that actions speak a lot louder than words. But with my situation and my age and how close we had gotten, she *really* misread how much of an impact she had and how much she was affecting me.

**Subcategory 2.1D: actions of disengagement.** Participants who described experiences of conditional regard indicated that they could not simply "know" that their coaches would

engage with and be focused on them, but they would rather question whether they were doing something right. They only perceived that they were doing something right in the intermittent times of receiving focused attention from a coach. Sarah, Samantha, and Alex perceived disengagement through less attentive body language and interaction. For example, Sarah said, "he would just be short with you and act like he didn't care as much. Just with his coaching. He would act, like, not as involved." Alex also perceived disengagement to occur through what felt like purposeful ignoring. The fact that her coach did not clarify what she would need to do to earn her attention made it particularly confusing. She said,

> She would try *not* to get your attention. I could tell she was not trying to get my attention, but she was very serious and you could see it in her face, like it was really tense, and she would try not to look at me. She would still be focused on what I was doing, but she wouldn't verbalize it to me, and so I was like, 'Okay, well what do I need to do?'

Samantha and Emma perceived total disengagement when their coaches blatantly walked away from them if they skated poorly. For Samantha, this occurred at a competition during a poor performance. For Emma, this occurred at a competition practice when her coach terminated their relationship then and there. She said,

> I was on a practice and I did this triple toe (an easy jump for me at the time), but I fell and hit hip-first and my feet hit really hard. So I got up and skated back to him and he just said, 'I'm done. I'm never working with you again. Figure it out yourself. I'm done working with you.' Like, 'This is over.' And walked – just walked away from me. So I had other coaches trying to open the boards (of the rink) for me 'cause I was starting to cry. And my dad ended up putting me on the ice the next day for my long competition.

A few months after this incident, at the biggest competition of the year, Emma described this

coach's purposeful ignoring of her. She said,

> I got no 'hello's.' Not even just a 'Hey,' like, I got ignored. And he talked – I won't
>
> forget this. I was waiting to get on a practice ice. I had a skater on one side of me and
>
> another skater on the other side, and he talked to both of them. Completely ignored me.
>
> And we had to stand in the order we were getting on the ice. So, he kind of went out of
>
> his way to be ugly, and that messes with your head, because these are your competitors.

**Subcategory 2.1E: coach respected and valued me if.** Participants described feeling

less respected and valued by their coaches when they could not push through difficult training

past the point of mental and physical exhaustion, when they did not maintain a lean body shape

or grew as normal through puberty, and when they could not produce successful sport outcomes.

It is important to note that participants did feel that demonstrating work ethic and "pushing

through" difficult training days was important for their success (both in skating and in life). Yet

they felt disrespected when they perceived that their coaches did not acknowledge or recognize

their actual experience at times in which they were unable to give any more to their training,

whether from exhaustion or outside circumstances. As an example, Sarah said,

> When he could tell we are completely physically and mentally exhausted and you're still
>
> trying to push us to that extreme. I understand that sometimes people can work through
>
> that and overcome it. But on some days a lot of people can't. And on days you can, that's
>
> great because then you can do it competition. But you're also not competing every day.
>
> So, I think in those situations it was like, 'Where is the respect? Where's that line and
>
> you're crossing it?'

Alex spoke of feeling valued less when she grew during adolescence, saying

Most of my career was focused on pairs skating. And I was no longer pair size [laugh]

after 15-years-old. I mean, maybe I could have gotten back to pair size. I had just gained

hips. So, (skating with a new partner) wasn't going well and then I ended up not skating

with that guy, and again I didn't understand what was going on. And later, in retrospect, I

learned that my mother had told them not to tell me that he wasn't skating with me

because of my weight. Because she just felt like I couldn't take any more that year.

Lynn and Samantha also shared experiences in which they perceived a coach to only value

skaters who were under a certain weight range. Samantha's coach gave her a grocery list of eight

foods she could eat, and Lynn had a pair coach tell her a certain weight that "all elite pair

skaters" should maintain.

Finally – just as with acceptance and engagement – participants felt valued by their

coaches when they attained successful sport outcomes. As Samantha put it, her worth in her

coach's eyes would vary "depending on how the competition went that month." Similarly, Alex

said, "Whenever I landed new jumps, that was always good. Or when I skated well, obviously.

Yeah. When I was successful."

**Subcategory 2.1F: actions of disrespect and non-valuing.** Participants described

perceiving actions of disrespect through their coaches' lacking empathy, purposefully shaming,

and pushing to unrealistic expectations without acknowledging the athlete's realistic ability to

meet those conditions in a given moment. Sarah shared that it felt as though her coach lacked

empathy, saying "He didn't really care for feelings too much [laugh]. If you were having a bad

day or something like that, he would just yell at you more and that's not the type of situation

where that's effective." She went on to share a situation in which her coach mandated that any

athlete who did not meet the expectations of the day would have to be publicly humiliated by his or her peers. She said,

> There was one day where if you popped three times the entire day, you had to go home. Even if you'd paid for something. And he was going to make you go to the middle of the rink, and he would sing a song, like the 'Bye Bye Bye' N'Sync song and everybody had to go around the circle and do it and then they had to get off.          c

Sarah shared a different story of her coach demanding to continue doing her program in training until she landed everything. When circumstances were out of her control to get her music on the loudspeaker one last time at the end of the day, her coach did not acknowledge the fact that she completed the program clean without music.

> I think I did ten programs that day. In three or four sessions, and then there were no more sessions. And the last one I did, I did it clean but it was without music, because I couldn't get it in again. And he was like, 'It doesn't count.' And I was like, 'But it does count, because it was completely clean.' I couldn't do anything, there was no more sessions. But he was not going to give me the encouragement of, 'Okay, fine. You did it.'

**Category 2.2: Unconditional Negative Regard**

Unconditional negative regard seemed to be perceived for participants who described that they could never be good enough for their coaches – as athletes or as people – and that they were never fully accepted. It is important to note that only Samantha and Emma discussed coach-athlete relationships in which they felt this way through the entire duration of that relationship. Alex felt this way at times, but acknowledged other moments in her coach relationship in which she did feel respected. Finally, Bailey generally felt accepted and positively regarded by her coach, but described moments or certain situations in which she felt she could not measure up.

Accounts from all types of examples of unconditional negative regard are included in the following findings.

**Subcategory 2.2A: never good enough.** Participants described feeling "never good enough" through instances in which they perceived that their coaches' made personal insults or shaming comments, criticized them even when the score was good, held a generally consistent negative affect, and never fully believed in their potential. As Samantha said, these coaches would say things that are "just something that you shouldn't say to a person." With a single mom, Samantha worked at a fast food restaurant to pay for her skating expenses and explained,

> He would make fun of me for working to pay for my coaching bills. He would say, 'Oh, you're going to go scoop your French fries to pay for me? To pay for your skating bill?' Like… 'Yeah. I am.'

Similarly, Emma had a coach who called her names for a physical disorder that she had had since she was little and could not control. After she scored well enough in the short program to be in the final competitive group for the long program at her first major competition, she shared how this coach did not allow her to stand where she could be seen before getting on the ice to compete, because the disorder was more prevalent when she was under stress. She said, "He called me [derogatory name removed] and I was really embarrassed and he made me go stand in the hall until I was called." Bailey shared her experience of her coach pointing out technical errors after a competition skate when she honestly felt she had not made the errors.

> She would be like, 'That spin was short and that wasn't long enough and you didn't hold that.' And it was just like, 'Whoa.' But then you'd get this score, and she's like, 'Oh, well, I guess they weren't actually looking.' Its like, 'Maybe you were off a revolution, because I counted and that wasn't that.' Or if I had another coach standing there too and

the other coach would say, 'I thought that was fine,' then my head coach would be like, 'No, no.' So she was always a lot harder with that stuff. If I counted 10 revolutions, she would count seven. She was always off, so I kind of knew to take it with a grain of salt, but it still sucked for her to be like, 'Well clearly they weren't counting because there's no way you got eight revolutions on that.'

Alex shared how she never felt her coach *really* believed in her full potential.

I don't know if she – ever – did. She kind of always had that attitude of, 'Well, you *could* do this,' but I didn't feel that she was really behind it. I mean, she didn't feel it with every fiber of her being, I think she was just like, 'Okay, well… Here we go! Do the best you can.' And like, 'Hold that left side up,' or whatever correction it was that really helped.

**Subcategory 2.2B: consistent non-acceptance.** Other participants felt that they were never fully accepted as a skater or a person. Sarah perceived non-acceptance through the way in which her coach favored other skaters. She said,

I don't – ever – think (he fully accepted me). I think he does know me and my family very well, but I don't know… I don't think ever. He played a little bit of favorites with another skater, and so how he would treat that skater versus me or someone else in the same situation – like, if one of us was throwing an attitude for the exact same thing, this other skater would get their feet kissed, whereas I would get like, 'You have to do suicides for two minutes, because you missed a jump' or something. So it was kind of like double standards.

Samantha felt that non-acceptance was communicated through aggressive and negative body language. She said,

> You know how a coach will correct you like, 'You need to bring your arm through on this,' and take your arm and gently guide it? He was so *aggressive* with it. And now looking back on it, he would, like, *push* your shoulder. He wouldn't gently do it. He would aggressively do it. And if your head wasn't where you needed to look, he would just [pause] it was almost like a slap.

Samantha later referred to body language, saying "Usually he just had one facial expression. Really no smiling involved." Finally, Maureen and Sarah perceived non-acceptance through monotonous instructions to "do it again." For example, Maureen said of a coach she worked with in the first part of her career, "In a day-to-day training basis towards the end, things were a lot more negative and just, 'do it again, do it again.' Not any technique or fixing anything."

**Category 2.3: Unconditional Positive Disregard**

Participants all spoke of relationships with coaches with whom they did work with, even if for a short period of time. Therefore, the notion of unconditional positive disregard is represented here as *coach-centered control* – disregard for the athlete except for ways in which the athlete could benefit the coaches' objectives. It is also represented as *non-acknowledgement of the person beyond the athlete* – such that care for the athlete's sport success would take precedence over the greater best-interest of the person. In this way, participants suggested that it often felt as though their coaches' cared for them when they were still in the relationship as athletes. Yet in retrospect, they described feeling that their coaches were actually disregarding their worth beyond sport success and their need for autonomy as human beings.

**Subcategory 2.3A: coach-centered control.** Instances in which it felt as though coaches were putting their own interests before the best interests of their athletes seemed to serve at the root of controlling behaviors. Participants perceived these behaviors to include a lack of

boundaries, lack of flexibility or openness in the coaching process, and playing "mind games" in which they felt their coaches were trying to make them more "mentally tough" by making them feel intimidated, comparing them to others, or putting them down emotionally.

Lack of boundaries occurred when coaches would take part and oversee all areas of training, especially those areas outside of the coach's typical role such as off-ice strength and conditioning, nutrition, recovery. Sarah said,

> I mean he always was in control of what time we had workouts, what we were doing for recovery. After skating, we would go to work out and then we would have dinner and go to the recovery center. And he would finish coaching and just come hang out with us at the gym and go have dinner with us, and then come – recover with us. And we're like, 'Go home.' Like, 'You have a family, go take care of them. Don't hang out with us – you've already hung out with us all day.' I mean I think he did (care), but I don't – no. He wanted to be in control of everything and that's not something he can do… Eh. Yeah. He always cared, but it was just too much. The only time away we had from him was when we slept. And when we went to school for – I only went to school in the morning and then came straight to the rink. So that's not much time away from somebody. Especially if you didn't like him on some days.

Samantha and Alex spoke of their coaches' attempts to control their restriction of food intake. Alex spoke of learning what not to do in her future coaching endeavors, as she said,

> I'm not going to look at my athlete who's eating a power bar, who's been told they need to lose weight, and take something out of their hand and tell them they don't need to eat it. Because that has happened to me.

Alex and Sarah shared that their coaches wanted to have control over their school schedule or required them to be home schooled. In addition, Samantha and Sarah indicated that it felt as if their coaches were not flexible in their coaching tactics on the ice. For example, Samantha said

> He would tell us what we were going to work on that session. And even if he was coaching one of the other skaters, he would make sure that you were working on what he told you to work on. It was always like, 'Okay you have to work on this jump for the next half hour. But don't work on anything else, and if I see you, then…'

Finally, coach-centered control was also perceived through what seemed like disregard for the person or athlete in pursuit of the coaches' own interest or goals. This seemed to occur when participants perceived their coaches to be more concerned about how their athletes' could help enhance their own resumes or coaching businesses. Alex, Sarah, and Bailey spoke of times when they felt this way. Sarah described it, saying

> It was always his end goal that was priority over everybody. He would always try and help us, but he wanted it on his resume. Like he wanted to be a specific caliber coach. And he was going to do it that year with *anyone*. And he knew that we all had a possibility of qualifying to that level competition, but that was the year that *he* was going to do it, and we're like, 'You're not the one skating.' so, I think it was never fully, fully about us. It was more about him.

**Subcategory 2.3B: non-acknowledgement of person beyond athlete.** Finally, participants described feeling that their coaches cared for and acknowledged them as athletes, but in retrospect have recognized instances in which their coaches disregarded their best interest as people for the sake of their athletic success. These included perceptions of coaches not attending

to an injury appropriately, continuing to treat them as a child even as they grew older, and showing no interest in who they were as people. Bailey thought back on her experience, saying

> See the thing is, I still felt like she cared about me *because* she was pushing me. And she wanted me to be successful and to be able to compete so badly – and to compete to the best of my ability. I don't even remember what I was working on at that time, but I was so close to whatever jump it was. And I remember that we did it a ton to the point that I got tendinitis in my ankle and [laugh] that was awful. But I didn't feel like she didn't care about me. I felt like she didn't trust my judgment, but I still felt like she was really, really determined to help me. And looking back like now, its like… Oh… maybe if she… you know [laugh], the better thing would have been to help me rest.

Sarah spoke about how her coach did not adjust his style of coaching or level of control in the relationship as she got older. Speaking specifically about what she perceived to be "mind games," she said, "It makes you more mentally tough in competitions, but it also could mess you up. I think when I got older, it was more and more difficult, because I – I understood it more." She later explained, "He used a sticker system. So – and the older we got the dumber it got. We didn't want the stickers."

Non-acknowledgement of the person beyond the athlete was also perceived when athletes did not feel heard by their coaches, and when they felt their coaches changed expectations without communicating the change. Alex shared an example of not feeling heard when trying to talk to a secondary coach about her unhappiness with training. She said,

> I tried to talk to him and just be like, 'Man, I don't do anything except for go home and go to sleep and come to the rink,' and I was somehow trying to put it together that I just

wasn't happy with the training and everything. And he didn't listen to me or really pursue

what I was trying to say.

Samantha straightforwardly said,

Well, I think he really only saw us as skaters. And he really did not care about the non-

skater stuff. I would never talk about my personal life with him. It was only on a skating

level that wasn't a whole 'as a person' level. He's only seeing you as somebody he can

take to competitions and be like, 'Yeah, this is my skater.' Not as – not as a person.

**Dimension 3: Perceptions of Influence of Coach Regard**

Participants all spoke strongly of the influence they believed their coaches had on them as

athletes and as people, whether it was good or bad. Not one participant perceived their coach's

influence to be neutral. Perceptions of influence of either the components of UPR or its opposites

were – respectively – opposite in nature. Overall, participants described perceived influence of

their coaches' type of regard for them on the coach-athlete relationship itself, on their sport

experience, and on their development of their own sense of positive self regard.

**Category 3.1: Influence on the Coach-Athlete Relationship**

Participants expressed the perception that their coaches' regard for them – positive or

negative, with or without conditions – influenced the state of their relationship with their coach.

This included either motivating them further or hindering their pre-existing motivation, either

able to be vulnerable with their coach or feeling that vulnerability was discouraged by their

coach, either feeling they could trust and rely on their coach or feeling personally hurt by their

coach.

**Subcategory 3.1A: influence of perceived components of UPR.** All seven participants

who primarily perceived UPR from their coaches felt that their coaches' consistent way of being

with them allowed them to fully trust them, to feel safe in taking risks and being open and honest

with their coach, and enhanced their motivation to want to do well for their coach. Cassie,

Bailey, Emma, Anastasia, and Maureen all spoke explicitly about feeling as though they could

trust and rely on their coaches to be there for them and to guide them with their best interest at

heart. For example, Cassie said, "I feel like (my coach's consistent acceptance) made our

relationship stronger, because it showed that she was supporting me all the time, basically. And I

feel like I could always rely on and trust her." Anastasia said,

> She was a very effective coach, because I trusted her at the same time that I respected and
>
> loved her, but on the other hand there was a sense of, not fear, but – she meant business.

Emma also said, "I knew that whatever she did was to benefit me, if not now then down the road.

She always looked out for our best interest, whether it was in skating or not."

> Anastasia indicated that it was empowering to have an authority figure on her side,

saying

> I felt like I had someone on my side. Yes, she was my coach, so that figure of authority,
>
> that figure of respect, but she was also someone who at the end of the day cared very
>
> much for me and, you know, had seen the ups and downs. Someone who I would feel
>
> comfortable crying to or laughing with.

Kelly, when speaking about her coach's normalization of working with a sport psychology

consultant for competition anxiety, said "That made me feel safe." Lynn spoke about being able

to be open with her coach as she said, "Nothing was really off limits as far as talking to him, like

I never felt scared to talk to him, but then as far as skating, he wanted the best from me."

Cassie, Emma, Brittany, and Kelly all spoke of feeling highly motivated within their relationship with their coaches, because they regarded their coaches positively, and therefore wanted to make them proud. Cassie said,

It made me feel good to make people feel proud. I like to work hard and its always so rewarding to have your hard work pay off. And, especially for your coach – you know, they want the best for you and when you make them proud, its such a good feeling. Its amazing, it makes you want to keep doing better.

**Subcategory 3.1B: influence of perceived opposites of UPR.** In contrast, participants who primarily perceived the opposites of UPR felt that it was difficult to trust or be vulnerable with their coaches. Alex, Samantha, Sarah, and Bailey all described times when they felt personally hurt by their coaches. These participants still wanted to please their coaches, but their desire to please their coaches differed from the motivation that participants who perceived the components of UPR described. They conveyed that they felt more of a *need* to please their coach in order to avoid conflict with that coach, rather than a *want* to make their coach proud. As Samantha put it,

I think I was a little scared of him, but I also wanted to please him at the same time, so I don't know. It was a weird relationship… I would never go out of my way to please him or anything, but… I feel like he would say whatever he wanted, but us – like, me as a student – would never say anything in retaliation.

Participants also described ways in which they felt their coaches' conditional or negative regard kept them from showing any vulnerability in the relationship. Samantha said,

He really did not care about, like the non-skater stuff. I would never talk about my personal life with him. I guess the only thing he knew was that I worked at a fast food

place to pay for my skating bills, and he made fun of it. So that discouraged me from

talking about anything else that was going on in my life.

Alex shared that during the time in which her coach became completely disengaged, she felt that

her coach "didn't care" about her "at all." She later stated that, despite having continued the

relationship, she still does not believe she could ever be honest with her former coach about how

that coach made her feel. She said,

I just have to accept it for what it is. And *never* bring it up. Because it has been so painful

to deal with and I don't even know if she realizes how much she affected me. I feel like I

could *never* talk to her about my interpretation of what happened and how upset I am

about it.

Lastly, Sarah and Bailey felt that their coach's occasional getting distracted during

lessons or practices led them to become angry at or lose respect for their coach. For example,

Bailey said,

I would get so frustrated, because she'd be like texting or emailing at the same time, and

I'd be like, 'You didn't even see what I just did,' and then she'd just make me go do it

again, like that was annoying.

**Category 3.2: Influence on Sport Experience**

Participants also expressed a perception of significant influence of their coaches' regard

for them on their sport experience. This included perceptions that their coaches' ways of being

influenced their enjoyment of the sport, love and passion for the sport, perception of personal

control over their own sport journey, likelihood to persist through challenges or hindered

progress, nervousness when performing under pressure, and ability to recover from mistakes. As

Alex said,

Just like a teacher in school, if the teacher helps you find the joy in whatever you're doing, let's say with the math or language, you're going to love that subject and want to learn it more and more. But if they cause you to hate it or to negatively see it then you're going to avoid it for the rest of your life.

**Subcategory 3.2A: influence of perceived components of UPR.** Participants who primarily described components of UPR perceived their coaches to play a large role in helping them to enjoy and love the sport and persist across time and trial within the sport. Anastasia said it matter-of-factly, "I enjoyed the sport *because* she was my coach and, um, she wasn't super mean to me [laugh]. The fact that she was my coach made me enjoy the sport." Cassie made a similar statement, as did Alex regarding the very beginning of her relationship with her coach. Emma and Maureen shared their perceptions that coaches they began working with later in their career helped them re-instill their passion for the sport that they had lost in prior CARs. Emma said, "They were kind of the ones that pulled me to that point, for that year," and later added, "I just, I *love* the sport again. And I think my coaches' kind of saved that for me."

Brittany spoke of the influence she felt her coaches had by emphasizing small successes through various injuries and growth spurts, saying,

Having them to (help me) see those small successes every day and working on simple things kept me in it. And it made me realize that it is my passion and its not just something that I'm going to compete in when I'm young and grow out of.

Anastasia, Lynn, Brittany, and Kelly described feeling a sense of personal control over the decisions they made within their sport experience and how it turned out. This most often related to decisions about competing or training, and whether or not to be involved in other activities outside of skating or pursue other goals besides skating. For example,

In the end, she supported every decision I made, so my decision (to take time off from college to train) didn't impact our relationship in a negative way. In fact, it probably strengthened it. She helped me reach that decision on my own. In no way I felt – or today feel – that it was her idea to take time off.

Finally, all participants who primarily described perceptions of UPR also perceived that coaches' persistent positive regard toward them helped them learn to recover more quickly from mistakes when performing, and – if it did not help them to feel less nervous in competition – it at least did not make their nerves worse. For example, Maureen described how her coach's attitude of "next time will be better" helped her recover more quickly from mistakes. She said,

When I would have a negative performance, because of that mentality, I would move on quicker. I would move forward to the next competition or performance and not be able to (completely) leave the bad one behind, but do so better than I would have originally.

Emma also described how her coach's acceptance of mistakes and challenge to work through them in training helped her ability to re-focus after a mistake, saying,

I would do a jump, fall on it, and at the end of the program, she would say, 'Okay. This is what we need to fix, this is how we're going to do it, and we're going to figure out how to work through this.' So then it wasn't as big of a deal to me if I missed something, which was perfect, because then if I missed a jump at a competition, it wasn't a big deal. I knew how to work around it, it wasn't the end of the world, and I knew that I had a plan to work around it.

**Subcategory 3.2B: influence of perceived opposites of UPR.** In contrast, participants who primarily perceived UPR's opposites felt that their coaches' negative regard, conditional regard, or disregard negatively influenced their enjoyment in sport participation and motivation

to continue or persist. They also described feeling a lack of personal control over their sport experience, and indicated feeling as though their coaches' way of being hindered their progress and made them more nervous in competition. It is important to note that those participants who spoke of losing their sense of enjoyment or motivation to continue in the sport all began the sport with a high level of self-determined motivation. For example, Alex said of the beginning of her career, "I was just skating because I loved it." Yet, she described how she felt her coaches' disengagement upon a drop in performance success influenced her motivation as she said,

> I worked out in my head that I don't like skating anymore. Its not fun, these people aren't fun, they're telling me I'm fat. They're just wagging their finger at me – I'm not getting any positive reinforcement. I didn't want to practice. I didn't want to come in a five in the morning anymore. I didn't want to sacrifice – I didn't want to go to bed at 10:30 anymore, with all the negativity. So I just said *no*. I'm not – doing – this – anymore.

Lynn felt that a pair coach telling her she needed to be a specific weight shifted the course of her skating career, leading to a loss in motivation to continue searching for a new pair partner after her initial long-term partner had retired. She said,

> I think that was kind of the end of my search. I was like, 'I don't want to do this.' And I had never wanted to switch (from pairs), I was always like, 'No, no I want to do pairs.'

Similarly, Samantha said of her early skating days, "I was *obsessed* with skating. I did cyber school for high school, because I wanted to skate the entire afternoon because I loved it so much." Yet she went on to speak about how she felt his action of walking away from the boards during a bad skate influenced her anxiety at competitions saying,

> Honestly, I would say when I was competing at a high level and actually getting coached by him, it was probably the lowest point in my skating career, because I wasn't doing

well in competitions. I think (his attitude) made me perform worse and worse. Going in

with having had a coach with positive reinforcement, and then once I was at that level,

dealing with that negative reinforcement, I think it just kind of made me not like it as

much – the competing part of it. It made me more nervous for competitions, having to

deal with, like, the backlash of his response.

She ultimately stated, "His attitude kind of led me to stop competing."

**Category 3.3: Influence on Development of Self Regard**

Whether it was good or bad, the majority of participants felt as though their own self-evaluations were "like a mirror" of their coaches' evaluations of them. Even when their coaches' evaluations were strictly of their sport performance, some participants explained that their identity was so closely tied to their performance, that any evaluation of their success or worth in figure skating served as an evaluation of their worth as a person. It is also important to note that participants seemed to rely on their coaches' feedback to know whether or not they were being successful in the sport. For example, Bailey said,

When she was really pleased with my performance and things were going really well, I

felt really good about myself and when she was disappointed or just not as thrilled or

telling me that I wasn't trying my best, then I would kind of mirror that and not feel good

about myself, or I'd be more upset with myself.

**Subcategory 3.3A: influence of perceived components of UPR.** Participants who primarily described the components of UPR felt that the perception of UPR from their coaches had an influence on their development of confidence, informed their own self-belief, provided them with a sense of freedom to fail in relationship with their coach and with themselves, and

helped them develop the ability to have an accurate evaluation and positive perception of themselves and their experiences.

Cassie, Brittany, Maureen, Emma, Kelly, and Bailey all spoke directly to their perception that their coaches' ways of being influenced their self-confidence or self-belief. For example, Maureen said,

I think the consistency of the way she was teaching me made me more confident and more positive as an overall person. The combination of all of it just they gave me the confidence to perform better, and therefore it had more of an overall effect. Like, when you're more confident in performing, I think you're just more confident in everything in general. And if you're happier performing then you're just happier in general, because skating is important to you and it's like a big part of your life.

Talking about self-belief, Bailey said,

I knew that I had to believe in myself, that it wasn't just enough for her to believe in me, but her belief really helped me. Its kind of a lonely feeling when you step out on the ice and they close the door, and then its like, 'Okay this is really happening. There's no turning back now' [laugh]. So looking over and seeing how she would have better posture, and just that look in her eyes, like she knew that I could do it – that made me feel like I could. And so her believing in me inspired me to believe in myself.

Further, Maureen, Brittany, Emma, Anastasia, Cassie, and Lynn specifically indicated that their coaches' orientation toward them allowed them to feel a sense of freedom that it was okay to take risks and fail, and that failure was viewed as an opportunity to learn and improve. For example, Brittany said of her coaches after skating less-than-perfect performances,

Knowing that they weren't upset with me or anything made me feel it was okay to fail in those times or succeed in those times. And, there are ways to overcome it or to make it a little better. So having them there to support me regardless of failures or success was very important to me growing as a person, because again in life in general, if I fail or succeed I can always get better next time and I don't have to be so hard on myself. I can grow from it and learn from it and work my way up again.

As another example of feeling free to fail, Anastasia said,

I think knowing that even if I fail there'd be some people around me who love me and support me, because she was always there. When I didn't succeed, when I didn't make Nationals, when I made mistakes, she was still there. She continued to be there throughout my skating career and after, so maybe our relationship has given me trust, really, trust in people – that people will be there no matter what for you, which I think is [pause] a great gift.

All eight participants who felt they experienced UPR from their coaches depicted that they felt their coaches' helped them to learn about themselves and to accurately evaluate themselves while maintaining a positive perception of and acceptance of themselves. Cassie said,

I think they helped me realize that nobody is – I'm not perfect. Even if it's a good skate, there's still something to work on. They always made me very realistic about how my skating was and how I viewed myself. So I think it's really helped knowing that I wasn't going to be *the* best, but I was going to be *my* best and that's all that really mattered.

In addition, Emma spoke of feeling as though her coach's knowing her helped her learn to know herself better. She said,

Skating has taught me the discipline to be patient and work through issues and problem-

solve, and a lot of that was my coach. Her knowing how to motivate me taught me a lot

about myself as well, because I learned that I'm a lot tougher than I thought I was, and

things that bothered me before don't bother me now. And the way that she taught me how

to handle situations and push yourself teaches you a lot about yourself, too.

As a final example, Kelly spoke of initially feeling like something was wrong with her for

"needing" to work with a sport psychologist, but described how her coaches normalized this for

her, helping her to *not* feel like, "just lesser of a person" and to accept herself. She said,

She made me feel worthy because she recognized that everybody had nerves and

everybody had a difficult time competing, and she didn't make me feel all alone in that.

And, like, I had started seeing a sports psychologist to try and help myself with this, and

she was really supportive of that. Like, very – like, 'This isn't weird. Like, you don't have

problems, this is very much normal. This is for you to learn more about yourself and

learn techniques to help.' But just the support through that in and of itself made me feel

really valued and really important. Because it was tough – like, that's such a vulnerable

place to be when you start talking about that kind of stuff, and so, just how she handled

that whole situation was really helpful.

**Subcategory 3.3B: influence of perceived opposites of UPR.** In contrast, participants

who primarily perceived the opposites of UPR also indicated that their coaches' regard for them

lowered their confidence, hindered their ability to be vulnerable or take risks, made them feel

"less than," led them to question or doubt themselves, and in some cases contributed to personal

struggles that have lasted through adulthood.

Alex, Samantha, Emma, and Lynn all spoke directly about feeling as though coaches'

conditionality, negative regard, or disregard contributed to lowered self-confidence (both Emma

and Lynn referring to one of the two coaches they discussed). As an example, Emma said,

> With that style of coaching, it was a really unhealthy relationship. He would make me cry
>
> at times in my lessons. And, its something that kind of lingers with you and it affects
>
> your confidence through the year… And I think through all of my skating career, the
>
> point when he refused to continue working with me started me doubting myself.

Alex also emphasized her coaches' role in her self evaluation of her sport success, saying of her

coach's disregard for her, "Oh man, I think it had a huge impact on my confidence." She went on

to say,

> When those other skaters got better and she was more focused on them than me, and
>
> therefore I wasn't getting a lot of attention from her, then I was kind of not giving myself
>
> attention, which doesn't really make sense, but it was more like [pause] Mm. I just felt
>
> really unworthy. And skating was a huge part of my identity, so then when I wasn't able
>
> to perform the way that she would have hoped I would perform, I didn't know who I was
>
> or what I was doing or what I was worth, and it was such a scary time.

Samantha stated that her coach's insults and shaming comments "basically made me feel

like I was less of a person than him." She described feeling that, because she was not

comfortable being vulnerable or open with her coach, she was not able to fully express herself on

the ice the way she would have wanted to. She said, "I think maybe (without him), I would have

been able to be more confident, and would have been able to have my own expression on the

ice." Lynn also conveyed feeling shame when a pair coach gave her a specific weight that "all

elite pair skaters" should maintain. She said, "That was definitely a low point, and at a point where you already feel pretty low (in high school)."

Sarah emphasized feeling as though her coach's inconsistent regard and personal "mind games" influenced self-doubt and confusion. She said, "The mind games were really tough. I think in general that messed up a lot of skaters, not just myself… in questioning a lot of things." She later described what she felt to be the influence of her coach's inconsistent regard for her.

That's why I was such a mess for a while [laugh]. I think. Because nothing was going right with my competitive career. And so then, it was just affecting me mentally, physically, my body was growing and I didn't know what to do.

Finally, both Samantha and Alex indicated feeling as though their coaches' ways of being with them lent to distress they still experience today. Samantha said, "I think its turned me off to competing, and I think that it makes me a little bit more self conscious when it does come to like anything that involves competition," and Alex said, "It definitely had an impact on me as a person and on struggles that I have as an adult."

## Dimension 4: Coach Regard and Mediating Factors

No matter what type of coach regard was perceived by participants, they clearly expressed outside factors that they perceived to have either alleviated or enhanced the influence they felt their coaches had on them. These factors included implicit cultural conditions, parental regard and involvement, personal characteristics, and the retrospective perception.

**Category 4.1: Implicit Cultural Conditions**

Participants described a sense of implicit conditions within their surrounding contexts, that emerged as too important not to address in relation to the research questions. Implicit conditions were described as what felt like underlying specific requirements, in a sense, that

participants perceived to be necessary in order to be accepted and valued within a culture or environment. The contexts in which conditions of worth were primarily perceived for these participants included figure skating culture and Western adolescent culture, with some conflicting tensions between the conditions of each.

**Subcategory 4.1A: conditions of worth in figure skating culture.** Participants described an underlying sense that the figure skating culture would only value or accept them to continue participation or achieve success under certain conditions, regardless of how their coach worked within the culture. These implicit conditions were perceived to be: working with a well-renowned coach, maintaining a thin body shape, appearing to be perfect in both their look and athletic performance, achieving success by a young age, and prioritizing skating over education.

Anastasia labeled it "the switching of the coaches" as she described feeling pressure to switch to a more well-renowned coach. Samantha also felt pressure to switch to the coach she primarily spoke about, saying, "I heard from other people, 'You have so much potential, you should go down and work with this coach, because he's going to be able to take you to Nationals.'" Other participants lived in areas where elite-level coaches and training facilities were more easily accessible, and three participants' families moved to such areas in order to work with a certain coach or at a certain facility.

Additionally, while there was not a single question in the interview guide related to body image or problems related to eating, eight out of 11 participants brought this up as an "issue" in one way or another. Kelly and Sarah noted seeing peers develop eating disorders. Lynn and Anastasia spoke of an underlying pressure to be "fit" and "in a certain shape." Alex stated,

It all goes back to confidence, but you're changing so much and this sport is – I'm sure

all sports, actually, but my experience is in figure skating. Its hard for girls. Because once

you hit 14, your body changes – that's normal, that's healthy, that's natural, right? But everything in skating doesn't support that. Girls are supposed to be too skinny, their bodies are not supposed to change. And its so wrong not to accept that for a child going through that. It doesn't matter what level they're at or what nationals they've been to.

Yet, the "whole package" that some participants felt was required of them as figure skaters went beyond being thin. It involved having a "more sparkly outfit," as Anastasia said her coach thought she should have, having to "do your makeup like this" as Maureen said her coach told her, knowing how to "play the game right" as Sarah said about the judging system, skating a "clean program" – free from mistakes – as many participants spoke about, and essentially maintaining an image of feminine perfection. Sarah emphasized the condition of perfection as she said, "You're not perfect, but you have to be perfect. Nobody's perfect, but that's what they want," referring to those in power in figure skating culture – officials, judges, and coaches.

Finally, participants described perceptions of pressure to achieve success at an early age and prioritize skating over standard education. This pressure was not derived specifically from their coaches or parents, but seemed to be implicitly present. For example, Lynn described a perceived pattern that some male pair partners would get a new pre-adolescent female partner every year. She appreciated the fact that she felt valued by her coach in her pair partnership because her coach established a sense of long-term commitment. She laughed as she said, "I think instilling that definitely made me feel appreciated and that I wasn't just going to be swapped out for a younger me." Further, seven participants (including those who perceived UPR and those who perceived UPR's opposites from their coaches) spoke of at least one point in their career when they either felt they had to choose between skating and going to high school or college full-time, or their parents or coaches chose for them. For example, Sarah said,

Skating was my main focus, *then* school. I finished everything, but… it was just school. It was just school to me. So (retirement from skating) was difficult. It was just kind of a, 'What are you going to do with your life?' Basically. And that was never an option before, it was only one option, which was skating.

**Subcategory 4.1B: conditions of "normalcy" as a North American adolescent.**

Participants described a sense of tension between the "need" to value education in their world outside of skating and the "need" to prioritizing skating within the figure skating culture. For example, Anastasia and Kelly spoke of the tension between skating at an elite level and living a "normal" college life. Anastasia said,

I had to not do social things on weekends or evenings like I wanted to, and it kind of challenged my resolve for what I wanted. Did I want to be a skater? Did I want to be this normal quote-unquote college kid? Were the two compatible? I think that was difficult because a lot of culture around skating said that it wasn't compatible. If you're an athlete, you're an athlete. And if you go to college, you do skating just for fun. And it was very difficult to find other people in my situation where it was compatible, and they were going to school full-time – a real student living in the dorms, and at the same time being competitive at the National and International level.

Brittany, Lynn, Maureen and Sarah spoke of tensions between skating competitively and having a "normal" high school experience, or having to make tough decisions between one or the other. Lynn said,

I had a few rebellion phases. I just felt, because there weren't a lot of other skaters at my school I felt like I was missing the extracurricular, even though skating was kind of like an extracurricular. So, especially when I learned to drive I would hang out with my

friends and be late for practice, and… you can tell – your skating suffers when you start

to do that stuff.

Brittany felt that her coaches helped her navigate decisions about a friend who had a "negative

influence" on her in high school. She emphasized the tension of *being* a competitive athlete with

friends who were not. In describing her friend, she said "She hung out with – not the wrong

crowd – but not the crowd that competitive athletes should be with." Lastly, Sarah indicated that

the expectations of being an elite athlete did not allow for typical adolescent risk-taking

behaviors, saying

> There's no partying, there's no drinking, there's drug testing. You had to be smart about
>
> what you ate and what you used. And that's a lot for us to take in. Thankfully my mom
>
> helped a lot... and we grew up – we had to grow up very fast.

> **Subcategory 4.1C: coach regard and cultural conditions.** Participants indicated that

the implicit conditions they felt within sport and adolescent culture did influence their sport

experience or development, and played a role how their coaches influenced them. In particular,

participants who perceived UPR from their coaches described how their coaches helped them

navigate cultural conditions while also allowing them the autonomy to make their own choices.

For example, Brittany's coaches helped her navigate the situation with her friend who had

become a "bad influence." She said,

> (My coaches) would just try to point out differences in what she was doing and what I
>
> should be doing, or would probably be doing on my own without her influence. And they
>
> wouldn't – again, they wouldn't steer me in the direction of not spending time with her,
>
> but they wanted me to acknowledge that there were differences there so that I could make
>
> my own decision as an adult. And whatever decision I made was going to affect my

training the next day. If I was going to go out with her at night, then I was going to be

tired at training the next day and not have a great session.

In a different way, Anastasia spoke of her coach helping her navigate the pressure to go to

college with her desire to continue competitive skating at an elite level.

I think to her it was more, 'Why don't you give skating a chance, because it does have

more of a deadline.' [laughs] And, you know, she wasn't saying 'Don't go (to college) at

all,' it was, 'Maybe see what you can do.' And she did help me come up with that

decision to take a break from school. I think – slightly – I felt like she was pushing

skating, obviously, [laughs] she's my skating coach. But I needed her to push skating,

because there were plenty of people pushing education.

In contrast, participants who perceived conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard

from their coaches indicated that their coaches seemed to be guided by the pressure to produce

athletes who met those conditions. In particular, Kelly, Sarah, and Alex all spoke of a sense of

increased pressure on both themselves and their coaches as they moved up in the competitive

ranks. Alex said, "As you get up in the rank and the pressure gets on, you have the harder tricks

and you have to train more, there's just more pressure and its harder for everyone involved."

Sarah described how she felt the pressure from all angles influenced her focus in competition.

The more difficult, higher pressure things got, the harder it got for me to handle, I think.

And I remember my second season, I would almost shake. And my coach was like, 'Are

you okay?' Like, 'Yeah. I'm just… I'm not nervous, but I am nervous.' I don't really

even know what it was, but I did not skate well – like *at all* – which was difficult because

I loved competing, I loved being the only person out there, I loved skating to programs,

and just that whole season was a mess. I would land something, like a gorgeous triple toe-

triple toe and then the next jump that I'd been doing for years, I would fall half-turn cheated. And it was just the most bizarre thing, going in and out of focus. It never made sense to me. But I think it was the pressure and… things were happening with my coach, like his pressures, and how he was handling me and the surrounding people and so I think pressure had a lot to do with it.

**Category 4.2: Parental Regard and Involvement**

All 11 participants noted that they believed their parents' regard and involvement were important factors in their relationships with their coaches, and the extent to which they perceived their coaches' influenced them. Overall, descriptions of perceived parent regard, level of parent involvement in their sport experience, and whether that involvement was good or bad was a bit different for each participant. However, it seemed clear that participants believed their parents had an influence, no matter what that influence was. Maureen summed it up to say, "A lot of it was directed by my parents, I would say, because you're still a kid, really."

**Subcategory 4.2A: parent regard.** Participants either indicated a perception of conditional regard from their parents or alluded to having a strong support system at home, as Kelly laughed as she said "My parents, man, they were great. They worked well. I think they did a good job." In contrast, Sarah and Bailey spoke of their perceptions of conditional regard from their moms, calling them "typical" or "crazy" skating moms. Sarah described her experience of negative regard, at times both from her mom and her coach. She said,

I would get (criticism) from my mom – my mom was kind of a crazy skating mom. I love her, but I would have it from everybody. All the criticism and not all the support sometimes. So I think that was the hardest part – finding the support. I mean, there was

always support, but you hear three negatives and one positive, one's going to outweigh

the other.

In addition, participants whose parents were involved to any extent indicated feeling as though

their parents' regard for their coaches sometimes influenced the coach-athlete relationship. Kelly

described her parents general positive regard toward her coach, saying

My parents never really put pressure on my coach, and if I didn't do well it was always –

it was great – because it was always Kelly. It was never my coach's fault. so I think my

coach never felt the pressure from my parents like, 'Well, why didn't Kelly do well?'

In contrast, Maureen shared an instance of negative regard from her dad to her coach at a time

when she said she skated "mediocre" at a competition. She said,

I was never aware of this until much later, but apparently after that my dad was not

happy. He expected better results I guess, I don't know. And so he went to the lobby and

starting screaming at her in the lobby and I was like off somewhere off with my mom.

But they fought back and forth right there in the lobby. But she – my dad was the one

being irrational, 'She should be doing better. Blah blah blah.'

Lastly, some participants said their parents supported the notion of putting skating before

everything else, including education, as Sarah said, "My mom and dad never said, 'You have to

go to college right away, you have to do this.' They were like, 'You can do it on your own

time,'" Conversely, other participants spoke of their parents making strong performance in

school a condition for the opportunity to skate. Kelly said,

(My coach) knew that school was a big priority for me and for my family. Like, that was

more important than skating. My dad made that very clear. My freshman year of high

school I wasn't allowed to skate for three weeks because I got a really bad grade. And

that was made very clear to my coach and to me that that was the way it would be – that

school was priority and skating came after.

**Subcategory 4.2B: parent involvement.** Participants also felt that their parents'

involvement within the coach-athlete relationship influenced the relationship itself and their

coaches' influence on them. Interestingly, all seven participants who primarily perceived UPR

from their coaches also believed that their parents maintained a supportive and healthy amount of

involvement. They described their parents speaking with their coaches regularly and setting

guidelines or boundaries with the coach without being perceived as overly involved or

overstepping their roles as parents. For example, Maureen said,

> Again I think, indirectly, my parents had a lot to do with it. You know, when you're so
>
> young they have to be so involved, but somehow they managed to keep everything
>
> together to have the conversations (with my coach), so that – by the time the information
>
> got to me – it was all filtered so that I was [pause] in a good place, I guess.

Lynn spoke about how she felt supported by her parents' and her coach's team effort, saying

> I definitely lucked out with that, you know, my parents respected my coach and they
>
> worked together with me. So there was never any bad communication about either party.
>
> It was all like a team effort, and my parents fully supported his decisions towards
>
> coaching and he supported things my parents would say, like 'We need to do this,' or
>
> 'We can't do this, because its just too much.'

Meanwhile, the four participants who primarily perceived the opposites of UPR from

their coaches or a mix of both either felt that their parents were too involved or noted that their

parents were not very involved at all. As an example of less involvement, Alex shared how her

parents were not strongly involved in her skating at the time when it felt as though her coach was

disregarding her. She said, "My parents – I don't really know how this plays into it, but they started getting a divorce like while this was all going on (with my coach and skating career), so they weren't really present emotionally, or even physically."

In a contrasting example of too much involvement, Bailey shared that she did not have a good relationship with her "typical skating mom." She shared a time at which it felt as though both her mom and her coach were siding with each other in their opinions about her skating career. She said,

After one of my worst competitions, my coach came over to my house, and we sat at my kitchen table and it was just her and my mom telling me how I basically set myself up for that failure, and how everything I did was wrong. And that there needed to be so many changes, and all this. And it felt like, at that point, I had never seen my coach so much like my mom. It was hard to get over that.

**Subcategory 4.2C: coach regard and parent regard.** Most participants had a difficult time isolating the influence of their coach with that of their parents. It is important to note that ten of eleven participants referred to their coach as a second parent or grandparent. One participant felt so strongly about her coach's role as a parent figure that she called her coach a "surrogate mother." Anastasia – the only participant who did not refer to her coach as a parent, grandparent, or "like a parent," said

I mean, I would never call my coach my second mother, because my mom is, like, my mom – number one, you know? But from the age of seven to 20 – very formative years – my coach saw me every day. So, *of course* she was a very big part of my life as a role model.

Participants seemed to describe an interaction of parent and coach influence in one of three scenarios: (1) both were perceived to have provided UPR and this enhanced positive influence, (2) only one was perceived to have provided UPR and this counteracted the influence of the other's opposite orientation, or (3) both were perceived to have exercised conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard and this enhanced negative influence. Regardless, all participants indicated that their coach's influence on them was often as great, if not greater, than that of their parents.

Cassie, Maureen, Brittany, Emma, Lynn, and Kelly described scenario one, where they perceived UPR from both coaches and parents and described experiencing a compounding positive influence on their lives and sport experience. For example, Kelly said, "So, my coaches and my parents, man, they were great. They worked well. [laugh] I think they did a good job."

Anastasia described scenario two, where it felt as though the perception of UPR from her coach counteracted the conditionality of her parents. She said,

I was always stricter on myself than (my coach) was. Because of my family's influence, so its kind of a nice balance, you know. My parents were very strict and my coach was very supportive, but also strict. So we met in the middle… But perhaps she encouraged me not be as modest – I don't know, what's the opposite of modest? Like, more vocal about my successes… Proud. That's the word. So in that regard, (she helped me) not be scared to be proud, not worried that it would come off as haughty.

Alex provided an example of scenario three, where she felt the experience of disregard from her parents may have increased the negative influence from the experience of disregard from her coach. She said,

It makes it a little bit more complicated because my life at home was a little bit… not

whole. There was a lot of dysfunction going to at home… (my parents) started getting a

divorce as all this was going on (with my coach), so they weren't really present

emotionally or even physically. Again, I was like Alice through the rabbit hole.

Bailey and Sarah also described scenario three, with the compounding influence of both mom

and coach adhering to the cultural condition of being thin. For example, Bailey said,

I had a lot of, uh, problems, like my mom and I aren't super close… And there was like a

lot of issues with, like, nutrition ideas and food and my mom was like – I had an eating

disorder – and my mom was super difficult with that, and my coach wasn't really

understanding of that… she'd just be like, 'Well, you know your mom wants you to be

the best, and if that means, you know, being in the best shape possible, that's what that

means.' And so that was a really rough time.

**Category 4.3: Personal Characteristics**

Finally, participants also felt that their own personal characteristics – including personal

tendencies and stage of development – each influenced the extent and ways in which they

believed their coaches' regard influenced their sport experience and development.

**Subcategory 4.3A: coach regard and athlete tendencies.** Some participants spoke

about feeling as though characteristics or tendencies they already had mediated their coaches'

influence on them. These most often included tendencies to be an anxious or nervous person or

competitor, to have either generally low self-confidence or a generally positive perception of

self, and to have perfectionist or "people-pleaser" tendencies. For example, both Anastasia and

Kelly perceived themselves to be a "nervous competitor" and explained a similar perception that,

while experiencing UPR from their coach may not have completely diminished their anxiety, it certainly did not make it worse. For example, Anastasia said,

> I think I performed well, but I could've [laughs] performed better. But, I don't think that was – that was *despite* all the love and support she gave me. There was still – I thought – a mental block on performance. But who knows – if I would not have had that support from her – how bad I could have, like how much worse it would have been.

In addition, Kelly spoke of having a generally positive self-concept to where her sense of self worth was not really an issue in her relationship with her coach. She said,

> (My coaches and I) didn't need to talk about self-perception or worth because they were super supportive and, I'm not a very self-deprecating individual anyways. So I didn't take my skating issues out on myself.

In contrast, Bailey spoke of having generally low self confidence and stood by her perception that her coach's belief in her helped carry her through some of her personal difficulties. She said, "I mean, at that point I did not have a lot of self confidence," but conveyed that her coach's belief in her did help her feel like she was "worth something."

Alex suggested that her own perfectionist tendencies influenced or enhanced her perception of her coaches' conditional regard for her. She said,

> I'm a big perfectionist, and I would get really down on myself for not being perfect. And I think that's a lot of the reasons why my coach acted the way she did, ignoring me when I would cry because I wasn't being perfect or whatever.

**Subcategory 4.3B: coach regard and stage of development.** All participants conveyed the perception being a teenager in their relationships with adult coaches had an influence on the relationship. For some, this merely contributed to "teenage angst" and tension at times, as would

be in a parent-child relationship through adolescence. For others, the non-acceptance of their growth by their coaches and the skating world was detrimental.

All participants who perceived UPR from their coaches suggested that their coaches played such a big role in their lives *because* the relationship occurred through adolescence, as Anastasia said, through "very formative years." Anastasia, Maureen, Brittany, Lynn, and Kelly also acknowledged that some strife or conflict is normal in such a close relationship – especially because they were teenagers – but still described a sense of safety and acceptance in the coach-athlete relationship amidst the "teenager mindset." For example, Anastasia said,

> Of course there were times of strife, times of conflict, times of misunderstanding. But, as with a parent or guardian or mentor, this is inevitable in such a huge period of time when you're changing so much and growing as a person.

In addition, Emma and Maureen both spoke about coaches with whom they did not start working with until they were teenagers. They indicated a sense of being able to say what they needed or take more control of the situation because they were older, and had both come from negative coaching situations in which they learned what they did not want. Maureen said,

> I was older by then, I was 15- or 16-years-old and I just knew more of like who I was and what I wanted, verses when I was younger. So I think that there's a difference when you're a little bit older and you switch to somebody new. You can say, 'Okay, well this is what wasn't working and this is what I want now.'

In contrast, all participants who perceived the opposites of UPR from their coaches described feeling like they were still treated like children as they grew up. For example, Samantha described the few times she did feel accepted and regarded positively by her coach by saying, "Generally, (I knew he accepted me) when he would talk to me like an adult. Because

being 15- and 16-years-old, I think that's something you strive for," while she felt disregarded the majority of the time, "when he would talk to me like an eight-year-old." Similarly, Sarah said, "I think he liked that sense of control… But that's not how it works. Not with girls going through puberty." Finally, Alex summed up the experience of growing into an adult in the sport context, saying

> I think there is something about the transition from when you are… lets say 10-15.
> There's a lot of maturing going on. When you're 10, you really just do what you're told.
> Especially as an athlete – *especially* as an elite athlete. You have to go here, you have to eat this, you have to train this, you have to do this many repetitions. But then when you mature as an adult, you start having thoughts and emotions, and I really think its important to have somebody to talk to about that. And have guidance. Because, you didn't have those thoughts and emotions before. So its like this whole other aspect that you have to bring to the sport. And to your character. If you don't figure out how to navigate that whole new person you become – *an adult* – if you don't incorporate that (into your sport experience), then you're not going to make it.

### Dimension 5: Coach Regard and Use of Power

The final dimension represents a unique and strong power differential between coach and athlete that was evident within athlete perceptions, and the perceived reciprocal influence of regard and power on each other. While a coach's perceived power is palpable in previous dimensions by the ways in which participants felt their coaches influenced them, power as it relates to coaches' ways of being with their athletes was deemed too important not to explicitly address. Specifically, whether participants perceived their coaches to maintain an orientation of UPR or not seemed connected to the ways in which they perceived their coaches to utilize the

position of power. This was evidenced by participants' accounts of power within the coach-athlete relationship, and by participants' common perception of having *needs* that they could not necessarily fulfill for themselves as youth in an intense sport environment.

**Category 5.1: Evidence of a Power Differential**

Participants described significant ways in which they believed their coaches were in a powerful position and held a powerful influence over their lives. Three particular ways in which participants indicated they held less power included the perception of *closeness* in their relationship with their coach, their *desire for sport success* (and therefore limited options of coaches who could help them achieve sport success), and *evaluation based on comparison*, to where participants felt they assessed whether their situation was good or bad by comparing it to other coach-athlete relationships they saw in the skating environment.

**Subcategory 5.1A: the power of a "close" relationship.** All participants except those who had an experience of unconditional negative regard (Emma and Samantha) or eventual unconditional disregard (Alex), maintained a perception of closeness with their coaches, even when they perceived their coaches to exercise conditional regard. Closeness, from retrospective perceptions, was not always perceived to be a good thing. For instance, Bailey indicated that she felt it would have been difficult to leave the relationship with her coach (even at times when she wanted to) because the were so close. She said,

It was hard because we were close and I couldn't imagine how it would be, transitioning to different coaches because I had become so accustomed to her style. And so that in itself was just challenging to leaver her because she was like another mom figure to me, I guess. It – that was hard. There were many times when I thought about leaving.

In addition, closeness at the start of Alex's relationship with her coach seemed to enhance the influence Alex felt her coach had on her once she felt her coach was disregarding her. She said,

> With my age and what was going on with my family stuff at home and with how close we had gotten, she *really* misread how much of an impact she had on me, and how much she was affecting me.

Participants also felt that the closeness they sensed with their coaches lent to their justifying or forgiving their coaches' negative actions, even when they felt their coaches would not offer the same forgiveness of their mistakes or failures as athletes. For example, Sarah said,

> I love them. No matter what. At the end of the day I still love them. I mean I still have a relationship with all of them to this day. Some better than the others. No matter what they're… what we've been through, I've known them since I was nine-years-old. I mean I wouldn't be anywhere without them. Through the good or the bad. And obviously the worse times are more recent than the good ones. But [pause] they're human, we're human. That's all.

In a similar manner, Alex said "We got so close. So its – she's like a family member. And family members… sometimes they do uncool things." Also recognizing that her coaches were human, Alex paused the interview as she said, "I feel, especially within this conversation, that my coach was just being human. With what she was doing."

**Subcategory 5.1B: the power of sport success.** Participants all emphasized their *own* desires for sport success. Thus, they described being willing to follow what their coaches told them if they knew and trusted their coaches' *sport expertise*, regardless of whether their coaches truly cared for their best interest or not. In this way, it was difficult for participants to distinguish between coach guidance and coach control. Participants indicated being able to sense or know

that their coaches truly did put their best interest first or not. Those who primarily perceived UPR conveyed that they felt they were autonomously choosing to follow their coaches' direction, and could trust their coaches' expertise without feeling controlled. For example, Maureen said of her coach,

> She could be controlling, per say. She'd be like, 'I want you to do your hair this way or your makeup this way.' And in training, 'I want you to do a 15-minute off ice warmup and you're going to do this, this and this, and then we're going to get on the ice and do this, this, and this.' And as a teenager, I would be like, 'Well, what if I don't want to do that?' But I didn't feel controlled. Really, I never felt that. when it came to skating, I knew that she knew what she was doing and that if I listened to her and followed what she said, then I would improve.

However, participants who perceived UPR's opposites expressed not really knowing whether their coach put their best interest first. Yet they *still* indicated that they were willing to adhere to coach attempts of control – that did feel like control – if they believed that coach had the sport expertise to take them to the top, and their options of coaches who had the appropriate sport expertise were viewed as limited. For example, Sarah said,

> It was difficult, because we had success. So its a love-hate relationship with him. I still don't speak to him very much. He still gets under my skin. He still – uh – the mind games were really tough… Uh. Aye. He's a very… a difficult person. But great technician and he knows what he's doing in the sport, so that's why its difficult.

In addition, Samantha switched to her coach because he was known for producing successful skaters. She indicated that his emphasis on "choosing" to work with her kept her in the unhealthy relationship. She said,

He always made it a big deal that he only coached three skaters. Because he was already – he made it very clear that he didn't need the money to coach. And he only coached three girls, because like, 'These are the girls that I want to coach. They have the most potential.' So in that way, it was the exclusivity of it – that I think kept me there. That kind of made me feel like he did care about me. Because the fact that he was coaching me… he made it seem *so*, like, special.

**Subcategory 5.1C: the power of comparison.** Finally, participants' perceptions of their relationships with their coaches, and whether it was a good or bad relationship, were often determined by comparisons with other coaches' sport. Thus, they recognized it could be possible that their positive perceptions were enhanced because of the negative situations they observed around them at their own or other training facilities. For example, Kelly said,

I saw a lot of tension in my rink – and frustration, ice anger, and – not everybody had the best temperament, let's leave it like that. So, relative to them, I thought my coach and I had a fantastic relationship [laugh].

Lynn also said, "I just – there's some horror stories where like, your coach wouldn't be standing at the boards when you came back from a program."

Despite the fact that the majority of participants did speak about a relationship which they perceived to be positive, Anastasia, Maureen, Lynn, and Kelly all shared the perception that they were likely one of few who actually did have a positive experience with their coach. For example, Kelly said she felt "very lucky" to have the relationships she did, and Maureen laughed as she said, "I'm probably in the rare set of people that only have positive things to say."

**Category 5.2: Power as an Opportunity**

Finally, all participants alluded to their inherent vulnerability as children in a relationship with an adult coach as they described what they felt they needed as youth athletes. In this way, a coach's position of power could be considered an opportunity to provide for athlete needs. Those participants who perceived UPR from their coaches suggested that their coaches met specific needs for them. Yet, participants who experienced the opposites of UPR also expressed similar needs in the form of stating that they "wished" their coach had done certain things differently. Specific needs that participants repeatedly expressed included (1) the need for their coaches to have *both sport competence and interpersonal competence*, (2) the need for *positive reinforcement*, (3) the need for *competitive focus, not comparative attention*, and (4) the need for *someone to rely on* in navigating sport and life.

**Subcategory 5.2A: need for coaches with both sport and interpersonal competence.** While participants expressed strong appreciation for being able to trust their coaches' sport expertise, they also expressed a strong need for their coaches to provide genuine relational care for them as people. All seven participants who primarily perceived UPR from their coaches emphasized their appreciation for their coaches' interpersonal skills. For example, Brittany spoke of how she felt her coaches met this need, saying, "Having them as coaches and knowing that they had all the knowledge and love and support that, as skaters – we need it – they helped me stay in the sport for so long." In contract, Sarah spoke of wishing that her coach had met this need, saying "I wish he took a little more time for himself to figure out how to… kind of… coach… in more specific ways toward each personality." Samantha also said, "I feel like, at the age of 15, a coach should be seeing his skater as a person, someone to teach life lessons to."

Further, Bailey spoke of how she felt her coach developed interpersonal skills once she had children of her own. She said,

I worked with her before she was pregnant with her first kid and then she had two kids who are actually in middle school now. And watching her go through that – becoming a parent and caring about her kids and realizing that there is more to life than skating herself and for her kids who didn't skate… that really helped her become more understanding, and realize that its not weird to value family time and important family events, and to not necessarily put skating first in every single aspect. So that was a huge, huge thing for me that I noticed.

**Subcategory 5.2B: need for positive reinforcement.** Every single participant spoke of either the benefit of or need for positive reinforcement from their coaches – those who perceived UPR described the benefit, while those who perceived the opposites described the need. Specifically, positive reinforcement was understood as coaches finding and stating *something* positive about what they had just done while also finding and stating ways to improve, regardless of how good or bad the skill or performance was. As Bailey put it, "Even in defeat there was something to learn, so that was nice." Providing another example, Maureen said,

I needed to *hear* that I was doing good. Or if if wasn't good, how was I going to make it good? And my coach was really good at phrasing things well. After I was done competing and she was essentially teaching me how to coach, she would say, 'Okay, well I use the *sandwich* method,' where you tell a kid that they've done something good, and then you say, 'But this could be better,' and then you end with something positive. So, positive-negative-positive. And I think that's what she did with me.

In contrast, Sarah spoke of how she felt that positive reinforcement declined overall as she got higher in the ranks, indicating that this was the time at which she felt she needed it the most. She said,

I think if my coach did more reassurance and more positive things… it would be better. Its hard to say that, because you don't know until… you learn it. But I mean some days I would work best if you yelled at me and then I would get mad and then fuel that as energy. But, then some days if you yell at me then I'm just going to crumble. And those are the days that you need to be positive. And I think once we got higher in the competitive rankings, I think you get more and more judgment and you just get nit-picked more. So I think when that happens, that's where the encouragement needs to come it, because you get so negative – you get a lot of negative self-talk – and I think encouragement would have worked more so in some situations.

As a final example, Samantha indicated that the positive reinforcement from a prior coach is what truly motivated her to want to improve. She said,

Looking back on it now, that positive reinforcement (from a previous coach) was what kept me going… well, I think I would've kept going no matter what because I loved it so much – but that's what motivated me to want to do better. And that's – I mean, that's what every coach should be doing.

**Subcategory 5.3C: need for competitive focus, not comparative attention.**
Participants distinguished between what felt like competitive and comparative energy, and spoke of the perceived need for their coaches to provide them with attention and focus that communicated investment in helping them be able to compete with the best. This was very

different from the hierarchical, comparative offering of attention that was perceived by every participant who experienced an opposite of UPR. For example, Samantha said,

> Having competition and being around competitive people, I think, isn't necessarily bad. Its nice to be around people that are motivated, too. But pitting them against each other is probably not the way to do it.

Bailey indicated that her coach met her need to not be compared to others, saying "Well, she wouldn't compare me with anyone else. And I think that was – that was key." Sarah felt it would have helped for her coach to have fewer students to allow him to focus more attention on each person, "I wished he had fewer students to focus on the higher level ones. I think that would have benefitted him in the long run, with his relationships with us."

Participants indicated sensing competitive, invested focus and attention from their coaches when they actually watched the skill that they asked them to do. For example, Brittany said, "I felt like I was the only one they would be paying attention to during my lessons. They wanted to make sure you were getting the most out of your time with them." Yet this feeling was diminished when participants described their coaches' getting distracted by other skaters or their smart phones. Lynn summed up this feeling to say, "You know, it's the worst thing when you go do something and they weren't even watching." Bailey also shared, "She'd be texting or emailing as I went to do a jump and I'd be like, 'Okay, you didn't even see what I just did,' and then she'd just make me go do it again. *That* was annoying."

**Subcategory 5.3D: need for someone to rely on in navigating sport and life.** Finally, participants recognized the challenges of navigating their lives in the sport of figure skating, and suggested that they needed to be able to rely on their coaches to guide them in a way that would be beneficial. For example, Kelly said,

You need somebody to rely on in the skating world that isn't your parents, that isn't your friends at school, or the skaters at the rink. And I think that's your coach, and I think they define so much about you and your experience with the sport.

In fact, all seven participants who primarily experienced UPR from their coaches felt that one of the most important influences of the perception of UPR was trust in their coaches to guide them in both sport and life. For example, Brittany said,

They were just people that I could trust or I could go to and even if I didn't want to talk about something, they would always have life lessons or stories of things they've learned over the years and little tricks for getting through life [laugh].

In contrast, Alex suggested that *not* having a coach who guided her through similar times ultimately led her to retire from competition. She said,

But if I had had somebody that was there to help – like a friend, maybe a more mature friend or something, or my coach! I don't know. Then maybe I wouldn't have chosen retirement, maybe I would've been like, 'Oh okay, I just need to eat healthier, and maybe socialize once a week.' There was just all this imbalance that I was trying to figure out.

Finally, participants spoke of their coaches guiding them by example, indicating that it was important to be able to rely on their coaches to be congruent in their actions and words. As Sarah said, "I think he did care. He always cared at the end of the day, but sometimes the actions were not – his actions didn't feel like he cared, sometimes." She went on to say that, while he claimed to care for everyone equally, "He cared about this other person more. And if that person wasn't there than he wouldn't be around as much. So, I mean his actions spoke louder than what he was saying." In a different manner, Emma spoke of learning by watching her coaches' way of being, and wanting to emulate that in her own life. She said,

She's a great person to learn from. She's a great teacher, great coach. And how she

handled situations and how people responded to her is something that you would want to

bring into your own life. I learned a lot of valuable life lessons that I could appreciate

from her. Whether it be knowing when to stand up for myself or knowing when to kind of

back off, there was always something she was teaching me every day. If she wasn't

saying it to me, I was watching how she was responding to different situations and that

was a lesson in itself.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**DISCUSSION and IMPLICATIONS**

In the following chapter, I summarize major findings according to the five dimensions and connect findings to literature within the areas of both person-centered theory and coach-athlete relationships. I then offer practical implications for coaches and coach education. Finally, I present limitations to the study and discuss implications for future research.

**Major Findings and Connection to the Literature**

Major findings were organized into five dimensions: (1) descriptions of perceived components of UPR from former coaches, (2) descriptions of perceived opposites of UPR from former coaches, (3) perceived influence of coach regard, (4) coach regard and mediating factors, and (5) coach regard and use of power.

Within the first three dimensions of findings, it is important to note that, while there was generally a clear "either-or" distinction between perceptions of UPR or UPR's opposites, participants who primarily described an experience of UPR did also share single or few instances in which they felt their former coaches' had gone "overboard," acted in a controlling way, or disregarded them as human beings. In a similar manner, participants who primarily perceived the opposites of UPR also spoke of single or few occasions on which they felt truly accepted, cared for, and respected by their former coaches. This is demonstrated in the fact that several of the same participants support findings across dimensions I and II, having described both experiences UPR and its opposites. Therefore, the following summary of findings is presented with the recognition that conditionality could be perceived in a moment even if it was not perceived through the entire duration of the coach-athlete relationship. Yet, the underlying sense of UPR

seemed to override minor instances of conditionality when participants spoke of overall perceived influence.

**Descriptions of the Components of UPR**

Within Dimension One, descriptions of perceived UPR generally support the ways in which it is discussed in previous literature. Authors have previously suggested that positive regard for a person's core worth and acceptance of one's experience can be offered unconditionally, no matter if the provider tolerates, likes, or condones what the recipient is doing (Mearns, 1994; Lietaer, 2001; Schmid, 2001). In alignment with this notion, participants described feeling that their coaches accepted them both as people and athletes even when they felt their coaches did not tolerate certain behaviors. They described feeling as though their coaches could accept their momentary experience as a contribution to their behavior, and for those who predominately perceived UPR, intolerable behaviors included those that were truly in their control (e.g. losing composure and showing poor sportsmanship). Disciplinary actions for these types of behaviors were viewed as a benefit for their development as people and did not involve negative regard or disregard towards them as people. Meanwhile, outcomes that were not entirely within their control, such as a mistake mid-performance or low placement were tolerated *in the moment* as coaches would recognize the athletes' *own* disappointment with the understanding that they did not try to fail.

Also in line with prior literature on UPR, participants described their coaches being open to and accepting of their individual needs, knowing them deeply and genuinely caring for their best interest in sport and life, and being fully present in their interactions with them. Watson and Steckley (2001) indicated that unconditionality requires an openness to another's experiences, without entirely drawing from prior experience to assume how that person's experience will be

in a given moment. Prouty (2001) discussed the notion that UPR involves a deep and genuine concern for what happens to another person. Finally, Friere (2001) noted that positive regard does not refer to being warm or soft toward another person, but rather that it refers to to being fully present and focused on that person when interacting with him or her.

It is important to note that participants' sense of their coaches *deeply knowing* them and also *feeling with* seem to best align with the concept of empathy. Rogers (1959) distinguished empathy from positive regard, but posited that both were necessary to promote growth and change in a relationship. Wilkins (2001) suggested that empathy sets the stage for UPR to be accurately perceived. In the present findings, empathic understanding was depicted as an important component of regard. If participants did not perceive their coaches to feel *with* them, then it appeared as though their coaches were focused on their own feelings. In the face of an athlete's performance failure, their coach's own feelings were often perceived to encompass anger *at* the athlete. In this way, lack of empathy also demonstrated a lack of regard, as coaches' emotions were perceived to be directed at the athlete for inadequately meeting *their* agenda, rather than feeling with the athlete and standing by the person for whom they were in this role.

Perhaps the most significant connection of participant perceptions of UPR to the literature is that of the subcategories *athlete-centered care* as it relates to the theoretical component of UPR, "non-possessive care" (Rogers, 1959; Schmid, 2001). It was sometimes difficult for participants to distinguish between control and guidance, especially when their goals aligned so closely with their coaches' goals for them. Thus, participants indicated that they felt as though guidance occurred when coaches' actions seemed to be truly guided by genuine concern for their athletes' best interest (athlete-centered or "non-possessive" care), and they felt that control occurred when seemed that coaches' actions were guided by their need to satisfy

their own interests (coach-centered or "possessive" care). These findings support Rogers and Skinner's (1956) notion that influence or guidance can occur in the midst of non-possessive care.

Participants also reinforced the idea of previous scholars that influence is likely desired in any helping relationship (Rogers & Skinner, 1956; Schmidt, 2001). No matter what type of regard they experienced from their coaches, all participants expressed that – at the time of their sport participation – they believed that if they did what their coaches' told them, then they would improve as athletes and be more likely to achieve their own goals. However, "athlete-centered care" seemed to allow participants to feel that it was their own autonomous choice to follow what their coaches said. In contrast, when participants sensed that their coaches put their own interests above the best interest of them as *people*, then the coaches' behaviors were recognized as controlling. This finding, again, supports Schmidt's (2001) notion that "non-possessive care" is not possible and true personal growth is hindered when a coach does not let go of his or her personal stake in the athlete's outcome. When it was perceived that coaches were driven by their own end-goal, participants also felt that their need for autonomy was disregarded and indicated a decrease in motivation over time. This, in turn, supports Deci and Ryan's (2000) notion that autonomy is a basic psychological need which – when thwarted – will hinder self-determined motivation and the consistency between one's internal sense of self and external experience.

Participants' descriptions also aligned strongly with the component of UPR described in previous literature labeled *acknowledgement* (Schmid, 2001), where they felt respected and valued as individuals who were worthy of their coaches' time and expertise, but also allowed to have some autonomy over their own experiences. Participants spoke of feeling respected and valued when their coaches utilized positive reinforcement and acknowledged "small successes" in conjunction with providing constructive feedback or technical correction. In these instances,

participants spoke of feeling as though their coaches would give *them* the credit for something done well, even if was small.

Because a coach's role is to guide and provide direction, an important finding that aligns with acknowledgement (Schmid, 2001) was that participants perceived their coaches to shift the balance between providing guidance and allowing autonomy as their athletes grew in age. Specifically, participants felt that they needed more guidance when they were younger, suggesting that their coaches' provision of guidance demonstrated that they were, as Schmid (2001) stated, "worthy of being dealt with" (pp. 52). Yet, they also described having some sense of autonomy in the fact that they were freely choosing to do what their coaches' said because they wanted to improve in the sport. This supports the notion of autonomy as it is defined within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and congruence as it is defined within person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959) such that autonomy and congruence both refer to the integration of one's actions with one's self-concept.

For all participants, their sense of volition within their desire to skate from a young age seemed present at least through their early years in the sport. Then, as participants spoke of growing older, a true sign of respect or acknowledgement from their coaches was the perception of a shift, to where it felt their coaches provided less guidance and allowed (or even encouraged) more autonomy and volition within their sport experience as such that it felt developmentally appropriate. Participants described this shift with a common language of "when I got older," or "once I was older," and spoke of feeling that their coaches allowed them to make their own decisions about their training schedules, choreographers or other support staff with whom they worked, costumes, nutrition, off-ice skating, and ultimately when to leave the sport or move on to other avenues of skating beyond competing at an elite level. While this finding is not directly

addressed in the literature on UPR or its opposites, it does support a body of literature that addresses the need for an increase of autonomy-support in parent-child relationships as children progress from childhood to adolescence and adulthood (e.g. Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal 2005; Grolnick, 2012; Hoghughi & Long, 2004).

Finally, participants supported previous literature on the component of UPR that was conceptualized as *confirming the other* (Rogers & Büber, 1960). Confirmation of another human being involves both belief in that person's potential and a challenge to that person to continually push toward their potential. Both concepts were perceived by participants who experienced UPR. In essence, confirming another communicates, 'I believe you have potential. I challenge you to continue moving toward your highest potential, and I am here to help you do that.' (Rogers & Büber, 1960; Van Ryn & Heaney, 1997). Most participants perceived their coaches' jobs to be specifically about making them the most successful athletes they could be, which automatically included challenging them to improve and pushing them beyond their limits. Yet, descriptions of UPR encompassed the perception that coaches consistently and directly communicated their belief in their athletes' potential, and most often paired acceptance or acknowledgement of "what was" – no matter whether that was good or bad – with the continuous challenge to make it better "next time" and specific direction on how to do that.

## Descriptions of the Opposites of UPR

Within Dimension Two, the opposites of UPR encompassed three concepts previously discussed in literature: conditional regard (Assor & Tal, 2012; Bartholomew et al., 2010; Roth, et. al., 2009; Wilkins, 2001), unconditional negative regard, and unconditional positive disregard (Wilkins, 2001).

When participants described experiences of conditional regard, conditions for their coaches' provision of positive regard often included things that – in the moment – were not always in their control. This included executing jumps and other elements flawlessly, performing at a level that was comparatively higher than other skaters, pushing through unrealistic circumstances like injury or total exhaustion, maintaining a lean, child-like body shape despite going through puberty, and prioritizing figure skating over everything else in their lives as children and adolescents. While their perceptions of their coaches' actions in these moments may have appeared similar to surface-level positive reinforcement, participants' indicated that their experiences were such that their core worth as human beings felt dependent upon the conditions noted above. Thus, when they weren't meeting these conditions, they commonly used the term "unworthy" to describe how they felt. In these same instances, they described experiences of negative regard from their coaches, including the perceptions of being ignored or attended to with less energy or in less frequency, being put down by shaming or insulting comments, or even having a coach decide to terminate the relationship.

In previous literature, conditional positive regard is defined as offering positive regard and approval of one's worth only in certain conditions, and conditional negative regard is defined as withdrawing attention, approval of one's worth, and care when desired conditions are not met (Assor & Tal, 2012; Bartholomew et al., 2010; Roth, et. al., 2009; Wilkins, 2001). The current findings affirm Assor and Tal's (2012) indication that conditional positive regard does not equate to praise or positive reinforcement. The fact that participants perceived conditional positive regard and conditional negative regard to be equally harmful – because one could not occur without the other – is an important finding. Conditional positive regard has been a well-accepted tactic for guiding and shaping children in parenting (e.g. Aronfreed, 1968; Sears et al.,

1957), and Bartholomew et al. (2010) failed to mention conditional positive regard as a conjunctive tactic to conditional negative regard in their Controlling Coach Behaviors Scale (CCBS; Bartholomew et al., 2010). It may be suggested that sport culture is not willing to consider how an accepted shaping method might actually be harmful or abusive, as participants in the present study have indicated.

Participant perceptions of negative regard when conditions were not met not only supported previous definitions of conditional negative regard (Assor & Tal, 2012; Bartholomew et al., 2010; Roth, et. al., 2009; Wilkins, 2001), but also aligned with definitions of emotional abuse in coaching literature (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Gervis et al., 2016; Stirling & Kerr, 2007). Through a collective body of research, scholars have indicated that psychological and emotional abuse occurs through consistent or repeated actions (O'Hagen, 1993) of a person in power toward a subordinate that causes harm to behavioral, cognitive, affective, social, or psychological functioning of the subordinate (Doyle, 1997 as cited in Gervis & Dunn, 2004). Actions of emotional or psychological abuse have been defined to include belittling, humiliating, ignoring, (Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1986), denying attention, denying emotional responsiveness, and exploiting or corrupting (Stirling & Kerr, 2013).

Further, Assor and Tal (2012) suggested that negative regard encompasses *both* withdrawal of love or denial of attention *and* the additional components of "intrusiveness and blame" (pp. 250). Participant perceptions of coach conditional regard align with the above descriptions – both of conditional regard and of emotional abuse. In fact, participants indicated that perceived denial of attention and perceived irritation, frustration, or blame (the perception that coaches were disappointed *at* them for a performance failure) had a greater negative influence than coaches' yelling. It seemed that perceived attention – even in the form of yelling

or disciplining – allowed participants to feel worthy, while perceived inattention or disengagement lent to emotional and psychological harm. Thus, it is important to consider how a coach's orientation of conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard might serve as a foundation for actions of emotional or psychological abuse.

In addition to conditional regard, participants described experiences that best aligned with two other opposite constructs from UPR – unconditional negative regard and unconditional positive disregard. Wilkins (2001) initially defined unconditional negative regard as consistently withdrawing respect, attention, and care from someone no matter what they do. Participants spoke of experiences in which they felt they were never good enough for their coaches. For some, this was specific to the skating domain, but two participants in particular felt they could never be good enough as athletes or as people in the eyes of a coach. These instances included the perception that coaches consistently made insulting comments, did not hear or trust what their athletes were trying to tell them, were physically aggressive when giving technical corrections, or played favorites with one skater to the detriment of everyone else.

Finally, unconditional positive disregard was best represented in instances when coaches disregarded the person beyond the athlete and did not acknowledge participants' need for autonomy as growing human beings. It is important to note that unconditional positive disregard, as it is defined by Wilkins (2001), could not have been purely supported in this data-set. Unconditional positive disregard was initially defined as a subconscious refusal to connect with another person, such that one does not even acknowledge the other's existence (Wilkins, 2001). In this study, all participants spoke of coaches who did initially enter into relationships with them, even if it was perceived to be for the coach's own gain. Therefore, all participants' coaches acknowledged at the very least as athletes or business clients.

However, several participants spoke of instances in which they perceived their coaches to disregard their identities as *people* beyond their skating involvement. The danger of this experience seemed to lie in the fact that participants also spoke of how strongly their own sense of identify was tied to their sport performance. Thus, when their coaches pushed them to achieve sport success in ways that were detrimental to them as human beings, participants conveyed that they did not recognize this as a bad experience. They noted that they still felt their coaches cared for them, because their own athlete-identities were stronger than their overall person-identities. While we cannot determine whether coaches' *only* acknowledging their athletes as athletes caused participants to define themselves only by their sport success, we can suggest that it may have contributed to the internalization of sport success as a condition of worth. This supports Rogers' (1959) concept of incongruence, which mirrors Deci and Ryan's (2000) concept of introjected regulation, such that one develops an internal compulsion to where she *has* to deem herself worthy by acting a certain way or achieving a certain outcome.

Lastly, unconditional positive disregard was demonstrated as disregard for the athlete's growing need for autonomy. Schmid (2001) suggested that regarding another person positively involves recognizing them as "separate and worthy," and letting go of one's personal stake in the relationship. Therefore, while allowing autonomy was an important component of regard, attempts to control the athlete in the interest of the coach was a component of disregard. Participants perceived disregard when they felt their coaches maintained a "my way or the highway" approach, lacked appropriate boundaries, lacked of clarity in expectations, and played intentional "mind games." While these findings do not directly support the minimal literature that addresses unconditional positive disregard, they do support prior research on controlling coaching behaviors, including that of *excessive personal control* and behaviors of *judging or*

*devaluing*, which Bartholomew et al. (2010) describe alongside conditional regard as part of the Controlling Coach Behaviors Scale (CCBS). Taken together, it is important to consider how a coach's orientation of conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard might serve as a foundation for controlling behaviors and actions of emotional or psychological abuse.

**Perceived Influence of Regard**

Participants indicated that both experiences of perceived UPR or its opposites were considered to have significant and respectively opposite influence on participants' perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship itself, their sport experience, and their development of self regard. It is important to note that participants sometimes described their perceived influence of specific momentary interactions with their coach, while at other times they described their perceived influence of the entire duration of their experience with that coach. Ultimately the predominate type of regard perceived seemed to outweigh minimal instances of an opposite type of regard when considering the overall perception of influence of regard in a coach-athlete relationship. Thus, perceptions of influence are presented as the overall influence of either a relatively consistent perception of UPR or a similarly consistent perception of conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, or unconditional positive disregard.

Those who felt they predominately experienced the components of UPR in relationship with their former coach also indicated the following:

1. Participants felt they could rely on and trust their coaches' not just for sport expertise, but also as a mentor with whom they could be open and vulnerable. These participants conveyed that the relationship with their coach in and of itself enhanced their motivation within the sport context. They also felt that the dynamic of the relationship changed as

they grew older, to where they felt their coaches allowed them opportunities to have autonomy within their sport experience.

2. Participants felt that their coaches played a significant role in their enjoyment of, passion for, and persistence through their sport experience. They believed that their perception of UPR from coaches helped to reduce – or at least did not augment – their nerves when competing and also helped them to better accept and recover from mistakes during and after performances. These participants felt that they had some sense of personal control over their sport experience, especially as they got older.

3. Participants felt that the perception of UPR from their coaches amidst day-to-day instruction and evaluation informed their own self-regard, accurate self-evaluation, self-belief, and overall sense of self-confidence. These participants felt that the ways in which their coaches' continually challenged them influenced their ability to work through challenges on their own, helped them develop a sense of freedom to fail and persist in sport and life, and benefitted their confidence and work-ethic in post-skating endeavors.

These findings support person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959), suggesting that the provision of positive regard in a growth-promoting relationship will influence a person's development of unconditional positive self-regard (UPSR), which allows one to maintain an underlying sense of acknowledgement for their own worth as a human being regardless of her momentary experiences (Rogers, 1959; Schmidt, 2001; Standal, 1954). Participants' descriptions of feeling safe and encouraged to be vulnerable in relationship with their coaches also supports the theoretical notion that UPR creates a safe environment, which allows UPSR to develop as all parts of the self are allowed to be integrated within one's experience (Lietaer, 2001; Lux, 2013).

The concept of a safe relationship aligns with self-determination theory and Deci and Ryan's (2000) indication that feeling "securely connected" (pp. 73) to an authority figure was important for and would likely enhance intrinsic motivation. The present findings offer support for this notion, such that when UPR was perceived, participants felt their relationship with their coaches *itself* nurtured an increase in their motivation. They indicated wanting to improve and perform their best *for* their coaches – not from fear of being reprimanded if they did not perform well, but out of respect and love for their coaches.

Further, participants' accounts of feeling a strong sense of personal control over their sport experience supports both Rogers' (1959) concept of congruence and Deci and Ryan's (SDT; 2000) concept of autonomy, such that they felt free to integrate their whole self with their experiences. Participants' comfort with failing and persisting suggests that they did and still do not consider failures to be personal threats to their whole sense of self worth, which supports Rogers' (1959) notion that UPSR will influence a decrease in conditions of worth. In addition, findings support several of the qualities Rogers' (1959) alluded to a "fully functioning person" (pp. 234), including the ability to better recover from mistakes or move forward from setbacks, the ability to hold realistic evaluations of themselves while maintaining confidence.

In stark contrast, athletes who described experiences of conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, or unconditional positive disregard also described the following:

1. The coach-athlete relationship itself lent to lowered motivation for sport participation despite extremely high self-determined motivation early in the sport experience. Athletes were discouraged to show vulnerability around their coaches, and felt – at times – that their coaches did not value them or had given up on them. These participants also felt

that their coaches maintained the same amount of control in their coaching methods from when they were children through to their adolescence and emerging adulthood.

2. Participants felt that their coaches' conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard for them contributed to enhanced nervousness or pressure in competition, hindered progress in training, and decreased love for the sport. They also felt their coaches' lack of allowing autonomy – especially as they grew older – made their sport participation feel increasingly difficult as they grew to recognize and understand how much they lacked personal control over their sport experience.

3. Participants felt that their self evaluation was "like a mirror" of coaches' evaluations of them and reactions to their performances, to where they had come to rely on their coaches' evaluation of them to determine their own sense of self worth. These athletes perceived that their coaches made them feel "less than," contributed to lowered confidence, and led them to question or doubt themselves. Some described feeling as though they could not be vulnerable in their performance or creativity and some spoke of their coaches influencing personal struggles that have continued through adulthood.

Again, these findings support person-centered theory, suggesting that athletes who experience the opposites of UPR may be more likely to develop *conditions of worth* (Rogers, 1957, 1959; Standal, 1954). The notion that conditions of worth may have been developed also suggests that *introjected regulation* might have been fostered. Both constructs are identified as an experience in which a person feels an internal impulse to act in a way that will meet certain conditions, based on the conditions in which a significant other has denied positive regard for that person (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Roth, et. al., 2009; Rogers, 1957, 1959, Standal, 1954). Further, participants' depiction of increased performance anxiety after experiencing negative regard or

disregard from their coaches after a poor performance supports Bozarth and Wilkins' (2001) indication that conditions of worth would be associated with increased fear, anxiety, and self-inhibition. Participants' experiences of a loss in motivation also provide support for Deci and Ryan's (2000) claim that introjected regulation serves as non-self-determined motivation.

Further, the above findings suggest that perceptions of conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard may have led participants to develop *incongruence* (Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954), or a *lack of autonomy* as defined in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Both incongruence and a lack of autonomy are both defined as an experience in which one's internal sense of self does not match her external experiences and choices. Incongruence and lack of autonomy were depicted most by participants when they described feeling as though they had a lack of personal control over their sport experience, especially as they grew older. Through the lenses of both person-centered theory (Rogers, 1957, 1959) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), it may be suggested that participants' incongruence led them to be motivated by the need to meet conditions of worth rather than by free choice to partake in and fully experience self-determined activities.

It also seems that participants had a strong satisfaction of their need for competence at a young age, another psychological need for motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), especially considering the levels at which they were successfully competing. Yet most participants alluded to a drop in sport competence when they hit puberty, noting that their growth spurts and changing bodies affected their sport abilities and new emotions or cognitions affected their confidence. An important consideration to this finding is the notion that participants felt they needed their coaches to provide a bit more control in the form of structure and guidance when they were younger, but that they described feeling disregarded if their coaches' level of control

remained the same as they grew older. The notion that each psychological need (autonomy, competence, or relatedness) might have greater or less importance through different stages of development has not yet been addressed in self-determination theory literature. However, it may be posited from the present findings that – in sport context – high levels of relatedness and competence may compensate for lower levels of autonomy at a young age, while a drop in sport competence along with cognitive and emotional growth through puberty may lend to an increased need for autonomy at an older age.

While there is significant overlap across self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959), scholars of self-determination theory have not fully addressed *how* or *why* an authority figure might choose to nurture autonomy, competence, or relatedness on a given day. The current body of research on self-determination in sport contexts predominately alludes to coach *behaviors* that might nurture needs satisfaction (e.g. Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) and a connection between athlete perceptions of needs satisfaction and athlete motivation (e.g. Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009; Gillet et al., 2010). Yet, scholars have found Mageau and Vallerand's autonomy-supportive behaviors and controlling coach behaviors (Bartholomew et al., 2010) to have been perceived in the same moment (Bartholomew et al., 2011). In the current study, participants who perceived the components of UPR indicated that an experience of UPR is deeper than a behavioral exchange. Rather, participants indicated that perceived UPR cultivates a sense or a knowing that an athlete is *safe* in relationship with her coach and can therefore develop a sense of volition in following a coach's direction and taking the risks necessary to improve and excel in a sport environment.

Beyond person-centered theory and self-determination theory, findings related to the influence of both UPR and the opposites of UPR offer considerations relative to Jowett's (2005)

3+1Cs model and Nicholls (1984, 1989) achievement goal theory. Perceptions of UPR also seemed to inform athletes' and coaches' high levels of the 3+1Cs according to Jowett's (2005) coach-athlete relationship model. Specifically, participant descriptions of feeling as though they could be vulnerable, honest, and open with their coaches when they primarily perceived the components of UPR from their coach mirrors Jowett's concept of closeness.

Participants also depicted their perceptions that their coaches put effort in to demonstrate commitment and ensure that coach and athlete understood their mutual goals. Jowett (2005) suggested that complimentarity requires a mutual understanding of the *same* goals. However, it may be important to consider how a coach's and athlete's goals might be different but complimentary, especially when the athlete is a child. All participants spoke of their goals to improve in the sport, and knew that their coaches had a similar goal even if for different reasons. Yet, those that predominately experienced UPR seemed to know that a part of their coaches' goals was also to help grow into a good person, even though this was not a goal they were explicitly thinking about as a child athlete. Still, knowing that their coaches' goals were grounded in *their* best interest helped to motivate them in the working relationship.

This was contrasted for participants who spoke primarily of UPR's opposites. These athletes indicated that they seemed to know that their coaches' goal to help them improve in the sport was rooted, essentially, in the desire to improve the coaches' resumes or businesses, and described a loss in motivation over time to perform well for their coaches. Thus, even with the *same* goal – to improve in the sport – a coach's intentions behind that goal, whether for *their* betterment or *their athlete's* betterment, seemed to influence the quality of an athlete's motivation in cooperative complimentarity. This suggests that coaches have a responsibility –

especially when coaching youth – to facilitate quality complimentarity by putting their athletes' interest first.

Jowett (2007, 2009) has defined commitment as seeing a long-term future together in sport with a willingness of coach and athlete to make sacrifices for each other. Essentially, all participants spoke of making sacrifices for their coaches throughout their sport experience regardless of whether their coaches' made sacrifices for them. Participants who primarily perceived UPR, they spoke of knowing that "no matter what" their coaches would "always be there" for them, and this seemed to nurture a deeper level of their own commitment toward their coaches. Yet those participants who experienced the opposites of UPR alluded to feeling as though their coaches were not open to sacrificing their reputation, business, or attention when they were not performing well. Those athletes indicated that they maintained a commitment to their coaches while also living with some level of fear that their coaches would not always be there for them. Again, this suggests it is within the responsibility the coach to commit to his or her athletes, knowing and trusting that youth athletes, especially, will more than likely be committed to them until they grow to recognize the imbalance in the relationship.

Lastly, participants' descriptions of mutual trust and mutual respect in instances when they perceived UPR from their coaches mirrored Jowett's (2005) concept of high co-orientation, to where the athlete trusted her coach and knew that her coach also trusted her. In contrast, those who perceived the opposites of UPR seemed to depict low co-orientation, where they put trust in their coaches while they did not feel that their coaches trusted them. It appears that the perception of UPR, again, offered a deeper sense of knowing athletes could both trust and be trusted by their coaches, but that in instances of UPR's opposites, youth athletes might still trust and adhere their coaches' direction regardless of whether they fully sense that their coaches are

committed to them, thus putting them in a position to potentially be harmed. It is important to

note that scholars of Jowett's model have predominately addressed adult athletes and adult

coaches, in which the distribution of power is automatically more level than within a child

athlete-adult coach relationship. Participants in the current study emphasized their position of

vulnerability as child athletes, suggesting that coaches have a greater responsibility in

establishing a relationship in which mutual closeness, commitment, and complimentarity can be

genuinely cultivated.

Finally, findings indicated that the perception of UPR seemed to support an environment

in which participants' described having an emphasis on personal improvement and belief in

themselves to become better each day. Participants who primarily experienced UPR spoke of

appreciating a feeling of equal attention and care across all athletes from their coaches and

expressed how important it was that their coaches did not compare them to their competitors.

These experiences offer support for Nicholls' (1984, 1989) achievement goal theory and Ames

and Archer's (1988) motivational climate as they embody a task-oriented motivational climate.

A task-oriented climate is said to occur when success is measured by personal improvement and

effort and persistence are rewarded over successful outcomes (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nicholls,

1988; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002). Present findings indicate that the provision of UPR may

contribute to the establishment of a task-oriented climate.

In contrast, perceptions of the opposites of UPR seemed to foster an environment in

which participants described experiences of feeling either explicitly compared to other athletes

their coach was working with, or implicitly compared by way of receiving more or less attention

than those other athletes. These experiences were manifested through the perception of a

hierarchy of regard or attention, where coaches gave the most engagement and attention to the

athlete at the top of the hierarchy of performance success and disengaged with athletes' when their levels of performance seemed to drop below someone else's. Also in alignment with achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1984; 1989) and motivational climate (Ames & Archer, 1988) these findings reflect the notion of an ego-oriented climate, in which success is measured through comparative outcomes, those who contribute the most to such outcomes receive the most attention, and interpersonal competition is encouraged (Pensgaard & Roberts). They also support the work of previous scholars who have suggested that, in the sport context, coaches are in a powerful position to influence whether a sport climate is task- or ego-oriented (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007).

Further, perceived influence of the experience of UPR in the present findings include increased enjoyment in sport, increased motivation, and lowered performance anxiety. These each mirror outcomes that have been previously found as a result of a mastery climate in sport (Brunel, 1999; Ntoumanis, 2001; Seifriz, et al., 1992; Smith et al., 2007). Participants in the current study who perceived opposites of UPR also alluded to increased nervousness or anxiety in competition and decreased motivation over time. Similarly, these findings support previous findings related to outcomes of an ego-oriented climate in sport (Ntoumani, 2001). Taken together, it must be considered that interpersonal effectiveness in the coach-athlete relationship may contribute to short-term enhancement in performance success (Jowett, 2005) in addition to long-term enhancement in an athlete's overall outcomes, especially as ineffectiveness through the opposites of UPR are perceived to increase performance anxiety.

Taken together, it may be suggested that coaches who exercise the opposite constructs of UPR will likely undermine their athletes' psychological needs satisfaction for autonomy, competence and relatedness, might thwart the cultivation of truly mutual commitment,

complimentarity, and closeness, and might foster an ego-oriented climate. Not only that, but coaches who exercise the opposites of UPR may also be setting themselves up to employ actions of emotional and psychological abuse. However – in opposition – the construct of UPR might provide coaches with an orientation or way of being, *through which* autonomy-supportive behaviors, cultivation of the 3+1Cs, and characteristics of a mastery-oriented climate may simply arise in a natural and deeply genuine way. UPR as a coach's way of being may allow for a richer, relational connection that is not dependent on specific behaviors, but provides reason and purpose for coaches to consistently and genuinely employ growth-promoting behaviors.

**Coach Regard and Mediating Factors**

Dimensions IV and V represent another important finding, that the influence of UPR or its opposites cannot be considered in isolation. Rather, these concepts must be considered in relation to the contexts surrounding coach and athlete. While these factors beyond the coach-athlete relationship were not built in to the research questions, they emerged as too important to leave out in how participants conveyed ways in which they mediated the influence of coaches' regard on athletes' sport experiences and development of self-regard. Participants specifically indicated the power that implicit conditions within figure skating and Western adolescent culture, parental regard, their own personal characteristics, and their stage of development had on their relationship with their coach, their sport experience, and their development of self-regard.

No matter how participants perceived their coaches' regard for them to be, descriptions of conditionality within figure skating culture emerged from participants' common experiences. In a sense, it seemed as these athletes felt they would be accepted and valued *within the sport itself* only under certain conditions. Naturally, any sport will have certain conditions or rules that qualify winning or losing, and a part of the condition participants felt was the need to execute

technical elements successfully. However, participants also spoke of the need to meet certain ideals in order to be valued and subjectively rewarded within the sport culture. These included the need to achieve success at a young age, the need to maintain a thin body shape, and the need to have the "whole package" with the right presentation in addition to technical success.

Participants' experiences of feeling as if they were growing out of the sport and struggling to maintain or improve their skill level through growth spurts during puberty support previous literature that has suggested figure skating is an early entry and early specialization sport in which there is pressure to achieve success at an early age (Gould et al., 1993; Monsma, 2008). Further, it is important to note that without a single question regarding body image or weight within the interview-guide, eight out of eleven participants mentioned pressure to be thin either as an issue they experienced personally or as a general issue in figure skating. However, the majority of participants who noted this pressure reported that they did not necessarily feel it from a coach. Rather, it seemed to come from exposure to eating disorders among peers in the sport and a general feeling of the "need" to be thin and fit to be successful in the sport. This supports the work of researchers who have identified specific risk factors within figure skating for negative perception of body image and dysfunctional eating (Dunn et. al., 2011; Gould et al., 1993).

Finally, the condition of having the "whole package" of costume, hair, makeup, and musicality *with* technical correctness and physical exertion supports Feder (1995), who suggested that "ladies" figure skating emphasizes femininity and downplays athleticism. This finding also serves as a somewhat literal example of the notion that femininity is a performance (Butler, 1990; Krane, 2001) in which a feminine appearance is an important component of the "whole package" necessary to be rewarded by judges. Considering this finding together with the

pressures to both achieve success early on and to be thin, it might be argued that figure skating and similar sports require a performance of pre-pubescent femininity, such that athletes must appear feminine in their make-up, hair style, and dress without the physical characteristics of female maturation (Monsma, 2008; Monsma, Malina, & Feltz, 2006).

It is also important to note the historical context of hegemonic, mainstream, Caucasian, heterosexual femininity from the late 1990's to mid-2010's – the time range in which participants were actively competing. At that point in time, Krane (2001) noted that it had become acceptable in Western culture for women to compete in a multitude of sports, but societal pressures to maintain an image of femininity whilst being athletic were prevalent. Yet, figure skating had been portrayed as "acceptable for females" (pp. 116), as its culture promotes an image of hegemonic femininity (Krane, 2001). Thus, participants' portrayal of the "need" to be thin and to appear to have the "whole package" offers alignment with the messages they likely received from the larger society, which were augmented within their sport culture, to say they must maintain an image of feminine perfection, even as an athlete.

It seems an important aspect of this finding is to recognize that – in figure skating – coaches are guiding their athletes to succeed, or essentially fit in, within an imperfect and often subjective system that rewards the image of pre-pubescent feminine perfection while requiring extreme strength and athleticism. Participants' who primarily perceived UPR from their coaches indicated that their coaches helped them navigate this system in a way that prevented them from internalizing sport conditions as conditions of worth, while those who perceived opposite types of regard indicated that their coaches bought in to and mimicked the subjective conditions of the sport as conditions of regard for their athletes. Further, because figure skating has an element of subjectivity in its judging, it seemed that participants strongly relied on their coaches' feedback

and evaluation of their performance to determine whether it was really good or not. In this way, coaches may have more power to influence an athlete's self evaluation in sports that are judged with some subjectivity as opposed to sports where both coach and athlete can clearly measure a race time on a clock or objectively see whether a goal was made.

In addition to figure skating culture, participants spoke about the perceived influence of their parents on their development and sport experience. This often occurred when they were asked about the influence of their coaches, as parental influence seemed too important to leave out. Parental influence was perceived to be either related directly to their parents' regard for them, to the kind of relationship their parents had with their coaches, or to the level of involvement their parents had in their sport experience in addition to their coach. Much of the existing literature on UPR and conditional regard is in the context of the parent-child relationship (e.g. Edwards, et. al., 2007; Grskovic et al., 2008; Jang & Glazer, 2000; Kidron et al., 2010; Assor et al., 2004; Roth et. al., 2009; Assor & Tal, 2012). Thus, it is not a surprise that participants noted that their parental influence was important.

The important aspect of this finding is that most participants perceived their coaches to be *as* influential if not *more* than their parents on their development as people and especially on their sport experience. This was evident in the fact that all participants stated that their coaches were like a second parent or grandparent. One participant even referred to her coach as a "surrogate mother." This supports what researchers have previously suggested, that the coach-athlete relationship is much like a parent-child relationship (Bloom et. al., 1998; Jowett, 2005; Neal & Tutko, 1975), and provides reason to continue to draw from parenting literature to inform best practices for coaches.

In addition to parent influence, participants felt their own personal characteristics played an interactive role in their coaches' regard for them and how they felt it influenced them. Specifically, participants spoke of knowing that they were generally an "anxious person," a "people pleaser," a perfectionist, or that their confidence was either generally high or "already low" at different points in adolescence. Participants distinguished these qualities from any influence their coaches had. These accounts suggest that it is likely participants had already developed conditions of worth (Rogers, 1959) at some point prior to the coach-athlete relationship. Yet, participants indicated that their coaches' way of being with them either made their existing tendencies worse (when regard was conditional or negative), or – at the very least – did *not* make them any worse and possibly made them better (when UPR was perceived). In essence, it seemed that coaches either compounded pre-existing conditions of worth by demonstrating conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard, or they helped their athletes to navigate and potentially correct these conditions of worth by offering UPR. This offers further support for person-centered theory, which posits that a consistent experience of UPR from a significant other can correct conditions of worth that have already developed (Rogers, 1957; Wilkins & Bozarth, 2001).

Finally, participants' felt as though their stage of development played an important role in how they navigated the frequent tension between conditions of "normal" North American teenage culture and figure skating culture, and for how they felt their coaches' regard influenced them. Specifically, participants suggested that the mere fact that their coaches were a big part of their lives through adolescence lent to the significant influence they believed their coaches had on their development – in good or bad ways, as adolescence is such a "formative time," in which significant cognitive, affective, and physical growth occurs (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015).

Participants who primarily perceived UPR also recognized that some of their dislike for their coaches at the time of working with them stemmed from their "teenage mindset," while in hindsight they noted that some ways in which their coaches enforced consequences irritated them when were that age, but they now recognize how this was actually very beneficial for them.

**Coach Regard and Use of Power**

The final dimension of findings reveals the unique and strong power differential in the coach-athlete relationship. This finding emerged from the data as all participants' conveyed their awareness that their coaches were in a position of power. Participants indicated that the ways in which regard was provided or not seemed connected to how coaches utilized their position of power. The specific ways in which power was evident included (1) through the closeness of the coach-athlete relationship, (2) through athletes' desires for sport success, and (3) through athlete evaluation of her own coach relationship by comparison to other coach-athlete relationships in the figure skating environment.

All participants indicated a sense of closeness with their coaches, no matter what type of regard they consistently perceived. This supports existing literature that coaches and athletes in individual sports are likely to develop a stronger bond (Rhind et al., 2012). For participants who primarily perceived UPR, closeness was perceived to enhance the influence of their coaches' positive regard. Yet for participants who primarily perceived the opposites of UPR, closeness seemed to enhance psychological harm – fostering a deeper sense of hurt – when their coaches were conditional or disregarding. These findings challenge Jowett's (2005) notion that closeness will contribute to an effective interpersonal relationship, and indicate that closeness in the context of conditional regard, negative regard, or disregard may enhance the harm ensued through psychological and emotional abuse.

Participants also indicated that sport success influenced the perceived power coaches held over them, such that the *athletes'* desires for sport success influenced their need for a coach who could help them attain success. In this way, a coach's sport competence was important enough to participants that they were willing to endure a challenging interpersonal relationship with their coach in light of believing that that coach could help them achieve success. This finding mirrors that of Scanlan et al. (1991) to where figure skaters felt they had no other option but to stay in an undesirable coaching relationship. Thus, it seems that coaches' expertise in the sport – teaching effective technique, preparing athletes well for competitions, and having knowledge and experience to pass on regarding elite level competition – gives them the power to relate to and regard their athletes however they want.

This finding also reflects the nuance of Jowett's (2005) two different ways one could evaluate a coach-athlete relationship – interpersonal effectiveness and performance success. Researchers have focused in the past on the notion that the external pressures placed on coaches to attain success, along with coaches' own desires for success will lead coaches to manipulate or seek control of their athletes. Their exploitation of power, in turn, has been found to be detrimental to their interpersonal effectiveness (e.g. Bartholomew et al., 2010; Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Occhino, et. al., 2014; Stirling, 2013). While this is an important notion to attend to, it seems researchers have failed to consider the possibility that an *athlete's* desire for sport success may limit her options in which coaches she can work with to get the success she wants and what tactics those coaches will employ.

In addition, participants utilized comparison to other coach-athlete relationships to determine whether their experience with their coach was good, bad, relatively acceptable, or relatively unacceptable. It may be suggested that this further enhances a coach's power to

employ psychologically or emotionally abusive tactics if these tactics are generally acceptable within a sport culture. Stirling (2013) revealed through coach reports that one reason why coaches continue to exercise emotionally abusive tactics is because their athletes accept it. Thus it is important to seriously consider potential harm that might be caused by normed coaching tactics, especially considering the fact that conditional positive regard is a generally accepted and normed tactic for behavior shaping (e.g. Aronfreed, 1968; Sears et al., 1957).

Finally, the power within the role of a coach was demonstrated in participants' common expression of *needs* as youth elite athletes. In a sense, their perceived needs reflected the components of UPR – to be genuinely known, seen, heard, and valued whilst being guided toward sport success; to be met with even the smallest amount of positive feedback in the midst of failure or direction for improvement; to be focused on with an energy that suggests they are worthy to compete with the best; and to rely on their coach as someone who will be there for them and will also challenge them in an environment where it could be safe to test the limits of their potential. Person-centered theorists have suggested that the central reason why UPR is so influential to a person's development of self regard is because it fosters a safe relationship (Rogers, 1962; Lux, 2013). Taken together, these perceptions of needs represent the need for a sense of safety to be able to be themselves at their worst and at their best, while also being challenged to keep trying to become their best.

Participants spoke as though they were not in a position to control whether their coaches would meet the needs stated above. They noted that they were really grateful or felt "really lucky" to have had a coach who met these particular needs, or that they did not have the power to change the situation when their coaches did not meet these needs. Thus, again, it seems that coaches have a responsibility, or rather – an opportunity – to consider the position of power they

hold and to consider how cultivating their own orientation of UPR might allow them to utilize their power in a true growth-promoting way.

## Practical Implications

The present findings suggest that incorporating education on regard and its four constructs would be beneficial for coaches to strengthen their interpersonal effectiveness and potentially improve successful sport outcomes. Findings support previous researcher claims that ineffective relationships (as defined by Jowett, 2005) – regardless of sport success – can lend to lessened self-determined motivation and enjoyment, decreased perceived efficacy, dissatisfaction in the sport environment, and psychological distress (e.g. Keegan et al., 2014; Hampson & Jowett, 2014; Gearity & Murray, 2011; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002).

Further, the present study adds to this growing body of evidence to demonstrate that the interpersonal effectiveness, which includes "empathic understanding, honesty, support, mutual liking, acceptance, responsiveness, friendliness, co-operation, caring, respect, and positive regard" (Jowett, 2005, pp. 14) of the relationship between coaches and athletes may enhance personal and performance outcomes. The literature and present findings on UPR indicate that many of the qualities of an "effective" CAR might naturally evolve out of a coach's way of being with an orientation of UPR. It can also be argued that UPR may provide coaches with an orientation *through which* autonomy-supportive behaviors, as defined in Mageau and Vallerand's (2003) motivational model of the coach-athlete relationship (also see SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), are likely to be enhanced. Thus, it must be suggested that coaches pay attention to whether their interpersonal relationships with their athletes are effective or ineffective, reflect on their ways of being with their athletes, and consider how an orientation of UPR might influence their coaching, their relationships with their athletes, and their athletes' growth and development.

From there, it must be recognized that UPR is, in fact, a theoretical construct that cannot necessarily be explicitly described or perfectly defined. To support efforts of coaches and coach educators, this leads to the following questions: What would an orientation of UPR look like in practical terms within a coach-athlete relationship context? And, how can coaches cultivate their cultivate an orientation of UPR toward their athletes? Based on the findings of the present study, I will present six suggestions concerning practical development and provision of UPR in coach-athlete relationship contexts.

First, an orientation of UPR is something to strive for, and as Cochran and Cochran (2015) suggested, will not likely be genuinely present always. For practical purposes, coaches need not worry about having total acceptance, respect, and care for their athletes at all times. Rather, it is more important that coaches acknowledge their own humanity and work to nurture their own positive self-regard as this will help them to better provide UPR for their athletes (Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954).

Second, an orientation of UPR requires coaches to set aside their personal stake in their relationships with their athletes (Schmid, 2001) in order to genuinely communicate care for the best interest of their athletes. To do this at the simplest level, coaches can ask their athletes about their lives outside of figure skating, listen to their responses, and encourage or support their goals outside of the sport. Coaches may also let go of their personal stake in the relationship by taking the time to understand their athlete's goals within the sport. This would also support Jowett's (2005) concept of complimentarity, such that coaches ensure that their athletes' goals and their own goals as coaches are in alignment. From here, findings of the present study suggest that it may be beneficial for coaches to consider whether their actions and coaching decisions are driven by support for their athlete's goals and total-person wellbeing or by their own desires for

sport success. The current findings indicate reason to believe that care for an athlete's overall wellbeing may lead some short-term sport success outcomes in addition to best possible long-term outcomes, while concern for the athlete's short-term success at the detriment of personal wellbeing may contribute to situations that are detrimental to an athlete's overall sport career, including the inability to properly recover from injury or loss of motivation to persist through adversity in the sport.

Third, UPR was perceived by participants of the present study when they felt accepted *at their weakest*. Cochran and Cochran (2015) acknowledged that this can be difficult for anyone in any relationship. Thus, it is suggested that coaches reflect on times when *they* have been accepted at their weakest and the degree to which they have been able to accept themselves at their weakest, both of which are activities utilized in counselor training to better understand and cultivate UPR (Cochran & Cochran, 2015). It is also suggested, as emphasized in the present findings, that coaches make a practice of searching for things done well by their athletes, even in the midst of a mistake-ridden performance or poor execution of a skill, and communicating those small things done well to their athletes while also working with them to determine how it can be done better the next time. Participants noted that they wanted technical correction and necessary critique, but that they also "needed to hear" when they did something well. Acknowledgement of small successes seemed to make it worth coming back the next day and trying a skill again.

Fourth, UPR was perceived when athletes felt their coach focused on and attended to them as much as other skaters with whom their coach worked. Contrarily, conditional regard was perceived when athletes felt their coach placed them on a hierarchy of status and, therefore, a hierarchy of regard. What seemed to matter most was their coaches' communicating their method of distributing attention on a practice session, and also acknowledging and providing a

rationale when more attention was given to one person over another. Perhaps the most detrimental situations described involved coaches' purposeful withdrawing of attention while not explaining to their athletes what they were doing wrong to warrant the withdrawal of attention.

Thus, an orientation of UPR may allow coaches to engage with each of their athletes with a focused energy on supporting each to move from where they are to where they want to be in the sport, no matter where they are in a given moment. Rogers (1959) acknowledged that some people may simply be more likeable than others; however, one does not actually have to like another person to regard them in a positive and unconditional manner. Current study findings in conjunction with the above notion indicate that it might also be important for coaches to check their own attitudes of favoring certain athletes over others. While it seems to be a natural tendency to like some people more than others, it must be suggested that coaches consider and evaluate their distribution of attention across the athletes they work with, again searching for the positive qualities in each individual athlete.

Fifth, UPR was perceived when athletes felt their coaches explicitly told them that they believed in their potential. It seems this finding should lead to a simple solution of communicating belief in potential, though there will likely be days when coaches might not fully believe this – as one participant said – "with every fiber of their being." Thus, it is suggested that coach education incorporate the underlying philosophy of both person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959) and self-determination theory of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003), which states that human beings have an innate tendency to grow toward their best selves given a nurturing psychological environment. In addition, it is suggested that coaches practice being open to multiple avenues of success or multiple ways to define success. Coaches may hold a valid and realistic disbelief in their athletes to achieve certain success outcomes based on

physical limits in ability. Yet, coaches who were perceived to provide UPR seemed to emphasize multiple avenues through which their athletes could be successful and remain involved in the sport when the highest level of elite competition became unrealistic.

Sixth, UPR was perceived by participants when it felt that their coaches allowed them to have an increasing sense of autonomy over their sport experience, shifting the balance from more guidance and less autonomy when they were young to more autonomy and less guidance when they were older. Participants indicated feeling as though their coaches who struggled with accepting their growth seemed to buy in to cultural condition that figure skaters must have pre-adolescent, thin, feminine bodies to be successful in the sport, while participants who felt their coaches worked through challenges related to physical growth or typical weight gain felt supported in developing positive self-concepts. Beyond this, increasing allowance of autonomy included participant perceptions that they were allowed to make decisions on their practice schedules, competitions attended, off-ice training, choreographer selection, and decisions to continue competing or move on to another aspect of the sport or life. Thus, it may be important for youth coaching education to incorporate components of human development and for coaches to reflect on what it might be like for both them and their athletes, should they allow their athletes' to have ownership over their sport experience.

Finally, the above suggestions must be noted with a recognition of the immense amount of power that coaches have, as demonstrated throughout the data, to the point that all participant's believed their coaches were as influential – if not more – than their parents on their development as people. A final implication is that coaches, and especially coaches of youth athletes, must be educated to recognize the power they hold to influence lives.

**Limitations and Considerations for Future Research**

An important limitation of this study is that there was no specification within the criteria for participant selection for whether athletes had a generally good or bad experience with their coaches to participate. Therefore, the ratio of descriptions of UPR to UPR's opposites could not be controlled, leading to seven participants who described primarily good aspects, three who described primarily bad aspects, and one who described both good and bad in their relationships with coaches. Three of those seven participants with good experiences did also speak of bad experiences with different coaches, and across all *experiences* described it was determined that enough repetition had occurred in descriptions of both UPR and its opposite constructs to warrant saturation. Regardless, a suggestion for future research may be to specifically recruit participants based on whether they felt they had a good or bad experience in their coach-athlete relationship and seek to attain an even number of participants for each.

Another important consideration for this study is the fact that participants were all North American female figure skaters (10 from the United States and one Canada). The decision to incorporate gender and country of origin in the criteria for participation was intentional, with the goal to attain as homogeneous of a sample as possible. However, especially because of the finding that UPR cannot be studied in isolation from the contexts in which it occurs, it would be beneficial to expand this research topic with participants of different genders and from different nationalities. In addition, because these findings are specific to participants in an individual sport that has a subjective component in judging, it would also be beneficial to expand this research topic to consider UPR in coach-athlete relationships in team sports and sports that offer a more objective indication of wins and losses.

One more additional limitation lies in the fact that participants were interviewed about past relationships with coaches, gaining retrospective perceptions. This decision was also intentional, specifically to protect participants from being negatively affected by talking about a coaching relationship they are currently in. We also felt that a retrospective perception might provide important information regarding lasting influence of the coach-athlete relationship. Regardless, it cannot be denied that recollections will be imperfect and that the variance in the length of time that had passed since participants had exited their coach relationship, which ranged from two to twelve years, is likely to have influenced the findings. In light of this, a consideration for future research is to conduct an intervention study in which both coaches and athletes' participant, and athletes are interviewed periodically after coaches receive education on the types of regard.

Finally, it is important that researchers consider cross-theoretical concepts and applications in future research projects. The current findings and connection to the literature have suggested that overlapping constructs exist across theories and also across disciplines, especially across self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and person-centered theory (Rogers, 1959). Poczwardowski et al. (2006) suggested that it will be valuable to understand concepts of the coach-athlete relationship from the lens of multiple theories. Thus, a suggestion for future research projects are to consider methodologies or methods that allow a data set to be examined from the lens of multiple theories to enhance our understanding of the coach-athlete relationship and better provide support and education for coaches in the areas of interpersonal competence, fostering constructive psychological development, and beneficial use of power.

**Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, findings of the present study indicate that the four constructs of regard – UPR, conditional regard, unconditional negative regard, and unconditional positive disregard – may *all* play an important role with significant implications in coach-athlete relationships, especially in the sport of figure skating. It seems, at the very least, that these constructs occurred naturally in participants' experiences, to where conditional or unconditional positive or negative regard could be felt, even if these experiences were not deliberately known and strived for by coaches or explicitly identified and understood by athletes. Thus, as it was initially indicated in the rationale for this study, there does appear to be a strong and important opportunity to incorporate types of regard into the coach-athlete relationship literature and coaching education. With the culmination of prior literature, present findings, and future opportunities in the sport context, several concluding points will now be emphasized.

First, UPR is an orientation or way of being to strive for. UPR cannot be genuinely maintained through the full duration of a relationship, but the efforts of cultivating it as an orientation alone are likely worth while. In addition, a person must have some sense of consistent regard for his or her self in order to develop or maintain it for others (Rogers, 1959; Standal, 1954). Therefore, coach education may emphasize the development of an orientation of UPR that is consistently, though reasonably, maintained and limit the placement of blame on well-intentioned coaches for their own moments of frustration, reactions to pressure, or for not knowing any different but to use conditional tactics. Coaches must be offered the support to improve upon their own self-regard in order to best orient themselves toward others with UPR.

Second, an orientation of UPR does not negate the importance of structure, guidance, influence, and consequences for intolerable controllable behaviors. Consistent positive regard

can be maintained in the midst of all of these influential actions and may likely enhance the intended outcomes from such actions. The main distinction to consider within specific strategies coaches may employ to help their athletes improve, is that an orientation of UPR will require a different consequence from the withdrawal of positive regard or escalation of negative regard.

Third, while it is recognized that specific behaviors – as described in the present data – may be helpful to associate with UPR or the opposite regard constructs, it must be noted that the behaviors themselves do not equate to the orientation of UPR. Thus, while behaviors may serve as tangible and relatable examples to educate coaches about regard, the importance of the orientation beneath the behavior itself must not get lost.

Finally, while it is necessary to concretely define and differentiate the four regard constructs for our own understanding, it is important to recognize that no one definition of UPR or the opposites of UPR will fully capture each construct as they are felt qualities that lend to felt experiences. Much like how UPR is an orientation to strive for, it is also a concept that scholars will likely continually strive to understand. And while we may never be able to define or describe these constructs in complete accuracy, it appears that striving for a greater understanding of each, especially in the coach-athlete relationships context, is worth every effort.

**REFERENCES**

Ames, C. & Archer, J. (1988). Achievement goals in the classroom: Students' learning strategies and motivation processes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 260-267.

Amorose, A. J. & Anderson-Butcher, D. (2007). Autonomy-supportive coaching and self-determined motivation in high school and college athletes: A test of self-determination theory. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 8*(5), 654-670.

Anfara, Vincent A., Jr., Brown, Kathleen M., & Mangione, Terri L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 31*(7), 28-38.

Aronfreed, J. (1968). *Conduct and conscience: The socialization of internalized control over behavior.* New York: Academic Press.

Assor, A. & Tal, K. (2012). When parents' affection depends on child's achievement: Parental conditional positive regard, self-aggrandizement, shame and coping in adolescents *Journal of Adolescence.*, *35*(2), 249-260.

Assor, A., Roth, G., & Deci, E. (2004). The emotional costs of parents' conditional regard: a self-determination theory analysis. *Journal of Personality*, *72*(1), 47-88.

Barber, B., Stolz, H., Olsen, J., Collins, W., & Burchinal, M. (2005). Parental support, psychological control, and behavioral control: assessing relevance across time, culture, and method. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 70*(4), I-147.

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1986). The Relationship inventory now: Issues and advances in theory, method, and use. In L. S. Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook* (pp. 439–476). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Bartholomew, K., Ntoumanis, N., & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C. (2009). A review of controlling motivational strategies from a self-determination theory perspective: Implications for sports coaches. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *2*(2), 215-233.

Bartholomew, K. J., Ntoumanis, N., & Thogersen-Ntoumani, C. (2010). The controlling interpersonal style in a coaching context: Development and initial validation of a psychometric scale. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, *32*, 193-216.

Bartholomew, K. J., Ntoumanis, N., Ryan, R. M., Bosch, J. A., & Thogersen-Ntoumani, C. (2011). Self-determination theory and diminished functioning: The role of interpersonal control and psychological need thwarting. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *37*(11), 1459-1473.

Becker, A. (2009). It's not what they do, it's how they do it: athlete experiences of great coaching. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 4*(1), 93-119.

Bloom, G. A., Durant-Bush, N., & Salmela, J. H. (1997). Pre- and post-competition routines of expert coaches of team sports. *The Sport Psychologist, 11,* 127-141.

Bozarth, J. D. (2001a). Client-centered unconditional positive regard: a historical perspective. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 5-18). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Bozarth, J. D. (2001b) A reconceptualization of the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic personality change. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 173-179). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Bozarth, J. (2012). "Nondirectivity" in the theory of Carl R. Rogers: An unprecedented premise. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 11*(4), 262-276.

Bozarth, J. D., & Wilkins, P. (2001a). Introduction to volume 3: Unconditional positive regard in context. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. vii-xiv). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Bozarth, J. D., & Wilkins, P. (2001b) Unconditional positive regard: towards unravelling the puzzle. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 220-230). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Bratton, S. C., Ray, D., Rhine, T., Jones, L. (2005). The efficacy of play therapy with children: a meta-analytic review of treatment outcomes. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*(4), 376-390.

Broderick, P. C., & Blewitt, P. (2015). *The life span: Human development for helping professionals* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

Brunel, P. (1999). Relationship between achievement goal orientations and perceived motivational climate on intrinsic motivation. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 9*(6), 365-374.

Büber, M. (1986). *Begegnung: Autobiographische fragmente.* (Vol. 4). Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York: Routeledge.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Choi, H., Huh, J., & Cho, S. (2013). The association between the perceived coach-athlete relationship and athletes' basic psychological needs. *Social Behavior and Personality, 41*(9), 1547-1556.

Coatsworth, J., & Conroy, D. (2009). The effects of autonomy-supportive coaching, need satisfaction, and self-perceptions on initiative and identity in youth swimmers. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(2), 320-328.

Cochran, J., & Cochran, N. H. (2015). *The heart of counseling: A guide to developing therapeutic relationships*. (2nd ed.) Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Coelho, G. M. O., Gomes, A. I. S., Ribeiro, B. G., & Soares, E. A. (2014). Prevention of eating disorders in female athletes. *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine, 5*, 105-113.

Cornelius-White, J. H. D. (2007). Learner-centered teacher-student relationships are effective: A meta- analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 113–143.

Cornelius-White, J. H. D., Motschnig-Pitrik, R., & Lux, M. (2013). *Interdisciplinary applications of the person-centered approach*. New York, NY: Springer New York.

Cornell, A. W. (1996). Relationship = distance + connection: a comparison of inner relationship techniques to finding distance techniques in focusing. *The Folio: A Journal for Focusing and Experiential Therapy, 15*(1), 1-8.

Cozolino, L. J. (2010). *The neuroscience of psychotherapy. Healing the social brain* (2nd ed.). NY: W. W. Norton & Co.

Côté, J., & Gilbert, W. (2009). An integrative definition of coaching effectiveness and expertise. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 4*(3), 307-323.

Cowan, D., & Taylor, I. M. (2016). 'I'm proud of what I achieved; I'm also ashamed of what I done.': A soccer coach's tale of sport, status, and criminal behavior. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 29* 10-18.

Cranmer, G., & Goodboy, A. (2015). Power play: Coach power use and athletes' communicative evaluations and responses. *Western Journal of Communication, 79*(5), 614-633.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, John W., & Miller, Dana L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-30.

Culver, D. M., Gilbert, W., & Sparkes, A. (2012). Qualitative research in sport psychology journals: the next decade 2000-2009 and beyond. *The Sport Psychologist, 26,* 261-281.

Curran, T., Hill, A. P., & Williams, L. J. (2017). The relationship between parental conditional regard and adolescents' self-critical and narcissistic perfectionism. *Personality and Individual Differences, 109,* 17-22.

Dale, G. A. (1996). Existential phenomenology: Emphasizing the experience of the athlete in sport psychology research. *Sport Psychologist, 10*(4), 307-321.

deCharms, R. (1968). *Personal causation: the internal affective determinants of behavior.* New York: Academic Press.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior.* New York: Plenum Press.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*, 227-268.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In (Eds.) N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists.* London: Routledge.

Doyle, C. (1997). Emotional abuse of children: issues for intervention. *Child Abuse Review, 6,* 330-342.

Duda, J. L. (1989). The relationship between task and ego orientation and the perceived purpose of sport among male and female high school athletes. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 11*, 318-335.

Duda J. L., & Nicholls, J. G. (1992). Dimensions of achievement motivation in schoolwork and sport. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 84*, 290-299.

Dunn, J. G., Craft, J. M., Dunn, J. C., & Gotwals, J. K. (2011). Comparing a domain-specific and global measure of perfectionism in competitive female figure skaters. (Report). *Journal of Sport Behavior, 34*(1), 25-46.

Edwards, N., Ladner, J., White, J., & Armstrong, S. A. (2007). Perceived effectiveness of filial therapy for a Jamaican mother: a qualitative case study. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 16*(1), 36-53.

Eisenberger, N. I. (2012). The pain of social disconnection: Examining the shared neural underpinnings of physical and social pain. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 13*(6), 421.

Elo, S. & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62*, 107-115.

Farber, B., & Doolin, E. (2011). Positive regard. *Psychotherapy, 48*(1), 58-64.

Farber, B., & Lane, J. (2001). Positive regard. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 38*(4), 390-395.

Feder, Abigail M. (1995). "A radiant smile from the lovely lady": Over-determined femininity in "ladies" figure skating. In C. Baughman (Ed.), *Women on ice: Feminist essays on the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan Spectacle* (pp. 22-46). New York: Routledge.

Flanagan, S., Patterson, T. G., Hume, I. R., & Joseph, S. (2015). A longitudinal investigation of the relationship between unconditional positive self-regard and posttraumatic growth. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 14*(3), 191-200.

Freire, E. (2001). Unconditional positive regard: the distinctive feature of client-centered therapy. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 145-155). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Fusch, P., & Ness, L. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report. 20*(9), 1408-1416.

Garbarino, J., Guttman, E., Seeley, J. (1986). *The Psychologically Battered Child: Strategies for Identification, Assessment and Identification.* Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

Gearity, B. T. & Murray, M. A. (2011). Athletes' experiences of the psychological effects of poor coaching. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 12*(3), 213.

Gervis, M., & Dunn, N. (2004). The emotional abuse of elite child athletes by their coaches. *Child Abuse Review, 13*(3), 215-223.

Gervis, M., Rhind, D., & Luzar, A. (2016). Perceptions of emotional abuse in the coach–athlete relationship in youth sport: The influence of competitive level and outcome. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 11*(6), 772-779.

Gillet, N., Vallerand, R. J., Amoura, S., & Baldes, B. (2010). Influence of coaches' autonomy support on athletes' motivation and sport performance: A test of the hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 11*(2), 155-161.

Goldstein, K. (1934). *The organism: A holistic approach to biology derived from pathological data in man.* New York: Zone Books.

Goudas, M., Biddle, S., Fox, K., & Underwood, M. (1995). It ain't what you do, it's the way you do it! Teaching style affects children's motivation in track and field lessons. *The Sport Psychologist, 9*, 254-264.

Gould, D., Jackson, S., & Finch, L. (1993). Sources of stress in national champion figure skaters. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 15*(2), 134.

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nursing Education Today, 24*, 105-112.

Grskovic, J., Goetze, H., & Leblanc, M. (2008). Short-term filial therapy with German mothers: findings from a controlled study. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 17*(1), 39-51.

Guardini, R. (1955). Die begegnung: ein beitrag zur struktur des daseins. *Hochland,47*(3), 224-234.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-216). Thousand Oaks, CA.

Grolnick, W. (2012). The relations among parental power assertion, control, and structure. *Human Development, 55*(2), 57-64.

Hagger, M. S., & Chatzisarantis, N. D. (2007). Advances in self-determination theory research in sport and exercise. *8*(5), 597-599.

Hoghughi, M., & Long, Nicholas. (2004). *Handbook of parenting: Theory and research for practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hampson, R., & Jowett, S. (2014). Effects of coach leadership and coach–athlete relationship on collective efficacy. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 24*(2), 454-460.

Hendricks, M. N. (2001). An experiential version of unconditional positive regard. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth, & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 220-230). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Hett, J. (2014). Investigating the use of the person-centered approach in non-Western settings: A report on four case studies from a Syrian context. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 13*(3), 233-249.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-88.

Iberg, J. R. (2001). Unconditional positive regard: constituent activities. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 109-125). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Isoard-Gautheur, S., Trouilloud, D., Gustafsson, H., & Guillet-Descas, E. (2016). Associations between the perceived quality of the coach-athlete relationship and athlete burnout: An examination of the mediating role of achievement goals. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 22*, 210-217.

Joseph, S., & Bryant-Jefferies, R. (2009). Person-centered coaching psychology. In S. Palmer & A. Whybrow (Eds.), *Handbook of Coaching Psychology* (pp. 211–228). London: Routledge.

Jang, M., & Glazer, H. R. (2000). Effectiveness of filial therapy for korean parents. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 9*(2), 39-56.

Jowett, S. (2005). On repairing and enhancing the coach-athlete relationship. In S. Jowett, & M. Jones (Eds.), *The psychology of coaching* (pp. 14-26). Leicester, UK: The British Psychological Society, Sport and Exercise Psychology Division.

Jowett, S. (2007). Interdependence analysis and the 3 +1Cs in the coach-athlete relationship. In S. Jowett & D. Lavelle (Eds.), *Social psychology in sport* (pp. 15-28). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Jowett, S. (2009). Validating coach-athlete relationship measures with the nomological network. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, 13,* 34-51.

Jowett, S., & Cockerill, I. M. (2002). Incompatibility in the coach–athlete relationship. In I. M. Cockerill (Ed.), *Solutions in Sport Psychology* (pp. 16–31). London: Thomson Learning.

Jowett, S. & Cockerill, I. M. (2003). Olympic medalists' perspective of the athlete–coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 4*(4), 313-331.

Jowett, S., & Meek, G. A. (2000). The coach-athlete relationship in married couples: an exploratory content analysis. *Sport Psychologist, 14* 157-175.

Jowett, S., & Nezlek, J. (2013) Relationship interdependence and satisfaction with important outcomes in coach–athlete dyads. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 29*(3), 287-301.

Jowett, S., & Ntoumanis, N. (2004). The coach–athlete relationship questionnaire (CART-Q): development and initial validation. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 14*(4), 245-257.

Jowett, S., & Poczwardowski, A. (2007). Understanding the coach-athlete relationship. In S. Jowett & D. Davelle (Eds.), *Social psychology in sport* (pp. 3-14). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Jowett, S., Shanmugam, V., & Caccoulis, S. (2012). Collective efficacy as a mediator of the link between interpersonal relationships and athlete satisfaction in team sports. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 10*, 66-78.

Kanat-Maymon, Y., Roth, G., Assor, A., & Raizer, A. (2016). Controlled by love: the harmful relational consequences of perceived conditional positive regard. *Journal of Personality, 84*(4), 446-460.

Keegan, R. J., Harwood, C. G., Spray, C. M., & Lavallee, D. E. (2009). A qualitative investigation exploring the motivational climate in early career sports participants: Coach, parent and peer influences on sport motivation. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 10*(3), 361-372.

Keegan, R. J., Harwood, C. G., Spray, C. M., & Lavallee, D. E. (2014). A qualitative investigation of the motivational climate in elite sport. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 15*(1), 97-107.

Kidron, M., Landreth, G., & Leblanc, M. (2010). Intensive child parent relationship therapy with Israeli parents in Israel. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 19*(2), 64-78.

Klein, A. (2001). Unconditional positive regard, deep openness. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 1–2). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Kong, P., & Harris, L. (2014). The sporting body: body image and eating disorder symptomatology among female athletes from leanness focused and non-leanness focused sports. *The Journal of Psychology,* 1-20.

Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *Quest. 53*(1), 115-133.

Krentz, & Warschburger. (2011). Sports-related correlates of disordered eating in aesthetic sports. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 12*(4), 375-382.

Kunze, D. (2013). The person-centered approach in adult education. In J. H. D. Cornelius-White, R. Pitrik-Motschnig, & M. Lux (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered Approach, Research and Theory*. New York, Springer Science.

Landreth, G. L. & Bratton, S. C. (2006). *Child parent relationship therapy (CPRT): A 10-session filial therapy model.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Landreth, G. L., & Lobaugh, A. F. (1998). Filial therapy with incarcerated fathers: effects on parental acceptance of child, parental stress, and child adjustment. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 76*(2), 157-65.

Leary, D., Minichiello, V., & Kottler, J. (2009). Radical reflexivity in qualitative research. In V. Minichiello & J. Kottler, (Eds.), *Qualitative journeys: Student and mentor experiences with research* (pp. 49-69). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Lietaer, G. (1984). Unconditional positive regard: a controversial basic attitude in client-centered therapy. In R. E. Levant and J. M. Shilen (Eds.), *Client-centered therapy and the person-centered approach: new directions in theory, research, and practice.* New York: Praeger.

Lietaer, G. (2001). Unconditional acceptance and positive regard. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 88-108). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lux, M. (2010). The magic of encounter: the person-centered approach and the neurosciences. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 9*(4), 274-289.

Lux, M. (2013). The circle of contact: a neuroscience view on the formation of relationships. In: J. H. D. Cornelius-White, R. Pitrik-Motschnig, & M. Lux (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered Approach, Research and Theory*. New York, Springer Science.

Lynch, J. & Chunglian, A. H. (2013). *Coaching with heart: Tao wisdom to inspire, empower, & lead in sports and life.* Tuttle Publishing.

Mageau, G. & Vallerand, R. (2003). The coach-athlete relationship: A motivational model. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 21*(11), 883-904.

Maslow A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

Maxwell, J. A., & Reybold, L. E. (2015). Qualitative research. In J. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 19, pp. 685-689). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

McAuley, E. & Tammen, V. V. (1989). The effects of subjective and objective competitive outcomes on intrinsic motivation. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 11*, 84-93.

McCombs, B., Daniels, D., & Perry, K. (2008). Children's and teachers' perceptions of learner-centered practices, and student motivation: Implications for early schooling. *The Elementary School Journal, 109*(1), 16-35.

McGraw, K. O. & McCullers, J. C. (1979). Evidence of a detrimental effect of extrinsic incentives on breaking a mental set. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 285-294.

Mearns, D. (1994). *Developing person-centered counselling.* London: Sage.

Merriam, S. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (1st ed., The Jossey-Bass higher and adult education series). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Monsma, E. V. (2008). Puberty and physical self-perceptions of competitive female figure skaters II: maturational timing, skating context, and ability status. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 79*(3), 411-416.

Monsma, E. V., Malina, R. M., & Feltz, D. L. (2006). Puberty and physical self-perceptions of competitive female figure skaters: An interdisciplinary approach. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 77*(2), 158-166.

Montuori, A., & Purser, R. (2001). Humanistic psychology in the workplace. In K. J. Schneider, J. F. T. Bugental, & J. F. Pierson (Eds.), *The handbook of humanistic psychology: leading edges in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 635–646). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Moon, K., Rice, B., & Schneider, C. (2001). Stanley W. Standal and the need for positive regard. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 19-34). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Moore, J. (2001). Acceptance of the truth of the present moment as a trustworthy foundation for unconditional positive regard. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 198-209). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Morse, J., & Field, P. A. (1995). *Qualitative research methods for health professionals* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Motschnig-Pitrik, R., & Mallich, K. (2004). Effects of person-centered attitudes on professional and social competence in a blended learning paradigm. *Educational Technology & Society*, 7(4), 176–192.

Motschnig-Pitrik, R. & Lux, M. (2008). The person-centered approach meets neuroscience: Mutual support for C. R. Rogers's and A. Damasio's theories. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 48*(3), 287-319.

Muscat, A., & Long, B. (2008). Critical comments about body shape and weight: disordered eating of female athletes and sport participants. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 20*(1), 1-24.

Najavits, L. M., & Strupp, H. H. (1994). Differences in the effectiveness of psychodynamic therapists: A process-outcome study. *Psychotherapy, 31,* 114-123.

Neal, P. E. & Tutko, T. A. (1975). *Coaching girls and women: psychological perspectives.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Nelson, L., Cushion, C., Potrac, P., & Groom, R. (2014). Carl Rogers, learning and educational practice: Critical considerations and applications in sports coaching. *Sport, Education and Society, 19*(5), 513-531.

Nicholls, J. (1984). Achievement motivation: Conceptions of ability, subjective experience, task choice, and performance. *Psychological Review, 91*(3), 328-346.

Nicholls, J. (1989). *The competitive ethos and democratic education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ntoumanis, N. (2001). Empirical links between achievement goal theory and self-determination theory in sport. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 19*(6), 397-409.

Occhino, J. L., Mallett, C. J., Rynne, S. B., & Carlisle, K. N. (2014). Autonomy-supportive pedagogical approach to sports coaching: Research, challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 9*(2), 401-415.

O'Hagen, K. (1993). *Emotional and Psychological Abuse.* Open University Press: Buckingham.

Orlick, T. D. & Mosher, R. (1978). Extrinsic awards and participant motivation in a sport related task. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 9*, 27-39.

Orlinksy, D. E., Grawe, K., & Parks, B. K. (1994). Process and outcome in psychotherapy: Noch einmal. In A. E. Bergin & S. L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (4th ed., pp. 270-376). New York: Wiley.

Orlinksy, D. E., & Howard, K. (1986). Process and outcome in psychotherapy. In S. L. Garfield, & A. E. Bergin (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (2nd ed., pp. 283-329). New York: Wiley.

Patterson, T., & Joseph, S. (2006). Development of a self-report measure of unconditional positive self-regard. *Psychology and Psychotherapy, 79*(4), 557-70.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pensgaard, A. M., & Roberts, G. C. (2002). Elite athletes' experiences of the motivational climate: The coach matters. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, *12*, 54–59.

Philippe, R. A., & Seiler, R. (2006). Closeness, co-orientation and complementarity in coach–athlete relationships: What male swimmers say about their male coaches. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 7*(2), 159-171.

Poczwardowski, A., Barott, J. E., Henschen, K. P. (2002). The athlete and coach: Their relationship and its meaning. Results of an interpretative study. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *33,* 116–140.

Poczwardowski, A., Barott, J. E., & Jowett, S. (2006). Diversifying approaches to research on athlete–coach relationships. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 7*(2), 125-142.

Pollio, H. R., Henley, T. B., & Thompson, C. J. (1997). *The phenomenology of everyday life: Empirical investigations of human experience.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Porges, S. W. (2007). The polyvagal perspective. *Biological psychology, 74,* 116-143.

Porges, S. W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation.* New York: Norton.

Prouty, G. (2001). Unconditional positive regard and pre-therapy: an exploration. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 76-87). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Rennie, D. (2007). Reflexivity and its radical form: Implications for the practice of humanistic psychotherapies. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 37*(1), 53-58.

Rhind, D.J.A., Jowett, S., & Yang, S.X. (2012). A comparison of athletes' perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship in team and individual sports. (Report). *Journal of Sport Behavior, 35*(4), 433-452.

Rice, L. N. (1983). The relationship in client-centered therapy. In M. J. Lambert (Ed.), *Psychotherapy and patient relationship.* Homewood: Dow Jones-Irwin.

Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: its current practice, implications, and theory.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1955). Persons or science? A philosophical question. *American Psychologist, 10*(7), 267-278.

Rogers, C. R. (1956). Client-centered therapy: a current view. In F. Fromm-Reichmann and J. L. Moreno (Eds.), *Progress in Psychotherapy* (Vol. 1, pp. 199-209). New York: Grune and Stratton.

Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Counseling and Psychology, 21,* 95-103. Also in H. Kirshcenbaum and V. L. Henderson (1989) (Eds.), *The Carl Rogers Reader* (pp. 219-235). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science. formulations of the person and the social context* (Vol. 3, pp. 184-256). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rogers, C. R. (1961). A tentative formulation of a general law of interpersonal relationships. In

    C. R. Rogers *On becoming a person: a therapist's view of psychotherapy* (pp. 184-256).

    New York: McGraw Hill.

Rogers, C. R. (1962) The interpersonal relationship: The core of guidance. In C. R. Rogers & B.

    Stevens. *Person to Person. The Problem of Being Human* (pp. 89-104). Moab: Real

    People Press.

Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn. A view of what education might become.* Columbus,

    Ohio: Charles Merrill.

Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A way of being.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1986). Carl Rogers on the development of the person-centered approach. *Person-*

    *Centered Review*, *1*(3), 257-259.

Rogers, C., & Freiberg, H. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson.

Rogers, C. R., & Büber, M. (1960). Martin Büber and Carl Rogers. In *Psychologia, An*

    *International Journal of Psychology in the Orient* (Kyoto University), *3*(4) 208-21.

Rogers, C., & Skinner, B. (1956). Some issues concerning the control of human behavior.

    *Science, 124*(3231), 1057-1066.

Roth, G., Assor, A., Niemiec, C. P., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). The emotional and

    academic consequences of parental conditional regard: comparing conditional positive

    regard, conditional negative regard, and autonomy support as parenting practices.

    *Developmental Psychology, 45*(4), 1119-1142.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic

    motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78.

Ryan, R., Deci, E., Hunsley, J., Pelletier, L. G., Vallerand, R. J., & Koestner, R. (2008). A self-determination theory approach to psychotherapy: The motivational basis for effective change. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 49*(3), 186-193.

Sagar, S. S., & Jowett, S. (2012). Communicative acts in coach-athlete interactions: when losing competitions and when making mistakes in training. *Western Journal of Communication, 76*(2), 148-174.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Sanford, R. (2001). Unconditional positive regard: a misunderstood way of being. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 65-75). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Sarpe, M. C., & Ladea, M. (2011). Can the lack of unconditional positive regard change the correct diagnosis and the decision of treatment? Case Report. *European Psychiatry, 26*, 13-26.

Scanlan, T. K., Stein, G. L., & Ravizza, K. (1991). An in-depth study of former elite figure skaters III: Sources of stress. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 15,* 103–120.

Schmid, P. F. (2001). Acknowledgement: The art of responding. Dialogical and ethical perspectives on the challenge of unconditional relationships in therapy and beyond. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 49-64). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Schore, A. N. (2003a). *Affect regulation and the repair of the self.* (1st ed., Norton series on interpersonal biology). New York: W.W. Norton.

Schore, A. N. (2003b). *Affect dysregulation and disorders of the self* (1st ed., Norton series on interpersonal biology). New York: W.W. Norton.

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Short, S. E., & Short, M. W. (2005). Role of the coach in the coach-athlete relationship. *The Lancet, 366*(9503), S29-S30.

Shwandt, T. A. (2015). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Sears, R. R., Maccoby. E., & Levin, H. (1957). *Patterns of child rearing.* Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.

Seifriz, J., Duda, J. L., & Chi, L. (1992). The relationship of perceived motivational climate to achievement-related affect and cognitions in basketball. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 14*, 375-391.

Silani, G., Zucconi, A., & Lamm, C. (2013). Carl Rogers meets the neurosciences: insights from social neuroscience for client centered psychotherapy. In: J. H. D. Cornelius-White, R. Pitrik-Motschnig, & M. Lux (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary Handbook of the Person-Centered Approach, Research and Theory*. New York, Springer Science.

Smith, B., & McGannon, K. (2017). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology,* 1-21.

Smith, R. E., & Smoll, F. L. (2005). Assessing psychological outcomes in coach training

    programs. In D. Hackfort, J. L. Duda, & R. Lidor (Eds.), *Handbook of research in*

    *applied sport and exercise psychology: International perspectives* (pp. 293-316).

    Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Smith, R., Smoll, F., & Cumming, S. (2007). Effects of a motivational climate intervention for

    coaches on young athletes' sport performance anxiety. *Journal of Sport & Exercise*

    *Psychology, 29*(1), 39-59.

Sollárová, E., & Sollár, T. (2010). The psychologically integrated person and the parameters of

    optimal functioning. *Studia Psychologica, 52*(4), 333–338.

Standal, S. W. (1954). The need for positive regard: A contribution to client-centered theory.

    Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago.

Stirling, A. E. (2013). Understanding the use of emotionally abusive coaching practices.

    *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, *8*(4), 625-639.

Stober, D. R. (2006). Coaching from the humanistic perspective. In D. R. Stober & A. M. Grant.

    (Eds.), *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook. Putting Best Practices to Work for Your*

    *Clients* (pp. 17–50). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Suh, C. S., Strupp, H. H., & O'Malley, S. S., (1986). The vanderbilt process measure: the

    psychotherapy process scale (VPPS) and the negative indicators scale (VNIS). In L.S.

    Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook*

    (pp. 285-323). New York: Guilford.

Suzuki, J. Y., & Farber, B. A. (2016). Toward greater specificity of the concept of positive

    regard. *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies,* 1-22.

Truax, C., & Carkhuff, R. R. (1967). *Toward effective counseling and psychotherapy: Training and practice (Modern applications in psychology).* Chicago: Aldine Pub.

Truax, C. B., & Mitchell, K. M. (1971). Research on certain therapist interpersonal skills in relation to process and outcome. In A.E. Bergin and S.L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavioral Change: An Empirical Analysis* (pp. 299-344). New York: Wiley.

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*(1), 80-96.

U.S. Figure Skating. (2017). *2017 U.S. Figure Skating Factsheet.* [Brochure]. Colorado Springs, CO: U.S. Figure Skating.

Uvnäs-Moberg, K. (2003). *The oxytocin factor: Trapping the hormones of calm, love, and healing.* Cambridge: Da Capo Press.

Vallerand, R. J., & Rousseau, F. L. (2001). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sport and exercise: A review using the hierarchal model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In R. N. Singer, H. A. Hausenblas, & C. M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 389-416). New York: Wiley.

Van Ryn, M., & Heaney, C. (1997). Developing effective helping relationships in health education practice. *Health Education & Behavior: The Official Publication of the Society for Public Health Education, 24*(6), 683-702.

Walling, M. D., Duda, J. L., & Chi, L. (1993). The perceived motivational climate in sport questionnaire: Construct and predictive validity. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 15*(2), 172.

Watson, J. C., & Steckley, P. (2001). Potentiating Growth: An examination of the research on unconditional positive regard. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 180-197). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

White, R. W. (1959). Motivation reconsidered: the concept of competence. *Psychological Review, 66*, 297-333.

Wilkins, P. (2001). Unconditional positive regard reconsidered. In G. Wyatt., J. Bozarth & P. Wilkins (Eds.), *Rogers' therapeutic conditions: evolution, theory and practice, unconditional positive regard* (Vol. 3, pp. 35-48). Ross-on-Wye, England: PCCS Books.

Yang, S. & Jowett. S. (2013a). Conceptual and measurement issues of the complementarity dimension of the coach–athlete relationship across cultures. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 14*(6), 830-841.

Yang, S., & Jowett, S. (2013b). The psychometric properties of the short and long versions of the coach–athlete relationship questionnaire. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, 17*(4), 281-294.

Yoo, J. (2003). Motivational climate and perceived competence in anxiety and tennis performance. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 96*(2), 403-413.

Zak, P., Stanton, A., & Ahmadi, S. (2007). Oxytocin increases generosity in humans. *PLoS ONE, 2*(11), e1128.

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A

**Informed Consent Statement**

Exploring Unconditional Positive Regard in Coach-Athlete Relationships

**INTRODUCTION**
You are invited to participate in a research study about coach-athlete relationships. The purpose of this study is to learn about coach-athlete relationships in figure skating, and to see how your relationship with a former coach impacted your experience and development in the sport.

**INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY**
If you choose to take part in this research study, your involvement will include a 60- to 90-minute phone or Skype interview at a day and time that is convenient to you.

Within 21 days following your interview, you will receive a typed transcript of your interview via email. You may choose to read it and let us know if you'd like us to make any changes or remove any part of it from the research study. This is to make sure that you feel your experience is recorded with accuracy.

Once the research team has completed this study, you will receive the final results via email. You may choose to read them and send us additional feedback about the results via email. The research team will incorporate any feedback you might provide at this time into the final report.

Your participation will take no more than a total of three hours. The interview will last 60 to 90 minutes. If you choose to give us feedback on your transcript and/or the final results, then this may take roughly 30 minutes each.

The QuickTime application will be used to audio-record your interview on a laptop. Your audio recording will be immediately stored in a secure university GoogleDrive account that will only be accessible to the research team. Your interview will be typed word-for-word and all information that could identify you will be removed from this transcript. Audio recordings will be erased once your interview transcript has been completed and checked for accuracy.

**RISKS**
Most studies involve some risk to confidentiality and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your information in the study. The research team members believe this risk is unlikely because of the procedures used to protect your information.

There is also a risk that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. To minimize this risk, you are *not* required to answer any question that you do not want to answer. You may ask to skip any part of the interview or to end the interview at any time, and you do not have to give any reason for doing so.

**BENEFITS**

There may be no direct benefit to you, but your participation will likely help sport scientists learn more about coach-athlete relationships and help us better understand athletes' experiences with their coaches. This may also contribute to coach-education practices to support positive experiences for future athletes and coaches.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your information in the research study records will be kept confidential. Your interview recording and transcript, all of your feedback, and all notes related to your interview will be stored securely and will be made available only to research team members, unless you give specific permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link your participation to this research study.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact myself, Lauren McHenry, at lmchenr1@vols.utk.edu and 865-229-6698 or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jeff Cochran, (for counselor education) at jcochr11@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee Institutional Research Board (IRB) Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed immediately for your confidentiality.

---

**CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

**Appendix B**

**Interview Guide**

**<u>Introduction</u>**
I have been involved in figure skating for most of my life. I competed in individual, synchronized, and ice dance disciplines through college, and then skated for three years with *Disney on Ice.* I worked with a lot of coaches with some great and some not so great experiences. My own experiences have really inspired me to do this research, and I am excited to learn about your experience with your coaches.

A. Demographic Questions
   1. Name, Age, Race/ethnicity, Gender- and Sexual-Identity?
   2. Family's financial status growing up?
   3. Discipline (singles, pairs, ice dance) and level (Jr/Sr)?
   4. How many years did you compete?
   5. When did you stop competing?
   6. Are you still involved in the sport in any way?

B. To start, tell me about some of your successes in figure skating.
   1. Progressing in some way?
   2. Successful seasons?
   3. Best performances?
   4. How did your coach respond / treat you during these times?
   5. How did these instances impact your relationship with your coach (if at all)?

C. Now, tell me about any setbacks you had throughout your competitive career?
   1. Injury?
   2. Difficult seasons?
   3. Times you did not perform your best?
   4. How did your coach respond / treat you during these times?
   5. How did these instances impact your relationship with your coach (if at all)?

D. Tell me about your retirement from sport.
   1. What was it like to part ways with your coach?
   2. How did you feel about leaving the sport?
   3. How do you feel about the sport now?
   4. Do you still keep in touch with your coach now?

E. Tell me about the relationship you had with your coach.
   1. To specify, lets focus on your relationship with your coach who coached you to and/or through the Junior/Senior level in competition?
   2. At what times did you feel like your coach fully accepted you as a person?
      i. How did you know that he/she did?
      ii. What did your coach do to show acceptance?
   3. At what times did you feel like your coach did not accept you as a person?

      i. How did you know this?

      ii. What did your coach do to make you not feel accepted?

4. At what times did you feel your coach gave you his/her full attention?

      i. How did you know that they were or not?

      ii. In what ways (if any) did your coach offer attention and care?

5. In what ways did you know your coach cared for you in a "non-possessive" way?

      i. How did you know it was care?

      ii. What did your coach do to show he/she cared?

6. At what times did it feel like your coach was trying to have control over you?

      i. What did your coach do?

      ii. How did this relate to feeling like your coach cared or not?

7. At what times did you feel like your coach respected you as an individual?

      i. How did you know your coach felt this way or not?

      ii. What did your coach do to show respect?

      iii. How did your coach make your feel like your own individual, allowed to have your own experiences?

8. In what ways did your coach make you feel worthy?

      i. As a whole person?

      ii. As an athlete?

      iii. What did your coach do to make you feel worthy (or not) of his/her time, effort, and attention?

9. At what times did you feel like your coach believed in your potential?

      i. How did you know he/she did or did not?

      ii. What did your coach do to make you feel this way or not?

      iii. How did this relate to the way you performed?

F. (*If not already addressed*) If you can think of a time, tell me about a way in which your coach changed the way he/she treated you:

1. Based on your performance?

      i. Positive change?

      ii. Negative change?

2. Based on your compliance to do whatever your coach asked you to do?

      i. Positive change?

      ii. Negative change?

3. Tell me about how frequently this happened.

4. Tell me how this related to your feeling like your coach cared about you.

5. Did this impact the way you viewed [or regarded] yourself in any way?

      i. Positively?

      ii. Negatively?

G. In general, tell me more about how your coach's regard for you may have influenced your self-regard (your sense of self worth, the way you viewed and treated yourself) while you were competing, if at all.

1. Any examples of self-talk related to things your coach said to you?

2. Any ways in which your coach's reaction to you based on your performance related to the ways you viewed yourself after a good or bad performance?

    3. How did this impact your self-regard after you had stopped competing?

H. Tell me a little more about how your coach's regard of you impacted your overall experience in figure skating.
    1. Any ways in which it impacted your performance?
    2. How about your motivation?
    3. Your body image or body satisfaction/dissatisfaction?
    4. Your enjoyment in the sport?
    5. Burnout or longevity?

I. Is there anything else you think might be important to know about your relationship with your coach that we have not discussed?

Thank you so much for your time! I really appreciate your contribution to this study. I will email you once we have transcribed your interview and you will have a chance to read through it to let me know if it captures your experience accurately, or if there is anything you would like to add, change, or remove.

**Appendix C**

**Initial Deductive Coding Frame**

| Dimension | Category | Subcategory | Desciptive Memo |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) | Unconditional | Consistent acceptance | Consistent way of being with the other, so that the other feels accepted in all circumstances |
| | | Openness | Open to hearing athlete's perspectives, explaining things in a different way, adjusting methods to best suit athlete in the given moment |
| | | Acceptance of what is | Accepts the athlete's moment-to-moment situation, rather than demanding what coach wants or thinks the situation should be |
| | | Acceptance of individual's experience | Accepts the athlete's experience as it is, even if coach does not tolerate or like what the athlete just did/is doing |
| | Positive | Non-possessive | Coach lets go of personal stake in the athlete's outcomes; coach does not control beyond the bounds of athlete's goals |
| | | Care | Personal concern regarding what happens to the athlete |
| | | Focused attention | Full Engagement with the athlete |
| | Regard | Acting with Respect | Athlete felt coach treated her with dignity, coach demonstrated deep awe for athlete |
| | | Separate and Worthy | Coach allowed athlete to be her own person, while making the athlete feel she was worthy of being dealt with |
| | | Challenge to Become | Althete felt that coach consistently challenged to her grow closer toward her potential |
| | | Belief in potential | Athlete felt coach believed in her potential |
| | | Allowing autonomy | Athlete was able to have choices in her skating experience, was provided explanations for why coach wanted her to do something |
| UPR's Opposites | | "Coach accepted me if…" | Athlete felt accepted by coach only when she met certain conditions |

| | Conditional Positive Regard | "Coach valued me if…" | Athlete felt valued by coach only when she met certain conditions |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | "Coach engaged with me if…" | Athlete received attention, liking, valuing, focus from coach only under certain conditions |
| | Conditional Negative Regard | "Coach did not accept me if…" | Coach demanded "what ought to be" rather than accepting "what is," Athlete did not feel accepted when she did not meet certain conditions |
| | | "Coach did not value me if…" | Athlete did not feel valued or that coach saw worth in her when she did not meet certain conditions |
| | | "Coach did not engage with me if…" | "Regard withdrawal" - coach withdrew from engaging, liking, valuing, giving attention when athlete did not meet condition |
| | Unconditional Negative Regard | "Never good enough" | No matter what the athlete does, it will never measure up to coach's expectations or meet coach's conditions to be provided attention, care, valuing, engagement. |
| | | Consistent non-acceptance | Coach never accepted athlete as a person, never accept's athlete's momentary experiences |
| | Unconditional Positive Disregard | Disengagement | Coach completely ignored athlete or ended relationship without explanation |
| | | Non-acknowledgement | Coach refused to enter into or continue relationship with athlete |
| Unconditonal Positive Self Regard | Freedom from Conditions of Worth | accurately evaluates experiences | athlete has an internal locus of control - |
| | | accurately evaluates self | athlete has an internal locus of control - evaluates self based on personal understanding of self, rather than external factors or outcomes |
| | | experiences not a threat to self | experiences do not define or personally threaten athlete's sense of self, self-regard, self-worth; athlete has freedom to choose how she responds to experiences, rather than having an automatic defense reaction |

| | | acceptance of self | "freedom to accept oneself" regardless of conditions |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | acceptance of momentary experiences | accurately accepts experiences as they are; does not demand that they should be any different |
| | | self-awareness | athlete attained objective, realistic, and adaptive perceptions of experience; gained awareness of self-concept and when self was out of line with experience |
| | | self-acceptance | athlete was able to accept self in good and bad moments |
| | Autonomy / Congruence | personal control | Athlete felt she had some control over her situation |
| | | "my actions match my internal experience" | one's sense of self and one's experiences are integrated |
| Conditional Self Regard | Conditions of Worth | Failure = personal threat | failure to meet conditions becomes a threat to the self; athlete will deny self if certain conditions not met |
| | | "I did not feel worthy if…" | athlete denied self-worth if conditions not met |
| | | Denial of self | athlete denies any part of self that would be rejected if certain conditions not met |
| | Introjected Regulation | "I must…" | "internal compulsion" to behave or perform a certain way in order to feel worthy |
| | | internalized conditions | athlete places same contingencies on self-regard / self-worth as coach |
| | Incongruence | Inaccurate symbolization of experience | inability to view experience accurately or objectively |
| | | Inconsistency in conscious & unconscious experience | inability to control, explain, or be aware of things that were happening within the self |

**Appendix D**

**Final Coding Frame**

| DIMENSION | CATEGORY | SUBCATEGORY (level 1) | SUBCATEGORY (level 2; example codes) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Descriptions of UPR from a former coach | 1.1 Unconditional | 1.1A Consistent Acceptance | Even if I failed… |
| | | | Even-keeled mood |
| | | | Focusing on the positives |
| | | | Acceptance of person and athlete |
| | | | Acceptance vs. Tolerance |
| | | 1.1B Openness | Adjusting tactics for individual needs |
| | | | Shifting focus when one thing wasn't working |
| | | | Evaluating based on personal improvement |
| | | | Allow work with other coaches |
| | | 1.1C Consistent Presence | There for me - always / no matter what |
| | | | Presence to the end |
| | | | Presence post-competitive skating |
| | 1.2 Positive | 1.2A Focused Attention | Felt like a priority |
| | | | Made time for |
| | | | Listened |
| | | | Attention to detail |
| | | | Focused in lesson |
| | | | Kept an eye on me (outside of lesson) |
| | | 1.2B Athlete-Centered Care | Care for person beyond the athlete |
| | | | Supported goals outside of skating |
| | | | Encouraged balance |
| | | | Off the clock |
| | | | Business aspect of relationship not salient |
| | | 1.2C Perception of Guidance, Not Control | Athlete-interest over coach-interest |
| | | | Perception of coach guidance |
| | | | Control of situation, not person |
| | | | Credit to the athlete |
| | 1.3 Regard | 1.3A Deep Knowing | Knew me forward and backward |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Disappointed with, not at / Feeling with / Empathy |
| | | 1.3B Actions of Respect and Valuing | Positive reinforcement |
| | | | Acknowledge small successes |
| | | | Praising |
| | | | Excited to work with me |
| | | | Positive body language |
| | | | Used me as an example |
| | | 1.3C Belief in Potential + Challenge to Become | Directly Communicated |
| | | | Persisting with |
| | | | Never gave up on me |
| | | | Acknowledge success and focus on how to improve |
| | | | Accept "what is," and focus on how to improve |
| | | | Goal setting |
| | | 1.3D Increasing Autonomy with Age | Balance between allowing autonomy and providing guidance |
| | | | When I was older / When I was younger |
| | | | Increasing autonomy with age |
| | | | Allowing autonomy |
| 2. Descriptions of UPR's Opposites from a former coach | 2.1 Conditional Regard | 2.1A Accepted if… | Could perform well / execute on the ice |
| | | | Did what they were told |
| | | | Prioritized skating over everything else |
| | | | Accepted as a person, not as a skater |
| | | 2.1B Actions of Conditional Acceptance and Non-Acceptance | Superficial encouragement |
| | | | Disappointed at, not with |
| | | | Perception of frustration |
| | | | Negative body language |
| | | 2.1C Coach engaged with me less or more if… | Higher on Hierarchy |
| | | | Lower on the Hierarchy |
| | | | Doing something wrong |
| | | 2.1D Actions of Disengagement | Less engaged body language |
| | | | Purposeful ignoring |
| | | | Walked away |
| | | | Terminating relationship |

| | | 2.1E Coach respected and valued me if… | Could push past extreme exhaustion |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Maintain lean/thin body shape |
| | | | Could not produce successful outcomes |
| | | 2.1F Actions of Disrespect/Non-valuing | Lack of empathy |
| | | | Shaming |
| | | | Push to unrealistic expectations |
| | 2.2 Unconditional Negative Regard | 2.2A Never Good Enough | Personal insults / shaming |
| | | | Criticizing regardless of score / result |
| | | | Consistent negative affect |
| | | | Never fully believing in potential |
| | | 2.2B Consistent Non-Acceptance | Not accepted as person or skater |
| | | | Played favorites |
| | | | Aggressive in corrections |
| | | | Consitent negative body language |
| | | | Monotonous "do it again" |
| | 2.3 Unconditional Positive Disregard | 2.3A Coach-Centered Control | Lack of boundaries |
| | | | Lack of flexibility/openness |
| | | | Mind games |
| | | | Coach-interest over athlete-interest |
| | | 2.3B Non-acknowledgement of Person Beyond Athlete | Athlete-interest over person-interest |
| | | | Not adjusting coaching style as athlete gets older |
| | | | Not listening |
| | | | Lack of empathy |
| | | | Changing expectations without explanation |
| 3. Perceptions of Influence of Regard | 3.1 Influence on the coach-athlete relationship | 3.1A Influence of percieved UPR | Made relationship stronger |
| | | | Could rely on and trust coach |
| | | | More than a coach |
| | | | Made me feel safe |
| | | | Athlete saw person beyond coach |
| | | | Athlete positive regard for coach |
| | | | Increased motivation |
| | | 3.1B Influence of percieved Opposites of UPR | Personally hurt by coach |
| | | | Vulnerability discouraged |
| | | | Need to please |

| | | | Had to seek support elsewhere |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Negative regard for coach |
| | 3.2 Influence on Sport Experience | 3.2A Influence of percieved UPR | Enjoyment |
| | | | Love/passion for sport |
| | | | Persistence in sport |
| | | | Left the sport loving it |
| | | | Perception of personal control |
| | | | Recover / Re-focus after mistakes more quickly |
| | | | Lessened competitive anxiety |
| | | 3.2B Influence of percieved opposites of UPR | Lack of personal control |
| | | | Hindered progress in training |
| | | | Made me more nervous for competition |
| | | | Loss of enjoyment |
| | | | Loss of motivation |
| | 3.3 Influence on Development of Self Regard | 3.3A Influence of percieved UPR | Confidence |
| | | | Coach belief informed self belief |
| | | | Freedom to fail in relationship with coach, self, others |
| | | | Accurate evaluation of self |
| | | | Positive perception of self |
| | | | Consistent with self |
| | | | Coach excitement influenced athlete excitement |
| | | | Learned how to motivate self |
| | | | Made me feel good/special/worthy |
| | | | made me a positive skater/person / able to work through challenges on my own |
| | | 3.3B Influence of percieved opposites of UPR | Lowest point mentally |
| | | | mirroring self-regard from coach-regard |
| | | | makes you feel less than |
| | | | lowers your confidence |
| | | | coach disbelief informed self disbelief |
| | | | question or doubt self |

| | | | personal struggles through adulthood |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Coach Regard and Mediating Factors | 4.1 Implicit Cultural Conditions | 4.1A Conditions of Worth in figure skating culture | Worked with an elite level coach |
| | | | Maintained lean body shape |
| | | | Full package - hair, makeup, costuming, music, etc. |
| | | | Image of perfection |
| | | | Prioritized skating over education |
| | | | Achieved success by a young age |
| | | 4.1B conditions of "normalcy" as a North American adolescent | Prioritize education |
| | | | Social life |
| | | | Risk taking behaviors |
| | | 4.1C Interaction of Influence: Coach Regard and Cultural Conditions | Coach helped navigate cultural conditions |
| | | | Coach buy in to cultural conditions |
| | | | Pressure impacted all coach and athlete |
| | | | Athletes perception of coach relationship based on in-sport comparisons |
| | 4.2 Parental Regard and Involvement | 4.2A Parent Regard | Positive regard from parents |
| | | | Parents accepted me if I had sport success |
| | | | Parent conditional regard for coach |
| | | | Parent buy in to conditions of the sport |
| | | | Parents mandated education first |
| | | 4.2B Parent Involvement | Parents set guidelines for how coach would be with skater |
| | | | Open communication was helpful |
| | | | Mutual respect |
| | | | Minimal involvement was good |
| | | | Parents and coaches made decisions together |
| | | 4.2C Interaction of Influence: Coach regard and Parent Regard | Parents influenced me more |
| | | | Coaches influenced me more |
| | | | Coach is like a parent/grandparent |
| | | | Compounding negative influence |
| | 4.3 Personal Characteristics | 4.3A Athlete Tendencies | Generally anxious person |
| | | | Generally positive self perception |

| | | | Generally lowered confidence than normal |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | People-pleaser |
| | | | Perfecitionist |
| | | 4.3B Stage of Development | Teen angst |
| | | | Turmoil in long-term relationship |
| | | | Crucial age |
| | | | Formative years |
| | | 4.3C Interaction of Influence: Coach regard and personal characteristics | Didn't make unhelpful tendencies any worse, if not made them better |
| | | | Increasing sense of personal control with age |
| | | | Increasing recognition of lack of control with age |
| | | | Perception of relationship different in retrospect |
| 5. Coach Regard and Use of Power | 5.1 Evidence of a Power Differential | 5.1A The power of a close relationship | Difficult to leave coach if wanted to |
| | | | Regardless of coach regard, athlete regarded coach positively |
| | | | Stronger negative influence because closeness |
| | | | Athlete acknowledges that coach is human |
| | | 5.1B Power of sport success | Difficult to leave coach if wanted to |
| | | | Good technical coach, difficult person |
| | | | Pressure to work with a successful coach |
| | 5.2 Power as an Opportunity | 5.2A Need for coaches with both sport and interpersonal competence | Need the love and support |
| | | | Wish coach would learn to work with different personalities |
| | | | Need a coach to teach life lessons |
| | | | Need coach to recognize there's more to life than skating |
| | | 5.2B Need for positive reinforcement | Needed to hear it was good |
| | | | Need the encouragement when you get higher up |
| | | | Positive reinforcement kept me going |

| | | 5.2C Need for competitive focus, not comparitive attention | Needed/liked the competitive energy |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Wouldn't compare me - important |
| | | | Wished coach had fewer students |
| | | | Need coach to watch when they ask you to do something |
| | | | Need coach to pay attention |
| | | 5.2D Need for someone to rely on in navigating sport and life | Needed someone to be there / to trust |
| | | | Kick in the butt - was when I needed it |
| | | | Life lessons |
| | | | Guiding by example |

**Appendix E**

**Sample Reflexive Memos**

7/2/17, 2nd Pilot Interview:



Starting out by saying "we never really had a bad relationship"
& "she did a good job"
& then it changing when we get into the details

[MY bias] coaches are powerful (knowledge of power) almost like (we) still need to say the relationship was good when things were not always

13:30 – 17:59

8/12/17, Lynn:

| Lynn | Post-interview | During the interview, I was skeptical, I have to recognize that I know this coach. I have to set my experience and what I know of this coach aside to let her experience come through. She knows him in a completely different way, and this is what matters. I was struggling during the interview when she spoke about "there was always room to improve, always a way to make something better" thinking that this was somehow conditional. As I am transcribing, I'm thinking this is more like a challenge to become. The coach wouldn't always provide opportunities to improve or gain consistency if he didn't think she had the potential to do it, and to grow into improvements. |

**Appendix F**

**Bracketing Interview Memos**

A. Demographic Questions
   7. Name, Age, Race/ethnicity, Gender- and Sexual-Identity?
   8. Family's financial status growing up?
   9. Discipline (singles, pairs, ice dance) and level (Jr/Sr)? I might be, in some ways, intimidated by skaters who have accomplished more than me (my successes feel very much like successes to me, but are certainly not the best of the best in the world of skating).
   10. How many years did you compete?
   11. When did you stop competing?
   12. Are you still involved in the sport in any way?

- To start, tell me about some of your successes in figure skating. Seems, to me, like performance successes will always help a coach-athlete relationship, as the purpose of the relationship is often primarily to gain success in sport. Would like to go into this question less assuming than this; perhaps could be a different experience for others.
   1. Progressing in some way?
   2. Successful seasons?
   3. Best performances?
   4. How did your coach respond / treat you during these times?
   5. How did these instances impact your relationship with your coach (if at all)?

- Now, tell me about any setbacks you had throughout your competitive career? Note – wonder if setbacks will often relate to growth and change in body shape/size. Something to consider exploring further in the future.
   6. Injury?
   7. Difficult seasons?
   8. Times you did not perform your best?
   9. How did your coach respond / treat you during these times? "Showing up" was important to me – simply being physically present and there during the rough times, and shifting focus on things I could be successful when I struggled with other aspects of the sport. Working with sport psych consultant also very influential for me. *Two different experiences with individual coach and team coach; difficult in some ways to compare the two, as the nature of team coaching seems different to me. Team coach response after cutting me definitely a difficult and emotional experience for me. My critical view may influence my reactions to participants' negative experiences, if any – awareness of this will be important.
   10. How did these instances impact your relationship with your coach (if at all)? Setbacks made successes even more meaningful for both individual coach and me together; perhaps made our relationship stronger because we persisted together. Age may make a difference (in college, had enough autonomy developmentally to decide not to try to talk to my coaches during the year I was off the team). *Still ended up having very good experience in skating despite less strong relationship with varsity coaches when

they took me back on the team, yet, support and relationships with other coaches were important. Professional relationship may be okay and work well for some, coach may not be only source of UPR.

B. Tell me about your retirement from sport. My experience is also shaped by my own motivation and passion for the sport – its hard to say how much of this came from the coaches I worked with or not. My not wanting to retire at the point of graduating from college was also part of my own drive, some participants may not express as much intrinsic love/drive for the sport and this could shape their experiences.

1. What was it like to part ways with your coach? Moving on from high school to college was a huge deal for me (leaving coach at this point), also a point at which I was making a positive/exciting transition specifically for my skating goals. More ready for it/less emotional with college coaches.
2. How did you feel about leaving the sport?
3. How do you feel about the sport now? Strong emotion in this answer – a lot of my feelings about the sport now are related to the critical reasons why I want to do this research – I think this is a complicated mix of emotion related to loving the sport and also seeing things wrong with it, being very very close with my lifelong individual coach, but having the experience of feeling totally burned by college coaches at one point. May be able to relate to different experiences as I have had different ones; some of my critique also comes from things I have observed in the sport over the years and am observing now from an academic / critical perspective.
4. Do you still keep in touch with your coach now?

C. Tell me about the relationship you had with your coach.

1. To specify, lets focus on your relationship with your coach who coached you to and/or through the Junior/Senior level in competition?
2. At what times did you feel like your coach fully accepted you as a person?
     i. How did you know that he/she did? I had to really think of specific examples of how I knew this; in general, its like I just "knew" she accepted me.
     ii. What did your coach do to show acceptance?
3. At what times did you feel like your coach did not accept you as a person?
     i. How did you know this? I noted that I was "terrified" of doing laps – this was my coach's general consequence for a number of things (being on the ice late, poor attitude, not following guidelines or wasting time on a practice session). I think this speaks to the fact that I definitely did want to please my coach, and feared getting in trouble. This was the case for me across the board as a kid (at school, with other adults) and is likely related to how my parents raised me. I wonder how this aspect of my personality impacted my coach providing UPR and our relationship in general.
     ii. What did your coach do to make you not feel accepted?
   b. At what times did you feel your coach gave you his/her full attention?
     i. How did you know that they were or not? After-the-fact of the interview, I thought about times at which my coach had multiple skaters competing at the similar times or when I was competing against skaters/friends who also had her as a coach. I still think she did well with giving each of us her full attention, one at a time, and we would just have to wait our turn at

times. I'm not sure how this situation could be handled any better, but think it may be something that happens often in skating, especially when coaches have numerous athletes competing at the same level. I also talk about how my coach would give a look, and you knew she was focused on you. I do remember sometimes this causing me more stress – like the pressure was higher to land a jump because she was watching. I think this is related to my wanting to please her or not disappoint her, even though her demeanor would be relatively consistent regardless of landing a jump or not.

    ii.  In what ways (if any) did your coach offer attention and care?

c.  In what ways did you know your coach cared for you in a "non-possessive" way?

    i.  How did you know it was care? A big thing for me here is allowing me to work with other coaches, not dropping me as a student when I was not performing or placing well at all at competitions, and not making a show or a scene at competitions when I did not skate well. Also openness to working with a sport psych.

    ii.  What did your coach do to show he/she cared? I noted having pre-season off ice meetings to determine goals. I remember this making me feel like I was legitimate in the sport and important to my coach, especially coming from a smaller city that did not have a real training center or many skaters who made it far in the sport. I also had friends who had different coaches and remember thinking it was cool that my coach was one of the only ones to do this (set goals systematically and involve me in the process), while other coaches did not and would make decisions about what level you were skating & what music you were skating to each season.

d.  At what times did it feel like your coach was trying to have control over you?

    i.  What did your coach do?

    ii.  I note that I feel like my coach changed and improved as a coach over the course of our time working together. When I was younger, my coach was very much a freestyle singles coach and would make comments downplaying the skill of ice dancers and synchronized skaters – from a young age, I then had a somewhat "stuck up" view of those disciplines, but both ice dance and synchronized ended up being the disciplines I had the most success in (and probably would have walked away from the sport without those opportunities). In this way, I think my coach did have control over me in regards to my taking on her views, although I'm not sure it was intentional control. By the time I was in high school and was invited to join a synchronized team, my coach was completely supportive and on board.

    iii.  How did this relate to feeling like your coach cared or not?

e.  At what times did you feel like your coach respected you as an individual?

    i.  How did you know your coach felt this way or not? Specific verbal feedback, her sharing what other coaches may have said and also later on in my career (in college and beyond), as well as taking the time and energy to give me a very meaningful gift and letter upon my high school graduation. She has also said to me (in talking about current students) that

<span style="color:red">she is not a coach just to take your money and will not work with skaters if they are not both clear on the skater's goals. *Note – in some ways, I think my views of her demonstrating respect (and all of the above) are in comparison to what I saw from other coaches and other skaters. This is something I want to be careful of in interviews, not to compare my experience to theirs but simply let them share theirs.</span>

    ii.  What did your coach do to show respect?

    iii.  How did your coach make your feel like your own individual, allowed to have your own experiences?

  f.  In what ways did your coach make you feel worthy?

    i.  As a whole person?

    ii.  As an athlete?

    iii.  What did your coach do to make you feel worthy (or not) of his/her time, effort, and attention?

  g.  At what times did you feel like your coach believed in your potential?

    i.  How did you know he/she did or did not?

    ii.  What did your coach do to make you feel this way or not?

    iii.  How did this relate to the way you performed?

D.  (*If not already addressed*) If you can think of a time, tell me about a way in which your coach changed the way he/she treated you:

  1.  Based on your performance?

    i.  Positive change?

    ii.  Negative change?

  2.  Based on your compliance to do whatever your coach asked you to do?

    i.  Positive change?

    ii.  Negative change?

  3.  Tell me about how frequently this happened.

  4.  Tell me how this related to your feeling like your coach cared about you.

  5.  Did this impact the way you viewed [or regarded] yourself in any way?

    i.  Positively?

    ii.  Negatively?

E.  In general, tell me more about how your coach's regard for you may have influenced your self-regard (your sense of self worth, the way you viewed and treated yourself) while you were competing, if at all.

  1.  Any examples of self-talk related to things your coach said to you? <span style="color:red">*Note – I have thought about this for a while, and the term "self-talk" is common to me being in the sport psych world while it might not be as common to others.</span>

  2.  Any ways in which your coach's reaction to you based on your performance related to the ways you viewed yourself after a good or bad performance? <span style="color:red">I was able to walk away from bad skaters and still have an underlying sense of worth as a person, even when my confidence regarding my skating ability may have been low. I think I largely credit this to my coach's consistently caring reactions after performances; however, it also could be due to my parents and my personality.</span>

3. How did this impact your self-regard after you had stopped competing? Note – I have also spent a lot of time thinking about and reflecting on this, very likely moreso than my participants. Perhaps I should just be more confident in my questions and not assume that participants will or will not understand or have an answer.

F. Tell me a little more about how your coach's regard of you impacted your overall experience in figure skating.
    1. Any ways in which it impacted your performance? Much of this for me is looking back/reflecting. I'm really not sure how her regard of me actually impacted my performances in the moments of competing. As a researcher I would love to find this connection, however I do think confidence and preparedness to compete are related to a number of things, more than just a coach providing UPR. For me, where I find the most connection (I think) is in my longevity in the sport and persistence through challenges, which ultimately led to my best performances later in my competitive career.
    2. How about your motivation? At this point, I definitely view my coach as someone who contributed greatly to my continuing in the sport when it was tough.
    3. Your body image or body satisfaction/dissatisfaction? I say this was a non-issue; really, as with (most likely) any female athlete I did struggle with this to an extent, especially during puberty and growth spurts. One thing to note is that my mom is a registered dietitian and I now know that there was a point at which my mom specifically asked my coach not to say anything to me about body weight, image, appearance. My coach respected this, but I also sometimes wonder if it would have been helpful to talk with her more about this.
    4. Your enjoyment in the sport?
    5. Burnout or longevity? [note question 2]

G. Is there anything else you think might be important to know about your relationship with your coach that we have not discussed?

H. Thank you so much for your time! I really appreciate your contribution to this study. I will email you once we have transcribed your interview and you will have a chance to read through it to let me know if it captures your experience accurately, or if there is anything you would like to add, change, or remove.

**Appendix G**

**Pilot Interview Memos**

Notes / sections to review from Pilot Interviews
*Pilot interview 1 BW is the first 10 minutes of the interview - I then had to change the way I was recording, but I think the most meaningful sections for you to listen to are all in Pilot Interview BW (the longer tape).

General notes (Both Pilot Interviews):
In general, I found myself saying "kinda" or "kind of" a lot when asking questions especially in
      BW's interview, think this improved with SM's interview.
In both, I found myself probing in ways that were not following the I-Guide exactly (i.e. giving a
      short reflection and asking to hear more about a specific thing that came up from a
      general question, even when it was not one of the follow-up questions in the I-Guide). I
      think this totally comes from my counseling experience, and I also did think it helped me
      get more detail out of her answers, just not sure it is entirely okay for a research
      interview. Examples are provided in the times below for you to listen to.

Sections to Listen to (Pilot Interview BW):
- **1:55-4:30** - am I too leading with some of these reflections, and did I get too off of the I-Guide?
- **9:50** -- okay for me to say "anything else you want to say on that?" (even though its about one segment and not at the end of the interview)
- **16:15-18:15** - OK to ask for more detail about starting and ending lessons?
- **20:15-25:24** - a number of examples of reflecting where I am unsure its needed; could I have skipped straight to the question of "How did your coach make you feel like your own individual?
- **30-33:54** - OK to start with just the first follow-up question (change based on performance) and stop there?
- **34:45-36:10** - right to move straight on after comment about mother, as this study is not looking at parent influence? *although I have a feeling this could come up frequently
- **39:30- 41:48** - This last question is kind of assuming people will understand what "regard" means, and seem hesitant in asking without trying to explain regard. Better to just assume and then respond if participants ask what I mean? *Any way I could make this question more clear that it is about the coach's changes in behavior & not other kinds of changes?
- **49:46-50:15** - should I / could I have probed more about the popped jumps? (i.e. noted that something really got to her about his reaction to them, asked what her own reaction became after popping a jump and if it related to his reaction? Or, is this too "counseling" and not sticking to the I-Guide enough?)

**Her feedback:**
- She asked if there was a way I could give questions in advance -- this is not my method, but makes a good point that some of the questions really made her think. This also helped me realize that I have been thinking about this for a long time, and it could bring up things for participants that they have not thought about in a long time, could make them think or

take them by surprise.
• She also noted that it would be interesting to do this with skaters shortly after they have retired - she stated that she thinks she would have had different answers right after she stopped skating, because she was "over it" and has a more mature perspective now. I don't think this will change anything for this study, but interesting to note.

Sections to listen to (Pilot Interview SM):
• **13:30-17:59** - Mainly wondering if I am too leading with my reflections, are interjections (i.e. really, wow) to "counselor" for the research, okay to ask her to clarify about the army and what that meant for her? Am I getting too caught up in details of these first questions?
• **18:15-18:40** - asked her to tell more about "why" she would never go back to the sport -- OK to probe like this or not relevant enough?
• **22:44** "in her mind" interjection - OK or should I have just let her keep going?
• **24:30-25:40** -- I am finding that asking for examples are almost better follow-ups than "tell me how," although (I think) both are asking for the same thing, essentially -- is it OK to use this wording, even if not directly from I-Guide?
• **28:45-31:28** - should/could have probed more with the question on coach's full attention? OK to use her answer to a previous question as an intro to another question, or should I just leave it more open and ask the question without bringing anything in from earlier in the interview?
• **38:18-40:45** - should/could have probed more on comment about her coach trusting her with work things? Should I have even asked the question (how did you know
• **58:45-1:00:48** - struggled (again) with the question about relating coach regard to self-regard. This may be because of her language difference (German primary language), but curious to hear your thoughts if you get to this segment.

**VITA**

Lauren McHenry was born in Raleigh, NC to the parents of Meg and John McHenry. She began figure skating at the age of seven and continued skating until she was 25-years-old. Lauren attended Douglas Elementary School from kindergarten to the fifth grade, Carroll Middle School from sixth to eighth grade, and Sanderson High School from ninth to twelfth grade where she graduated as the Salutatorian of her senior class. Lauren competed as a singles skater through her junior year of high school, after which she switched to synchronized team skating. After high school graduation, Lauren attended Miami University (Ohio) where she studied Psychology and minored in Sport Coaching. For three of her four years in college, she competed with Miami's Varsity Synchronized Skating Team, winning two collegiate National Championships in her junior and senior years. In her sophomore year, she also competed in singles skating for Miami's intercollegiate skating team. Immediately following college graduation, Lauren skated professionally with *Disney on Ice* for three years, touring and performing in 48 states and 27 countries around the world. For the past three years, Lauren has been a full-time student with a graduate research assistantship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and has coached skating in the local community. She graduates in May of 2018, and will remain at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she will pursue her PhD in Kinesiology with a specialization in Sport Psychology & Motor Behavior.