PARENT RELATIONAL PROCESSES WITH COACHES AND ATHLETES IN EARLY SPECIALIZATION SPORT

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Abstract

In early specialization sports, where athletes may reach elite levels as young as 13 or 14 years old, parents and coaches (both individually, and in combination) play an important role in supporting the development and overall quality of experience of youth athletes. Despite a growing focus on interpersonal relationships in sport, research examining parent-coach and parent-athlete interactions is relatively limited, particularly when compared to the coach-athlete dyad. Situated within an interpretivist paradigm, the purpose of this dissertation was to advance understanding of the relational processes of parents with coaches and athletes in the context of Canadian competitive figure skating. Two studies were conducted towards this end. The first study was an interpretive description with the purpose of understanding the nature of the coach-parent relationship. Data were collected using individual semi-structured interviews with 12 mothers and 12 coaches. Most participants described positive experiences of the parent-coach relationship, albeit with the presence of conflict. Participants’ descriptions of their experiences clustered around three configurations of the coach-parent dyad. These corresponded to (a) collaborative, (b) coach-athlete centric, and (c) contractual configurations, with each reflecting different views about the nature of the relationship. These configurations are discussed considering three prominent themes: expertise, communication, and trust. The second study was an instrumental case study design with five parent-athlete (athlete $M_{age} = 11.40$ years) dyads. Contextual action theory and action project method were used to describe how parents and athletes jointly navigated the transition to (or not to) higher levels of training and commitment in figure skating. Data were collected longitudinally over 10 months and included video-recorded conversations, video feedback-supported interviews, and biweekly telephone monitoring. Parent-athlete
dyads’ joint projects were grouped based on three common themes that corresponded to negotiating school, sport, and extra-curricular commitments, progressing towards skating goals, and maintaining a developmental focus. These joint projects were embedded in the broader parent-child relationship project. Overall, these studies revealed important aspects about parent-coach and parent-athlete relationships in skating and offer general insights for the study of parenting in sport. When taken together, the findings highlight the role of parents in promoting youth psychosocial development in sport.
Lay Summary

Parents are actively engaged in their child’s sport, particularly in sports where the highest levels of competition are reached as young as 13 or 14 years old. This research focused on understanding parents’ relationships with coaches and athletes in competitive figure skating. Despite common views of problems in parent-coach interactions, the findings showed that parents and coaches have relatively positive experiences of their relationship, even though all participants shared examples of conflict. There were also different perspectives about how coaches and parents relate that included working collaboratively, focusing more on the coach and athlete, or treating the relationship as business-oriented. The findings also highlighted that parents and athletes had shared goals related to increasing their involvement in skating, these included balancing commitments between school, extra-curricular activities, and skating, progressing towards skating goals, and prioritizing well-roundedness, well-being, and personal development.
Preface

The two studies presented in Chapters 2 and 3 are written in a manuscript format. The studies are currently under review for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Chapter 2. A manuscript of this study is currently under review for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. My co-authors for this submission include Leah Baugh (Masters Student, University of British Columbia), Kesha Pradhan (Masters Student, University of British Columbia), Mark Beauchamp, Sheila Marshall, and Richard Young. My contribution involved the formulation of the research questions, participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and manuscript preparation. The initial data analysis phase of the 24 interviews was conducted in pairs. Leah Baugh and Kesha Pradhan assisted with the analysis of 12 interviews each. Final analyses were conducted in a group setting with Leah Baugh, Kesha Pradhan, Sheila Marshall, and Richard Young. My co-authors also assisted with edits to the final version of the manuscript. Ethical approval was granted by the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (ID: H16-00975).

Chapter 3. A manuscript of this study is currently under review for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. My co-authors for this submission include Kesha Pradhan, Leah Baugh, Mark Beauchamp, Sheila Marshall, and Richard Young. My contribution involved the formulation of the research questions, participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and manuscript preparation. Data collection and initial analyses of the five dyads were conducted in pairs, as a result I was assisted by Leah Baugh (two dyads) and Kesha Pradhan (three dyads). Final analyses were conducted in a group setting with Leah Baugh, Kesha Pradhan, Sheila Marshall, and Richard Young. My co-authors also assisted with edits to the
final version of the manuscript. Ethical approval was granted by the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (ID: H15-01753).
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For Jarret.
Chapter 1: General Introduction

This year, three of the top nations in competitive figure skating were not able to send their best skaters to the Senior World Championships due to minimum age requirements. The International Skating Union (ISU, 2018) stipulates that skaters must be at least 15 years of age to compete at Worlds, a change in part made to protect young athletes from the excessive demands of the sport (Kestnbaum, 2003). The women’s national champions for Russia and the United States are 14 and 13 years old respectively, and the men’s silver medalist for Canada is 14 years old. Sports in which peak performance occurs at or before physical maturation are referred to as early specialization sport (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). Although, empirical evidence and professional opinions have mounted that discourage the practice of singular sport participation on a year-round basis and early in the sports career (e.g., Bergeron et al., 2015; Côté, Lidor, & Hackfort, 2009; Jayanthi, Pinkham, Dugas, Patrick, & LaBella, 2013; LaPrade et al., 2016), the nature of certain sports requires early specialization (e.g., Issurin, 2017). These acrobatic and highly kinesthetic sports typically require a complex motor skillset that cannot be fully mastered if taught after maturation (Sport Canada, 2016). Figure skating, gymnastics, and swimming are among a small subset of sports that Sport Canada (2016) identifies as early specialization. There is a growing body of literature related to the physical implications of early specialization practices (for reviews, see Bell, Post, Biese, Bay, & McLeod, 2018; Bergeron et al., 2015), however, knowledge of the psychosocial processes, particularly within early specialization sports, remains relatively limited.

Interpersonal relationships provide a backdrop for sport participation. In youth sport, relationships between coaches, athletes, and parents are instrumental in both athletic
performance (e.g., Rees, 2016) and the overall quality of people’s experiences in sport (e.g., Holt et al., 2017). Hinde (1976) defines a relationship as extending through time and involving multiple interactions between two known people. It is widely acknowledged that different sport settings and stages of the athletic career shape the type and frequency of interactions between athletes, coaches, peers, and parents (Côté, 1999; Martin, Ewing, & Gould, 2014; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). For instance, given the age of the athlete in early specialization sport, the parents are more likely to continue their active involvement in competitive sport through higher levels of their child’s sport participation (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). In contrast with late specialization sport, the relationships between parent-athlete and parent-coach in early specialization sport are arguably as salient as the coach-athlete, and yet, they have received considerably less attention in the literature.

In an effort to extend knowledge of interpersonal relationships in the context of early specialization sport, the purpose of this doctoral dissertation was to understand the relational processes between parents, coaches, and athletes in the context of Canadian competitive figure skating. This program of research was comprised of two studies, the presentation of which is organized around four chapters. The remainder of the current chapter is dedicated towards an in-depth review of the literature on interpersonal relationships in sport. The review concludes with an integrative critique in order to situate the two studies. Both studies build on the existing literature and respond to content and methodological deficits identified in the review. The first study is presented in Chapter 2, the aim of which was to understand the nature of the parent-coach relationship in competitive figure skating. The second study is presented in Chapter 3, the aim of which was to describe how parents and athletes jointly navigate the transition to (or not to) higher levels of training and commitment in this early
specialization sport context. The dissertation concludes with Chapter 4, which includes a synthesis of the collective findings in relation to the extant literature and a discussion of the strengths, limitations, potential avenues for future research, and implications for practice.

**Review of the Literature**

In a commemorative article on parental involvement in sport Harwood, Knight, Thrower, and Berrow (2019) suggest a shift in the research agenda for parenting in sport: to study parents as active participants worth collaborating and engaging with, as opposed to viewing them as simply consumers and influencers. A central premise of the article is that the literature on parental involvement and positive youth development in and through sport has largely neglected the role of parents in nurturing their child’s psychosocial development and experiences. The authors contend that the literature to date has more readily emphasized parental influence on ‘in situ’ experiential consequences such as motivation and sporting behaviour. They suggest that this emphasis comes at the expense of understanding how parents take a more proactive approach to nurture their child’s psychosocial development. One way to address the imbalance in the literature raised by Harwood et al. is to adopt a relational perspective when studying parenting in youth sport. Two central and understudied relationships in sport are the parent-coach and parent-athlete. Much of the literature on interpersonal relationships in the field of sport psychology has prioritized and focused on the coach-athlete relationship, largely, to the exclusion of other important relationships in sport. Given the proportional difference of empirical evidence, much can be learned from research on the coach-athlete dyad for studying parents’ relationships with coaches and athletes. Thus, the literature review described in the next section includes a discussion of the coach-athlete, parent-coach, and parent-athlete relationships.
Historical context of interpersonal relationships in sport. The study of relationships in sport began in the late 1970s (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006; Wylleman, 2000) with a focus on the coach-athlete relationship. Although a body of research on interpersonal relationships in sport has been underway for 40 years, research developments have progressed slowly. Almost 20 years ago, Wylleman (2000) suggested that the study of relationships in sport was “uncharted territory” (p. 555), highlighting a disproportion between the relevance of relationships in sport and the amount of research conducted. In the editorial to a special issue, Jowett and Wylleman (2006) made a case that momentum was building in relationship research, suggesting that the chasm was being crossed. Nearly 15 years later, a number of developments in relationship research have occurred, most notably, extensive coverage of the coach-athlete relationship (for reviews, see Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016).

One way to understand the historical development of research on interpersonal relationships is with respect to the focus of inquiry (e.g., Wylleman, 2000). In the 1970s the initial focus was on the coach-athlete relationship. There was a noticeable shift from studying the traits of coaches (e.g., Hendry, 1969) to the process of coaching. One line of research used a behavioural approach to conceptualize the coach-athlete relationship in terms of social reinforcement and modeling using the mediation model of leadership (Smoll, Smith, Curtis, & Hunt, 1978). Another line of research involved the multidimensional model of leadership, an interactional approach that investigated person and situation variables such as decision-making style, motivational tendency, and instructional behavior (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978). The focus of inquiry then extended to the influence of parents in youth sport in the 1980s. Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1984), for example, studied the influence of parental
pressure on young wrestlers. Similarly, Hellstedt (1990), investigated 13-year-old skiers’ perceptions of parental pressure and later went on to construct a developmental model of the athlete family (Hellstedt, 1995). A third focus of inquiry moved beyond the parent-coach-athlete relationships to the social network. Studies investigated the influence of social support on athletes’ well-being and performance. For example, Rosenfeld, Richman, and Hardy (1989) described the social support networks of athletes in terms of providers and types of support, such as technical support from coaches and emotional support from parents. In addition, Rosenfeld et al. (1989) examined whether there were differences between the social support networks of low- and high-stressed athletes. Relatedly, Hardy, Richman, and Rosenfeld (1991) explored the role of social support on life stress and injury in male and female collegiate athletes.

Each of these initial foci laid a foundation of research on relationships that contemporary scholars have continued to develop. For instance, Jowett and colleagues have led the field of sport psychology in advancing the study of the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., for reviews see Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Harwood, Holt, and Knight, among others, have furthered the study of parental involvement in youth sport (e.g., for reviews see Harwood & Knight, 2015; Holt & Knight, 2014; Knight, Berrow, & Harwood, 2017) and Coffee, Lavallee, and Rees, among others, have expanded the body of literature on social networks and support (e.g., for reviews see Rees, 2016; Sheridan, Coffee, & Lavallee, 2014). The coach-athlete relationship, however, continues to be the most studied and cited as the most important relationship in sport (Jowett, 2017).

**Coach-athlete relationship.** One way to understand the growing body of literature
on the coach-athlete relationship is to consider methodologically the level of analysis. Studies on the coach-athlete relationship are conducted with an emphasis on the individual and dyadic level of analysis. However, most of the literature to date has prioritized analysis at the individual level, exploring the perceptions, experiences, or needs of coaches and athletes (e.g., Adie & Jowett, 2010; Antonini Philippe, Sagar, Huguet, Paquet, & Jowett, 2011; Chelladurai, 1984; Davis & Jowett, 2010, 2014; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Frost, 2007; Kavanagh, Brown, & Jones, 2017; LaVoi, 2007; Moen, Myhre, & Moldovan 2018; Sandström, Linnér, & Stambulova, 2016; Thelwell, Wagstaff, Chapman, & Kenttä, 2017). For example, Stirling and Kerr (2009, 2013) investigated abused athletes’ perspectives of the coach-athlete relationship attending to perceptions of power in the relationship and perceived effects of emotional abuse. In addition, Jowett and Cockerill (2003) interviewed 12 Olympic medallists about the nature and significance of the coach-athlete relationship within the constructs of closeness, co-orientation, and complementarity (i.e., the 3Cs). As one of the earlier studies on the now widely used 3+1Cs model (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016), this study asked open-ended questions about the main features and characteristics of the relationship, connection to success, conflicts, and comparison with their ideal coach-athlete relationship. In each of these studies the analysis emphasized the individual athletes’ perceptions related to relational phenomena (i.e., closeness, commitment, complementarity). The result was a singular perspective of the coach-athlete relationship.

Poczwardowski et al. (2006) highlighted that the prominent focus of analysis at the individual level “may miss or misrepresent some of the more complex issues that are inherently present in the interpersonal dynamics in the athlete-coach dyad” (p. 129). They suggested that the inclusion of both members of the dyad in research designs, that enables
analysis at the dyadic level, is one way of overcoming the singular bias identified in relationship research (Poczwardowski et al., 2006; Wylleman, 2000). Thus, there is a growing trend of research that has focused on the dyadic level of analysis.

Earlier dyadic research studied compatibility between coach-athlete dyads (e.g., Carron & Bennett, 1977; Horne & Carron, 1985). For example, Carron and Bennett (1977) studied 54 coach-athlete dyads in intercollegiate sports about whether the coaches’ and athletes’ expressed behaviours were compatible with the behaviour that the athlete or coach desired. Twenty years later, Jowett and Poczwardowski each conducted qualitative studies that focused on the coach-athlete dyad. Jowett and Meek (2000) studied four married coach-athlete dyads and Jowett (2003) conducted a single case study on a coach-athlete dyad to examine the nature of a top-level, adult coach-athlete dyad that experienced interpersonal conflict. In contrast, rather than focus exclusively on coach-athlete dyads, Poczwardowski (1997) studied a high-level, collegiate gymnastics team that encompassed six female gymnasts, three coaches, and an athletic trainer. Including multiple coach-athlete dyads from the same team, as well as the athletic therapist, provided an alternative viewpoint of the dyadic dynamics of the coach-athlete relationship.

In the last 15 years, the field has developed extensively with respect to the study of the coach-athlete relationship dyadically. A range of studies explored interpersonal dimensions and constructs using the coach-athlete dyad (e.g., Davis, Jowett, & Lafrenière, 2013; Jowett & Clark-Carter, 2006; Jowett & Nezlek, 2012; Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, & Carbonneau, 2011; Rocchi & Pelletier, 2018; Staff, Didymus, & Backhouse, 2017; Trzaskoma-Bicsérdy, Bognár, Révész, & Géczi, 2007; Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2018). For instance, Lorimer and Jowett (2009a, 2009b) investigated empathic accuracy of
coach-athlete dyads in individual and team sports. Another line of research conducted by Jackson and colleagues (Jackson, Knapp, & Beauchamp, 2009) explored self-, other-, and relation inferred self-efficacy in the coach-athlete dyad. They also examined the role of these efficacy beliefs in relation to perceptions of relationship quality (Jackson, Grove, & Beauchamp, 2010), commitment, satisfaction, and effort (Jackson & Beauchamp, 2010). These advances in knowledge related to the coach-athlete relationship have come about largely as a result of the development and use of conceptual models as seen in the following section.

**Conceptual models.** Early work conceptualized the coach-athlete relationship within a leadership approach (e.g., Chelladurai, 1984; Smoll & Smith, 1989). However, more recently, conceptual models focus on the interpersonal dynamics within the coach-athlete relationship, including Wylleman’s (2000) interpersonal behaviours model, Poczwardowski and colleague’s (Poczwardowski, 1997; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Pereygo, 2002a; Poczwardowski, Henschen, & Barott, 2002b) qualitative-interpretive model, Mageau and Vallerand’s (2003) motivational model, Jowett and colleagues’ (Jowett, 2005, 2017; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016) 3+1Cs model, and Jowett and Poczwardowski’s (2007) integrated model. Comparatively, Jowett and colleague’s 3+1Cs model is used the most extensively to conceptualize and study the coach-athlete relationship. A brief description of the 3+1Cs model is provided below given its widespread use in the literature. The qualitative-interpretive model is also described as it was used, in part, to conceptualize the coach-parent relationship in Study 1 (Chapter 2).

**Jowett and colleagues’ 3Cs+I model.** Informed by interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) the 3+1Cs model conceptualizes the coach-athlete relationship as “a
situation in which coaches’ and athletes’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are interdependent” (Jowett, 2007b, p. 17). The relationship is considered dynamic; its nature changes over time in response to internal, situational, and relational factors. Coaches’ and athletes’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are operationalized using four separate constructs from the broader interpersonal relationship literature, namely, closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Closeness encompasses mutual affective meanings such as trust, respect, and liking. Commitment reflects the cognitive aspect and refers to coaches’ and athletes’ long-term orientation towards the relationship. Complementarity represents the behavioural aspect and refers to actions of cooperation and affiliation such as reciprocal (e.g., dominance and submission) and corresponding (e.g., friendly and responsive attitudes) behaviours. The fourth construct, co-orientation, refers to the degree of similarity between athletes’ and coaches’ interpersonal perceptions (i.e., assumed similarity, actual similarity, and empathic understanding).

The 3Cs are considered to reflect the degree of interdependence between coaches and athletes in terms of closeness, commitment, and complementarity. The model is grounded in a foundation of qualitative research on coach-athlete dyads exploring the utility of the Cs for understanding the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., Jowett, 2003; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000). In addition, the development of the direct and metaperspective versions of the Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Qs; e.g., Jowett, 2009a, 2009b; Jowett & Ntoumis, 2004; Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Yang & Jowett, 2012) has advanced quantitative research using the 3+1Cs model for conceptualizing the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., Jowett & Chaundry, 2004; Jowett & Clark-Carter, 2006; Jowett et al.,

**Poczwardowski and colleagues’ qualitative-interpretive model.** Compared to the 3+1Cs model, research using the qualitative-interpretive model is limited. Poczwardowski and colleagues (Poczwardowski, 1997; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Perego, 2002; Poczwardowski, Henschen, & Barott, 2002) also initially took an exploratory approach to understand the coach-athlete relationship. However, rather than a deductive approach with a priori constructs such as the 3Cs (Jowett, 2003), Poczwardowski (1997) conducted an interpretive research study grounded in symbolic interactionism and focused on the meaning, process, and context of coach-athlete dyads. Informed by social exchange theory (Chadwick-Jones, 1976) and negotiated order theory (Strauss, Erich, Bucher, & Sabshin, 1963), the results of the study conceptualized the coach-athlete relationship as “a recurring pattern in the athlete’s and coach’s activity, interaction, and care… aimed at building and maintaining [the] relationship” (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Perego, 2002, p. 129). Activity relates to the individual and separate actions of coaches and athletes (both sport- and non-sport specific), interaction is what they do together, and care involves recognizing the other person on a cognitive and affective level and acting in the best interest of the other person’s welfare. The relationship was described as positive when coaches’ and athletes’ activities, interactions, and care were directed toward the relationship in addition to the sporting task. Also, the relationship was considered strong when coaches and athletes interpreted that the other cared about and was engaged in activities and interactions towards building and maintaining the relationship. The absence of activities, interactions, or care directed toward the relationship corresponded with a negative and weak relationship. Furthermore, a reciprocal pattern was
noted between interaction and care, the more the athlete and coach cared, the more they shared, and the more they shared, the more they cared about each other. In addition, the more positive and stronger the athlete-coach relationship, the greater growth the athletes and coaches experienced both athletically and personally.

**Parent-coach relationship.** Balanced against the empirical evidence on the coach-athlete relationship, the parent-coach relationship studied interpersonally has largely been neglected. Although there is extensive anecdotal literature about facilitating, managing, and enhancing the coach-parent relationship (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2015; Knight & Holt, 2014; Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011; Van Mullen & Cole, 2015), empirical investigations explicitly examining parent-coach interactions and the nature of the relationship are relatively limited (for a review see Knight & Gould, 2016). This review of the coach-parent relationship literature describes research that has explicitly focused on the nature and characteristics of the relationship. However, given the narrow range of empirical studies, selected studies on parental involvement and coaching that reflected coaches’ and parents’ perspectives of each other and the relationship were included.

A search of the literature identified only a few studies that investigated the nature of the coach-parent relationship as an explicit focus of inquiry. For example, Vanden Auweele (1999) sought to identify the main dimensions of the coach-parent relationship as perceived by both parents and coaches. A sample of 140 parents (80 mothers, 60 fathers) and 71 coaches were asked about their perceptions of the parent-coach relationship using a self-report questionnaire. The general consensus drawn by Vanden Auweele (1999) was that coaches’ and parents’ behaviours and perceptions were complementary. Both sides perceived the other as cooperative and in turn responded with cooperativeness. Another
study by Wylleman, De Knop, Sloore, Vanden Auweele, and Ewing (2002) explored athletes’ perspectives of the dyadic relationships in the athletic triangle. Using the Sport Interpersonal Relationships Questionnaire 265 youth athletes (M age=17.5 years) provided their perceptions about the parent-coach, parent-athlete, and coach-athlete relationship. Specifically, athletes perceived the parent-coach relationship as mutually consultative, with parents behaving in a helpful way towards the coach and coaches consulting with and feeling supported by parents.

Although not directly studying the parent-coach relationship, Wolfenden and Holt (2005) investigated athletes’, parents’, and coaches’ perceptions of talent development in junior tennis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants (three athletes aged 13-15 years, four parents, and two coaches). Among the six categories related to talent development was the importance of positive relationships with coaches for both athletes and parents. The participants generally had positive perceptions of the parent-coach relationship. It was reported that parents had high regard for their child’s coach; one parent recalled that the coach was the best thing that happened to their child’s tennis. Similarly, the two coaches in the study had positive perceptions of parents. One coach shared, “I don’t speak [to the parents] as much as I should. But the parents are great. They let me get on with my job, and yes I would say we have a solid relationship” (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005, p. 122).

Coaches’ perspectives of parents. Research examining coach stressors and the role and influence of parents in youth sport as perceived by coaches highlights additional aspects of the parent-coach relationship. For instance, Scantling and Lackey (2005) reviewed four decades of research on high school coaching longevity and associated pressures as perceived by high school principals in the state of Nebraska. In general, the majority of principals rated
coaches to be under “moderate” pressure. Parents of athletes were identified as one of the top five sources of pressure. In the 1990s and 2000s parents of athletes were ranked as the number one source of pressure on coaches. More specifically, Strean (1995) found that coaches perceived problems with parents influencing competition schedules, interfering with team tactics, opposing coach leadership and strategy, and engaging in vicious remarks on the sideline. In addition, one coach highlighted the collective power of parents for arranging a “coup” and dismissing a head coach (Strean, 1995). Similarly, Reade and Rodgers (2009) found that parents were a main source of stress for coaches. In contrast, Raedeke, Warren, and Granzyk (2002) identified issues with parents, such as dealing with over-involved parents and parental pressure to develop a successful program, as minimally stressful compared to other issues in coaching such as conflicts with administration, general frustrations with coaching, and limits on time.

While these studies investigated sources of pressure and stress on coaches more generally, Knight and Harwood (2009) investigated specific parent-related stressors for coaches across the athletic career. Côté’s (1999) developmental model of sport participation was used to denote stages that athletes move through during their involvement in sport which includes sampling, specializing, and investing. In the sampling stage the emphasis is on fun, play, and engagement in multiple sports. In the specializing stage athletes begin to focus their attention on one or two sports, and the investing stage is when the athlete commits to one sport and engages in extensive training toward the elite level. According to the model, parents are most involved in the sampling stages with the coach having a minimal role. Coaches become more prominent in the specializing and investing stages while the parents’ involvement decreases. Direct stressors identified by coaches related to (a) variations in
parental involvement, with over involved and under involved parents perceived as more stressful; (b) parents’ perceptions of the coach; (c) parents’ understanding of the sport; (d) demands parents placed on coaches including imposing on their personal time, expectations for communication, and perceptions of their commitment; and (e) the effects coaches perceived parents to have on their children (Knight & Harwood, 2009). Across the athletic career parent-related stressors were less in the sampling and investing stage. Similar findings were identified by Gould, Pierce, Wright, Lauer, and Nalepa (2016) in a study on coaches’ views of parent roles in 10-and-under tennis. Among the biggest challenges working with parents were parent over involvement, overemphasis on results and comparison, and unrealistic expectations and pressure. Furthermore, coaches found how parents approached them in their interactions, such as defensively, aggressively, or questioning, was also a source of stress and indirectly hindered the coach-athlete relationship (Knight & Harwood, 2009; Ross, Mallett, & Parkes, 2015).

Coach observed parent-child interactions were also identified as a source of stress for several coaches (e.g., Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006, 2008; Gould et al., 2016; Knight & Harwood, 2009; Ross, Mallett, & Parkes, 2015). For example, Gould et al. (2006) surveyed 132 junior tennis coaches about the role and behaviours of parents. A subset of the study focused on the extent of problem behaviours in parent-child interactions. Coaches were asked to rate 26 items based on the extent of the perceived problem. Most items were identified as “sometimes a problem”. The most common problem behaviours were overemphasizing winning, unrealistic parental expectations, coaching their own child, criticizing their child, and pampering their child too much. Similarly, Gould et al. (2008) conducted six focus groups with 24 coaches to explore coaches’ perceptions of parental
behaviours in junior tennis. Categories related to negative parental behaviour included overemphasizing winning, becoming controlling and over involved (i.e., overprotective and making excuses for their child or forcing their child to play), being overbearing and pushy (i.e., comparing child to others, bragging about child, or having unrealistic expectations), and negative and critical communication (i.e., displaying a lack of confidence in their child or not listening to their child). Knight and Harwood (2009) also identified indirect stressors such as parents putting pressure on their children, limiting their child’s development by preventing the development of independence (through over involvement), not providing appropriate opportunities, and distracting their child during practice sessions. In addition, Knight and Harwood reported that coaches found educating parents was a source of stress, with one coach stating, “it’s probably the biggest [stress]… trying to educate the parents on actually what they have to do for their children competitively, what is required of them.” (Knight & Harwood, 2009, p. 555).

Although there is an emphasis on problem parents in the literature (Knight & Newport, 2017), coaches generally acknowledge that the majority of parents are “good parents” (Strean, 1995, p. 27) whom they experience as positive (Gould et al., 2008). Tennis coaches were asked what percentage of parents hurt and facilitate their child’s development as a player. Coaches believed that 35.9% were a negative influence, whereas they felt that 58.6% of parents were a positive influence (Gould et al., 2006). Similarly, a coach from Strean’s (1995) interviews highlighted that parents are seldom discussed when they are not problematic. The coach stated, “the good parents in the club, the 90% of them that you never talk about – that 90% who are good solid supportive parents” (p. 27). Positive parent behaviours perceived by coaches include providing financial, logistical, and socio-emotional
support, offering sport opportunities, maintaining perspective, emphasizing their child’s total development, providing unconditional love and support, and keeping a balanced approach (Gould et al., 2006, 2008, 2016; Ross et al., 2015). This is consistent with the responsibilities of parents of athletes put forward by Harwood and Knight (2015), namely, “managing and supporting the needs of their child, managing themselves and their own well-being, and managing their interactions with the youth sport environment” (p. 32).

**Parents’ perspectives of coaches.** Only one study was found that focused on parents’ perspective of the parent-coach relationship as a direct focus of inquiry. Blom, Akpan, Lape, and Foster (2014) investigated parents’ perspective of the ideal coach-parent relationship. The study involved six focus groups with 25 parents (5 fathers, 20 mothers) who were involved in recreational youth sport. Positive parent-coach interactions were represented by four primary themes: (a) *roles and boundaries*, which encompassed the maintenance of a friend-coach boundary, clearly communicating roles, and the importance of both coaches and parents contributing to relational maintenance; (b) *respect*, which included letting the coach do their job and fostering mutual respect; (c) *coaching philosophy*, which represented the need to foster a partnership between coach and parent and the use of a mastery approach; and (d) *communication*, which referred to the need for honest, open, and two-way communication. Beyond this study, there is scarce evidence pertaining to parents’ perspectives of the coach-parent relationship.

Looking to the parental involvement in sport literature offers additional insights about parents’ views of the parent-coach relationship. Similar to the collection of studies reported earlier on coaches’ perspectives of parent-related stressors, Harwood, Knight, and colleagues (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b) investigated parents’
stressors in youth individual and team sport across the athletic career. For example, Harwood and Knight (2009a) conducted an open-ended survey with 123 tennis parents that examined their perceived stressors as tennis-parents. One of the seven core themes was coach-related stressors which included lack of match attendance and player preparation, and lack of feedback, interest, and strategic advice to parents. Parents also identified unprofessional behaviour, poor planning, and non-punctuality as stressors. Comparatively, however, coach-related stressors were only identified by a small percentage of parents (i.e., 27%).

Taking a more in-depth approach to the study of parents’ stressors in tennis, Harwood and Knight (2009b) interviewed 22 tennis parents across different stages (i.e., sampling, specializing, and investing) of the athletic career. Côté’s (1999) developmental model of sport participation, described earlier, was used as the framework for the athletic career. Aspects of the parent-coach relationship emerged under one of the core themes, namely, the organizational theme. Parents described coaches’ lack of feedback, respect, and commitment as a source of stress. This varied across the stages of the athletic career with 80% of parents in the investing stage identifying lack of feedback, respect, and commitment as a stressor compared to 50% of parents in the specializing stage and 67% of parents in the sampling stage. Parents also indicated that the lack of information from coaches was a stressor. Extending their program of research to team sports, Harwood et al. (2010) explored stressors of 41 parents using focus groups. Parents across all stages of the athletic career indicated that they felt they were not understood nor appreciated by coaches. Of note, this was the only coach-related stressor identified by parents in this study.

More recently, Knight and Holt (2014) sought to develop a grounded theory of
optimal parental involvement in youth tennis. Drawing on the broader literature on parenting practices (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993) they developed a theory that centered on shared goals between parents and athletes and how parents could develop an understanding emotional climate and engage in optimal parenting practices at competition. Among the parenting practices identified was maintaining strong parent-coach relationships. However, beyond mention of this strategy in the overall theoretical model, the specifics of how to engage with and interact with coaches to facilitate a strong parent-coach relationship were not identified or discussed. Extending this line of research, studies have emerged that assess the effectiveness of parent education programs (e.g., Dorsch et al., 2018; Thrower, Harwood, & Spray, 2017). Within these programs there are sections of educational material geared towards helping parents maintain healthy relationships with coaches. For example, one parent education program encourages parents to “trust the coaches and to communicate with [them] at the right time and place” (Dorsch, Dunn, Osai, & King, 2014, p. 16). However, specific outcomes of these parent education programs related to the parent-coach relationship were not reported.

**Researchers’ and practitioners’ perspectives.** In addition to coaches’ and parents’ perspectives, youth sport researchers and practitioners also provide insights about the parent-coach relationship. Although not empirically based, these largely anecdotal contributions are widely referenced in the literature and offer additional knowledge about the nature of parent-coach interactions. A prominent focus of articles is on assisting coaches with “dealing with parents” or facilitating harmonious parent-coach relationships (e.g., Hellstedt, 1987; Smoll et al., 2011; Van Mullem & Cole, 2015). These contributions tend to make broad generalizations, often describing typologies of parents for helping coaches understand
different parent behaviours. For example, Hellstedt (1987) suggested that there is a continuum of parental involvement including under-, moderately, and over-involved parents. Smoll et al. (2011) described parents as disinterested, overcritical, scream from behind bench, sideline coaches, and/or overprotective. More recently in an article on communication strategies Van Mullem and Cole (2015) described seven types of parents: performance-focused, emotionally driven, seasoned veteran, financial influencer, verbal abuser, submissive bystander, and clock watcher. Although typologies can be helpful for making sense of parents’ behavioural characteristics, they are also narrow and rigid, contributing to the notion that parents are a hassle rather than someone whom the coach can collaborate and engage with as a resource (e.g., Harwood, 2011).

Common strategies and suggestions (e.g., see International Journal of Coaching Science, Issue 1 for a full review) are also discussed in the literature for assisting coaches to work effectively with parents. A typical trend is to associate certain strategies with types of parents (e.g., Hellstedt, 1987; Van Mullem & Cole, 2015). For example, for each of the seven types of parents that Van Mullem and Cole (2015) described, they offer key characteristics to help coaches identify each type of parent and recommend subsequent strategies for communicating with each type. For instance, the performance-focused parent is described as seeking results to justify their child’s involvement in sport. Van Mullem and Cole state that performance-focused parents are typically quite driven and likely former athletes themselves. In order to identify the performance-focused parent they encourage coaches to look for parents who monitor the statistical performance of their child, talk with their child immediately following a game, and who watch practices and off-season workouts.
The recommendation for coaches is to keep these parents involved from a distance and to encourage the parent to have a team-oriented perspective (Van Mullem & Cole, 2015).

Smoll et al. (2011) provided another set of suggestions for coaches working with parents which was accompanied by 11 commentaries from prominent scholars in youth sport. The central focus of Smoll et al.’s article was to help coaches foster better understanding among parents of athletes, particularly around

- the differences between youth and professional sport,
- the goals of youth sport,
- how to have a healthy philosophy of winning,
- parent roles and responsibilities,
- the importance of two-way communication, and
- how to initiate sport meetings with parents (2011).

All commentaries affirmed and supported the core tenets of Smoll et al.’s suggestions and in some cases additions or emphases of selected points were highlighted.

For instance, Brustad (2011) identified the uni-directional nature of Smoll et al.’s recommendations and discussed the importance of empowering parents to have a voice. Also, Harwood (2011) suggested a humanistic approach to working with parents that encouraged coaches to have empathy for the stressors faced by parents. He also went on to propose that “parents aren’t there to be fixed, they are there to be developed and grown” (p. 62). Such sentiments move away from the prominent focus on parents as problematic. In addition, both O’Connor (2011) and McKenna (2011) highlighted the dynamic, nuanced, and process-oriented nature of the coach-parent relationship. Although Smoll et al.’s (2011) suggestions provide practical and concrete strategies for coaches, O’Connor (2011) and
McKenna (2011) highlighted that they are to some degree static, falling short of accommodating the interactive components of the relationship. Furthermore, Gilbert and Hamel (2011) were the only contributors to comment on how Smoll et al.’s (2011) suggestions treat youth sport as a single, uniform entity. On the contrary, they suggested that “youth sport comprises many extremely diverse sport settings, each with its own unique features that require shifts in coach and parent roles” (Gilbert & Hamel, 2011, p. 38). One set of general suggestions may not be relevant for the diversity inherent in youth sport settings.

Smoll et al.’s (2011) article and associated commentaries shed light on some of the common perceptions that researchers, practitioners, and coaches hold in relation to the coach-parent relationship. The anecdotal accounts suggest that the behaviours of some parents have created a generalized sentiment that collaborating with parents is a challenge and a hassle. Knight and Newport (2017) highlighted that despite the consistency with which problematic parents are described, there is scant empirical evidence in support of such statements. Even more, the existing evidence on the coach-parent relationship and coach-related stressors indicates that the majority of parents are not difficult to engage with in youth sport.

This review of the literature on the parent-coach dyad reveals a number of shortcomings in our understanding of the dynamics and processes between parents and coaches in youth sport. First, this is a relatively understudied dyad with little known empirically about the interactions between parents and coaches. Second, the existing knowledge presents a largely singular view on parent-coach interactions by emphasizing the coach’s perspective and role in facilitating and maintaining the relationship. Finally, the
relationship has typically been generalized across youth sport settings despite contextual differences that may affect the nature of interactions between parents and coaches.

**Parent-athlete relationship.** Research on the parent-athlete relationship is similarly difficult to parse out from the broader literature on parental involvement in youth sport. The involvement of parents in youth sport has been a focus of research for over 40 years (for reviews see Holt & Knight, 2014; Knight et al., 2017). It is well recognized that parents play an important role in initiating sport activities for their children and providing opportunities and resources for continued participation (e.g., Côté, 1999; Harwood & Knight, 2015; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a). Parents are also key influencers on children’s positive experiences in sport such as enjoyment and competence (e.g., Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002; Brustad, 1988; Brustad, 1993; Dunn, Dorsch, King, & Rothlisberger, 2016; McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2007), and at times, can also be sources of anxiety, stress, pressure, and burnout (e.g., Bois, Lalanne, & Delforge, 2009; Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; Gustafsson, Hill, Stenling, & Wagnsson, 2016). Key areas of study associated with parenting in sport include parental influence on the quality of children’s experiences in sport (e.g., Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2008), the role of parents in promoting child motivation and competence (e.g., Amado, Sánchez-Oliva, González-Ponce, Pulido-González, & Sánchez-Miguel, 2015; Felber Charbonneau & Camiré, 2019; Garcia Bengoechea & Strean, 2007; Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavallee, 2009), differences in parenting styles (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009; Juntumaa, Keskivaara, & Punamaki, 2005; Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011), parents’ behaviour (perceived, actual, and ideal) and involvement at competitions (e.g., Dorsch, Smith, Wilson, & McDonough, 2015; Knight,
Neely, & Holt, 2011; Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Omlø & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2011), and socialization in sport (e.g., Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Greendorfer & Bruce, 1991; Pot, Verbeek, van der Zwan, & Hilvoorde, 2016; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). In addition, recent research has taken a more parent-centric perspective (Harwood & Knight, 2016) and explored parents’ experiences related to being involved in their children’s sport (e.g., Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2015; Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b; Thrower, Harwood, & Spray, 2016; Warner, Dixon, & Leierer, 2015; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008).

The empirical literature on parenting in sport also includes studies that focus explicitly on the influence of the parent-child relationship in youth sport. Some studies focused on the influence of athletes’ perceptions of their relationships with their parents on their physical selves, self-esteem, and motivational outcomes (e.g., Jowett & Cramer, 2010; Kang, Jeon, Kwong, & Park, 2015; Ullrich-French & Smith, 2006); while other studies adopted dyadic approaches that include both parents and athletes in the study design. For instance, Kaye, Frith, and Vosloo (2015) surveyed parent-child dyads to explore the interpersonal effects of achievement goals on precompetitive anxiety. The results showed that the definitions of competence that parents hold for their children influence the athletes’ emotional state and that parent’s goals had a stronger influence on an athlete’s anxiety than vice versa. These findings provided support for the phenomenon of dyadic transmission in the parent-athlete dyad, where one person’s psychological states and actions has the capacity to influence those of the other (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). Dorsch, Smith, and Dotterer (2016) also surveyed parent-child dyads, but the study examined individual, relationship, and context factors associated with parent support and pressure. Specific to the parent-child
relationship, the findings showed that higher ratings of warmth in the relationship were associated with parental support. In contrast, higher ratings of conflict were associated with perceptions of pressure.

Few studies, however, examine the interactions that occur between parents and athletes. The reciprocal nature of parent and child behaviour in sport is noted, for example, most frequently in the socialization in sport literature (e.g., Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bois et al., 2002; Brustad, 1993; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). Although typically the emphasis is on parent to child socialization, more recently, the interactive processes of how parent’s experiences and behaviours are affected by their child’s participation in sport were described (e.g., Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009, 2015; Holt et al., 2009; Knight & Holt, 2013). Research that investigates relational phenomena (i.e., communication, conflict, interactions) that occur between parent and athlete is only beginning to unfold (e.g., Prewitt-White, Fisher, Odenheimer, & Buchanan, 2016). Recent investigations have explored communication between parent and child, particularly around post-game discussions and debriefs (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Tamminen, Poucher, & Povilaitis, 2017). Other inquiries have focused on parent-child interactions studied dyadically. For instance, Clarke, Harwood, and Cushion (2016) explored parent’s and children’s experiences of their interaction and relationship in the context of elite youth football. Based on individual interviews and dyadic analyses Clarke et al. found that the parent-athlete relationship was constituted by a sense of closeness through interactions in sport. These interactions were shaped by the gender of the parent, social context, particularly other family relations, and the temporality of the sport context including upcoming transitions and consequences of academy decisions.
Although research has shifted to an emphasis on the parent-child dyad, including both parents and athletes in the study design, these investigations are hampered by an overreliance on interview data. Even though the use of dyadic analyses (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Kaye et al., 2015) has advanced the study of parent-athlete relationships from a focus on the individual level of analysis, the relational processes beyond those reported by parents and athletes remain relatively unexplored. In order to capture the inherent complexity and processes between parents and athletes, borrowing methodologies and data collection methods from other disciplines may extend knowledge of the parent-child relationship in youth sport (Carr, 2012). A more detailed critique of the literature is provided in the following section.

**Summary and integrative critique of the literature.** To summarize, mapping the interpersonal relationships in sport literature reveals similarities and differences in the study of the coach-athlete, parent-coach, and parent-athlete dyads. First, there is a general trend, particularly in the coach-athlete and parent-athlete literature that shows a movement from studies that focus on the individual to the dyad as the level of analysis. That is, the literature has developed from exploring individual behaviours, perceptions, or needs to a focus on relational phenomena that occur between individuals. Comparatively, however, the parent-coach literature continues to focus on the individual level of analysis, with few empirical studies including both coaches and parents in the study design and explicitly focusing on interactive processes. Second, the study of the coach-athlete relationship is considerably more advanced as noted by the greater proportion of studies and the existence of conceptual models and theoretical frameworks. Third, relative to the progression of research on the coach-athlete relationship, there is a general paucity of empirical investigation on parent-
athlete and parent-coach relationships. Based on the literature, possible explanations for this imbalance may include the pertinence and centrality afforded to the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett, 2017), the overemphasis on studies of parents as opposed to with parents (Harwood et al., 2019), and the predominant narrative that parental involvement decreases throughout the athletic career (Harwood & Knight, 2016).

This review of the literature also highlights limitations and areas for further study of interpersonal relationships in sport. Methodologically, both quantitative and qualitative designs are used to study these relationships. The avenues for exploring the coach-athlete and parent-athlete relationships began with qualitative investigations that aimed at describing and understanding the relationships in detail (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Jowett, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002; Poczwardowski, Henschen, & Barott, 2002). Similar exploratory investigations of the parent-coach relationship have yet to be conducted. Given the limited empirical base for understanding parent-coach interactions, exploring the parent-coach relationship with qualitative investigations may be a fruitful avenue for research. Also, specific to the coach-athlete and parent-athlete literature, to date, data are primarily survey and interview based, with the dyadic level of analysis based on individuals’ perceptions (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Felber Charbonneau and Camiré, 2019; Nicholls & Perry, 2016; Stebbings et al., 2016). Research designs that move beyond self-reported data may also extend knowledge of dyadic relationships in sport. In addition, given the process-oriented nature of relationships, that is, that relationships are dynamic and constituted through multiple interactions over time, it is surprising that few studies adopt longitudinal designs. Since relationships are dynamic and constantly changing, longitudinal designs could offer important temporal information. Furthermore, although multiple sport-
specific conceptual models exist within the coach-athlete literature, studies have largely favoured Jowett and colleagues 3Cs+1 model (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Narrow reliance on a single model does little to advance a comprehensive and diverse understanding of interpersonal relationships (Poczwardowski et al., 2006). Thus, just as borrowing from other disciplines has informed the study of the coach-athlete relationship to date (e.g., interdependence theory, social exchange theory, negotiated order theory, attachment theory), the continued integration of alternative theories and relational perspectives may add diversity to the extant literature.

These deficits in the existing literature in addition to the movement away from sport specialization early in the sports career (e.g., IOC, Bergeron et al., 2015; Sport Canada, 2016) lead to specific directions that require further inquiry. Situated within an interpretivist paradigm (Pascale, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005), the purpose of this dissertation was to advance understanding of the relational processes of parents in the context of early specialization sport. Specifically, one study examined the parent-coach relationship and another study the parent-athlete relationship in competitive figure skating. The first study (Chapter 2) was designed to understand the nature of the parent-coach relationship. Given that much of the literature has focused on the relationship solely from the perspective of coaches and largely neglected interactive processes, the study was designed to include perspectives from both coaches and parents about their interactions. The aim was to overcome speculative and generalized accounts by detailing how parents and coaches describe their experiences of the relationship. This inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) What are the patterns of similarity and difference in how coaches and parents describe the coach-parent relationship? (b) What are the themes that characterize this relationship?
The second study (Chapter 3) was designed to understand how parents and athletes jointly navigate the transition to (or not to) higher levels of training and commitment in early specialization sport. In an effort to extend knowledge about the parent-athlete relationship, the focus of the study was on how parents and athletes acted together as a dyad. To overcome the previously identified limitations in the study of interpersonal relationships in sport, a dyadic perspective in both data collection and analysis was adopted through the use of a theoretical framework and associated research methodology from the field of counselling. Specifically, contextual action theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996) was used to conceptualize specialization as a transition process involving intentional, goal-directed actions enacted jointly by athletes and their parents. Contextual action theory and the action project method (Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005) enabled the description of the joint projects of parents and athletes over time related to the transition to higher levels of training and commitment in competitive figure skating. Joint projects refer to interrelated actions between parents and athletes that are constructed around a common goal or meaning. A more detailed description and rationale for the theoretical framework is provided in Chapter 3. Guiding the inquiry was the following research question: How do parents and athletes jointly navigate the transition to higher levels of training and commitment in competitive figure skating?

The ensuing chapters of this dissertation address these two sets of research questions with the aim of advancing knowledge about parent relational processes with coaches (Chapter 2) and athletes (Chapter 3) in the context of Canadian competitive figure skating.
Chapter 2: The Coach-Parent Relationship in Competitive Figure Skating: An Interpretive Description

Interpersonal relationships play a central role in youth competitive sport (Sheridan, Coffee, & Lavallee, 2014). How participants in sport interact, communicate, and work together serve important functions in both athletic performance and the overall quality of their experiences. Among the various relationships between participants in youth sport, the coach-athlete relationship has been most frequently studied and cited as the most important relationship in sport (for reviews, see Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Comparably, little attention has been granted to sport-specific contexts that shape the nature of other important interpersonal relationships. In early specialization sports (Sport Canada, 2016), where peak performance is attained prior to physical maturation (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007), for example, the parent-coach relationship often involves more frequent interactions due to the sport setting and age of the athlete. The involvement of parents and coaches, and how they relate and engage together can either facilitate or debilitate parents’, coaches’, and athletes’ experiences in sport, and subsequently influence the psychological development of the child (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005; Weiss, 2004). In a study by Knight and Holt (2014) an international tennis coach commented that the parent-coach relationship “is without question the single most important and significant aspect of the job … it is the bit that can ultimately decide success and failure” (p. 160). Informed by Hinde’s (1976) description of relationships in general, and Poczwardowski, Barott, and Henschen’s (2002) conceptual model of the coach-athlete relationship, the coach-parent relationship is conceptualized as the recurring activities and interactions between coaches and parents. The relationship typically originates around sport involvement, such as, supporting the child in
sport, and therefore the activities and interactions are either directed toward the shared task of supporting the athlete or concerned with relationship and non-sport aspects such as maintaining and building the coach-parent relationship.

In recent years, multiple stories of aggressive and inappropriate parent conduct in youth sport have featured prominently in media outlets across North America. Such portrayals often include images of pushy or irate parents yelling from the stands (e.g., Brunt, 2017; Hite, 2018). Smoll, Cumming, and Smith (2011) highlighted a common sentiment among coaches and sport personnel about the coach-parent relationship, that there is a perception of the potential for hassle in interactions between coaches and parents. A prominent focus within the sport psychology literature has been on assisting coaches with strategies for managing or dealing more effectively with parents (Hellstedt, 1987; Smoll et al., 2011; Van Mullem & Cole, 2015). These contributions tend to make broad generalizations, often describing typologies of parents, to help coaches better understand parents (e.g., Hellstedt, 1987; Smoll et al., 2011; Van Mullem & Cole, 2015). More recently, parent-centric perspectives (Harwood & Knight, 2016) have sought to promote parenting expertise in youth sport settings, including the ability to foster and maintain healthy relationships with coaches (Harwood & Knight, 2015).

Although the coach-parent relationship has garnered anecdotal attention in the popular press and practice-based sport psychology literature, to date, little empirical consideration has been given to the interpersonal dynamics of this important relationship (for a review see Knight & Gould, 2016). One of the very few studies that examined both parents’ and coaches’ perspectives of the relationship showed that they perceive the relationship as generally cooperative, albeit with some irritation, such as coaches having an
authoritarian attitude or parents questioning or interfering with coaching decisions (Vanden Auweele, 1999). Although not involving parents and coaches directly, another study by Wylleman, De Knop, Sloore, Vanden Auweele, and Ewing (2002) examined talented youth athletes’ interpersonal perceptions of the athletic triad (parent-coach-athlete). In that study, athletes generally perceived the relationships between coaches and parents to be consultative, with parents and coaches behaving in a helpful and supportive way towards each other (Wylleman et al., 2002). Looking to the broader literature on parental involvement in sport, provides further insight into the nature of the coach-parent relationship. From parents’ perspectives, coaches are often a source of stress throughout their involvement in youth sport (Harwood & Knight, 2009a). Among the coach-related stressors experienced by parents are a lack of communication and feedback, interest, strategic advice, commitment, respect, understanding, and appreciation (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b). Similarly, for coaches, parent-related stressors included demands for time, unrealistic expectations and pressure, varying levels of involvement and engagement, lack of respect and trust, and interfering with coaching decisions (Gould, Pierce, Wright, Lauer, & Nalepa, 2016; Knight & Harwood, 2009; Strean, 1995). Additionally, coaches cited direct interactions with parents, such as defensiveness, aggressiveness, or questioning, as sources of stress (Knight & Harwood, 2009).

Balanced against the growing body of literature on parenting in sport and theoretical and narrative position papers discussing the coach-parent relationship, empirical investigations related to the coach-parent dyad are sparse at best. To date, much of the literature has addressed the coach-parent relationship from a single perspective, with an overemphasis on the coach, and largely neglected the interpersonal nature of the relationship.
The purpose of this study, therefore, was to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship, from both coaches’ and parents’ perspectives, within an early specialization sport context. The aim was to overcome speculative and generalized descriptions of parent and coach interactions. This inquiry was guided by the following research questions: (a) What are the patterns of similarity and difference in how coaches and parents describe the coach-parent relationship? (b) What are the themes that characterize this relationship?

**Method**

**Methodological orientation.** Interpretive description (ID; Thorne, 2008; Thorne, Reimer-Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997) served as the methodological orientation for guiding the study design and data analysis. Originally developed within the discipline of nursing, ID represents an appropriate qualitative methodology for applied disciplines. The focus of ID studies is to illuminate themes and patterns within participants’ subjective perceptions in order to provide an integrative description of a phenomenon of practical interest (Thorne, Reimer-Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004). The foundational underpinnings of ID are guided by naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thorne, 2008) and embedded in a constructivist paradigm. It is assumed that multiple and equally valid social realities exist, that knowledge or meaning is created from the interplay between investigator and respondents, and that findings must be grounded in the data (Thorne et al., 2004).

**Research context.** Figure skating is a sport where the parent-coach relationship often involves frequent contact on a regular basis. In Canada, figure skating clubs are structured both privately and as not-for-profit organizations with a volunteer board of directors, typically made up of parents. In some clubs, coaches are hired directly by parents
(and skaters), whereas in others, a club director facilitates a team model of coaching whereby skaters are assigned a managing coach but work with a number of coaches. The team model of coaching has become more common. In some cases, coaches directly bill parents for their services, however, in others, the club director manages payment. In either case, this introduces a transactional component to the coach-parent relationship where parents are consumers of a service provided by the coach. It has been estimated that parents pay approximately $7,000 to $10,000 a year, at the lowest competitive level (Schneider Farris, 2019), and upwards of $35,000 a year at elite levels (Mulhere, 2018), for lessons, ice time, music, choreography, equipment/costumes, and competitions/travel. Conversely, coaches are professionals whose livelihoods depend on the satisfaction of their clients – skaters and their parents. The longevity of the relationship varies but in some cases an athlete may work with the same coach for 10-15 years. Furthermore, given that figure skating is an early specialization sport, athletes train upwards of 20 hrs/week from as young as 9 or 10 years old (Skate Canada, 2010). In such cases, the parent is entrusting their child to the care of another adult whose influence will have important consequences, not only for the athlete’s development, but also well-being. Thus, regular communication and contact between parent and coach is vital for the care and development of the youth athlete.

**Sampling and participants.** Ethics approval was obtained from the first author’s institutional review board prior to the study commencing. Club directors and presidents from primarily competitive stream clubs in Western Canada were contacted (see Appendix A) and agreed to circulate an information letter to coaches (see Appendices B and C) and parents (see Appendices D and E). General inclusion criterion for participants was current or past involvement (min. one year) as a coach or parent in the competitive stream of figure skating.
Interested participants were invited to contact the researcher directly. Purposeful sampling was used with the aim of selecting participants from a variety of skating clubs. All participants were briefed about the purpose and nature of the study and were asked questions about general demographic and sport specific information to ensure they met the inclusion criteria (see Appendices F and G). Twenty-four participants were recruited in total. Written consent was obtained from each participant before starting data collection (see Appendices H and I). Parents received a $20 gift card and coaches received $100 cash, comparable to their professional wage, as an honorarium.

The rationale for the sample was grounded in the research questions, previous research, and considerations of feasibility (Thorne, 2008). Given the research questions, a balance was sought between ensuring enough participants to describe commonalities and variations while also allowing analysis and comparison of individual, contextualized accounts (Thorne et al., 2004). Moreover, sample sizes in ID studies vary, with most ranging “between 5 and 30 participants” (Thorne, 2008, p. 94). Taken together, it was concluded that gathering in-depth data from 12 parents and 12 coaches would provide a range of perspectives and experiences for generating knowledge about the coach-parent relationship (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

The sample consisted of 12 mothers and 12 coaches from eight figure skating clubs. Mothers ranged in age from 35 to 59 years ($M = 46$ years), and had a son ($n = 3$) or daughter ($n = 9$), currently ($n = 11$) or formerly ($n = 1$) involved in the competitive stream of figure skating. Nine mothers were employed part- or full-time and three were not employed or were homemakers. Nine mothers were involved in competitive sport themselves, competing provincially or at the university level, with three mothers competing and formerly coaching.
in figure skating. Two mothers had no personal experience in sport. The average age of their son or daughter currently involved in skating ranged from 11 to 20 ($M = 14$) years and their shared involvement in the sport ranged from 5 to 14 ($M = 9$) years. One mother’s daughter was formerly involved in skating from 9 to 18 years old, at the time of the study the daughter was 35 years old. Skaters competed in singles or ice dance and all levels of the competitive stream were represented from pre-juvenile to junior. Parents had worked with their current managing coach for an average of 4 years (ranged from 6 months to 9 years), and their son or daughter was coached by a team of coaches ($M = 4$).

The coach sample was comprised of seven males and five females who ranged in age from 31 to 63 years ($M = 47$ years). Coaches were on average Level 3 certified through the National Coaching Certification Program and Skate Canada and had been involved in coaching for an average of 25 years (range was 11 to 42 years). Half of the coaches had a post-secondary degree, four had a high school diploma, and two had some post-secondary coursework. Coaches were not employed elsewhere and most ($n = 8$) had no plans of changing careers. Coaches worked with an average of 27 skaters (range was 15 to 50). Although the researchers were aware that some coach and parent participants worked together, dyads were not part of the study design and therefore the dyadic relationships were not considered during the data analysis.

**Research team.** The research team consisted of six authors; one doctoral student, two master’s students, and three senior researchers. The lead author (JW) was a PhD student in Counselling Psychology with 6 years of experience conducting qualitative research. She had 25 years of experience participating in competitive sports, including competitive figure skating, as a skater, as a coach, and currently as a sport psychology practitioner. The lead
author’s background provided motivation for the study and influenced the data collection and analysis process. For example, rapport building was facilitated by shared experiences. Understandably, this background also influenced interpretations of the data. To safeguard against selective interpretations, initial analyses were conducted in pairs and cross-group analyses as a research team to ensure multiple and diverse perspectives of the data.

The second and third authors (LB and KP) were graduate student research assistants with training and experience in qualitative data analysis, neither of them had personal experiences in competitive sport. The fifth and sixth authors (SM and RY) provided guidance related to the study design and engaged in the cross-group analyses and assisted with decision making related to the presentation of the findings. The fifth author had a background in competitive dance which provided a frame of reference for understanding the sport culture of figure skating. The sixth author had over 40 years of experience in qualitative research but limited personal experience in competitive sport. The fourth author (MB) was a researcher and practitioner in sport and exercise psychology who provided guidance related to the design and write-up of the study. All authors were familiar with the philosophical underpinnings of ID research and careful attention was given throughout the study design, data collection, and analysis to ensure consistency with the constructivist paradigm.

**Data construction: Collection.** A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix J) was designed for coaches and parents based on previous studies examining the coach-athlete relationship (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002) and parental involvement in youth sport (Knight & Holt, 2014). The interview guides were similar except for word changes to reflect the context for coaches and parents. Consideration was given to types of questions
and sequencing. Overall, questions fell under five different topics, (a) relationships, (b) typical interactions, (c) performance and development, (d) retrospection, and (e) closing the interview. Following Patton’s (2002) suggestions for sequencing interview questions, the interview guide began with descriptive and experience-based questions. The aim was to engage the participant with straightforward questions to ease into the interview and to encourage the participant to talk descriptively. Questions such as “How did you get involved in coaching? How did your son/daughter get involved in skating?” served this purpose. The interview guide progressed with different types of questions including behaviour questions, contrast probes, simulation questions, role-play questions, and opinion questions.

The initial interview guide was piloted first with a coach and then a parent. Following the pilot interview the coach indicated that they were unclear whether to respond to questions based on their experiences working with parents of recreational or competitive skaters. As a result, minor revisions were made to the wording of questions to specify the focus on parents of competitive skaters. The pilot coach interview was not included as data in the study. No changes were made following the pilot parent interview. The first author conducted all interviews in-person at the training center or in-person at a location convenient for the participant. Only one interview took place as a video call. Following each interview, the interviewer documented personal reflections from the interview that were re-visited during analysis. Parent interviews were on average 67.50 min (range was 52 min to 93 min) and coach interviews were on average 77.67 min (range was 48 min to 104 min).

**Data construction: Analysis.** Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist, and checked for accuracy by a member of the research team before beginning analysis. Participants received a copy of their transcript and were invited to make
corrections and additions in line with the topics covered in the interview. No participant requested changes. Data were stored and managed during analysis using QSR NVivo11 software.

The analytic techniques guiding this inquiry were reflective memos, conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), constant comparative analysis (Boeije, 2002; Thorne, 2000, 2008), and concept mapping (Hunt, 2009). Analysis proceeded inductively by a research team with two researchers per interview, the interviewer conducted analyses on all 24 transcripts and worked with a research assistant who each analysed 12 transcripts. Coach transcripts were analysed first, involving within-case and cross-case analyses, followed by the parent transcripts, and then cross-group analyses.

Analyses began with immersion in the data, reading and rereading transcripts closely, and writing a synopsis of each interview to maintain the whole of participants’ stories and to not pre-maturely code or classify (Thorne et al., 1997). To further assist with this, reflective memos, created after each interview and while checking the data for completeness, were referenced. Next, each interview was coded on a line-by-line basis by two researchers, separately, with the aim of knowing the data intimately (Thorne, 2008). The two researchers met after each interview was analysed to review and discuss codes. The purpose of this initial coding was to sort and organize the data generally and “to use structure as a means to elaborate meaning” (Thorne, 2008, p. 147). During the meeting, the inductively derived code list (a separate code list was created for coaches and parents) was refined and the within-case constant comparative analysis (Boeije, 2002) was completed. Consistent with the philosophical tenets of the study, the purpose of working in pairs was to ensure thoroughness and multiple perspectives on the data, as opposed to inter-rater reliability.
(Smith & McGannon, 2018; Thorne, 2008). After each interview had been analysed, earlier transcripts were re-visited with the final code list.

Two cross case analyses were then conducted, one for the parent interviews and another for the coach interviews, with three researchers, which involved concept mapping (Hunt, 2009) as a way of describing relationships between codes. The process of concept mapping was a “creative exercise” (Hunt, 2009, p. 1288) that involved informal sketching to imagine possibilities and to facilitate discussion. During this exercise, the parent, athlete, coach (PAC) triangle was drawn on a whiteboard and served as a helpful heuristic for mapping the observed similarities and differences in how participants described their experiences of the relationship. Main themes were then synthesized for coaches and parents.

The final step involved a cross-group analysis (Boeije, 2002), with the research team, to interpret the patterns of similarities and differences in how coaches and parents described the relationship, and to identify the themes that characterized the relationship. We chose the PAC triangles to represent the similarities and differences in how coaches and parents described the coach-parent relationship. After much deliberation and discussion among the research team about what to call the triangles we reached a consensus that they were configurations. We then turned to the themes identified in the cross-case analyses to highlight characteristics of the relationship for coaches and parents. The aim of the cross-group analyses was to present an overarching conceptual understanding or thematic summary of the coach-parent relationship in line with the a priori research questions (Thorne, 2008). An audit trail was maintained that documented the evolution of analytic thinking and the three researchers involved in the detailed analyses kept journals with reflective memos to
facilitate reflexivity and to assist with managing preconceptions (i.e., theoretical allegiances, expert opinion, other sources of prior knowledge; Thorne, 2008).

**Research rigour.** Considerations of quality involved several procedures, as specified by Thorne (2008), for interpretive description. First, care was taken in the design and presentation of this study to ensure *epistemological integrity*, that is, that decisions about data collection, analysis, and interpretation flowed logically from the research questions and philosophical underpinnings of interpretive description research. Second, *representative credibility* was addressed by sampling multiple parents and coaches involved in different skating clubs in Western Canada. To ensure the findings were consistent with sampling, analyses of the coach and parent interviews were conducted separately before the cross-group analyses, and the collective findings were presented in a way that attended to coaches’ and parents’ individual descriptions of their experiences. Third, *analytic logic* was made explicit by keeping an audit trail for transparency of decisions made throughout the study. In addition, using thick description in the presentation of results grounded interpretations in the verbatim data and illustrated analytic thinking. Finally, the trustworthiness of interpretations, or *interpretive authority*, was maintained through the use of researcher journals by the interviewer and research assistants in order to facilitate reflexivity and enable movement beyond existing knowledge, initial biases, and experiences. In addition, pairs of researchers were used during initial analyses and the research team was involved in broad analytic discussions, which served as critical friends (Smith & McGannon, 2018) as interpretations of the data were developed.

**Results**

The detailed analyses revealed that participants had a range of experiences of the
coach-parent relationship. Parents described their experiences of the relationship varying from negative and distant \((n = 4)\) to positive and enjoyable \((n = 8)\), while coaches described their experiences as mostly positive and enjoyable \((n = 12)\), but with the potential for the relationship to be challenging and contentious \((n = 12)\). Participants’ descriptions of their experiences clustered around three configurations of the coach-parent dyad, in relation to the athlete, as shown in Figure 2.1: (a) collaborative, emphasizing an equal, collaborative relationship between parent and coach; (b) coach-athlete centric, emphasizing the coach-athlete relationship as primary and the coach-parent relationship as secondary; and (c) contractual, emphasizing coaching as a business with the coach-parent relationship prioritized. In the following section, we describe each configuration in light of three themes that characterized the relationship across configurations, but manifested in different ways. Themes included views on coach and parent expertise (i.e., who has control and input into the training process); the when, what, and how of communication (i.e., frequency, content, and processes related to the exchange of information), and trust which included interpersonal and technical trust. Although most participants spoke about positive experiences of the coach-parent relationship, they also shared experiences of when it was not going well. All participants relayed stories about having points of tension or disagreement in the coach-parent relationship, which arose when there were different views about the nature of the relationship, expertise, communication, or trust. In some cases, disagreement or conflict in the parent-coach dyad led to a break down in the parent-athlete-coach triad. We did not observe differences in conflict or relationship break down across the three configurations; therefore, we provide a general description after the configurations. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of participants.
Collaborative configuration. Six coaches (Cathy, Zack, Kion, Dorothy, Ruth, and Courtney) and six parents (Anne, Lucy, Petra, Sue, Sarah, and Tina) emphasized a collaborative relationship between coach and parent. Both parents and coaches viewed parents as having an active and important role in the athlete’s involvement and development in skating. Parents described themselves as involved in their child’s skating and working as a team with the coach and athlete. As Sue shared, “I always feel like it’s a team thing. I don’t feel like it’s just him and her, I feel like it’s really the three of us.” Coaches viewed parents as an important and crucial part of skater development, and therefore, were invested in their relationships with parents. As Kion noted, “because these kids are so young, if you don’t have that assistance from a parent, I can almost put my hand on my heart and say that
you’re not going to produce that athlete, not to their true potential.” Coaches and parents in this configuration spoke about working collaboratively not only for the development of the skater, but also the well-being of the child.

The differences in expertise of parents and coaches were acknowledged and welcomed. Coaches were recognized as the professional and the expert of the technical and tactical aspects of skating and parents recognized as the expert about their child. Tina explained it as follows, “no one side can have more power than the other.” Working collaboratively, however, meant there was a giving and receiving of input from each other about their respective domains of expertise. Coaches were generally open to parent input into skating when it related to information that was unique to the child or broader training decisions, but input about technical matters was seldom welcomed. An important part of working collaboratively for coaches was parent education from the ‘learning to skate’ level (i.e., CanSkate), as Kion explained, “I take the parents in right from out of CanSkate … I teach them … so that they understand that they can actually be a benefit to the development of their kid.”

Zack, Kion, and Courtney described themselves as “co-parents” or “pseudo parents.” They shared that they are aware of the influence they have in the skater’s life. Coaches noted examples where they advised parents about parenting matters such as school, discipline, or lifestyle choices. Courtney explained, “I had a girl who wasn’t doing well at school, and I said to the mom, ‘pull back some skating until she pulls up her socks’.” On the receiving end, Sue shared about her coach, “he was coaching me too, ‘how much is she sleeping? What is she eating? … get her into these habits’.” Coaches, however, were cautious of overstepping the bounds of the parents’ expertise. As Kion noted, “I can never say to people
how to be a parent.” Parents, on the other hand, spoke about the importance of respecting the coaches’ expertise but shared that they also tried to educate themselves about the sport so they were aware of what was happening. Petra shared that she and her son learned that they needed to take responsibility for skating because coaches make mistakes. She said, “we changed from ‘oh the coach knows everything, is almighty,’ to we need to make sure that, not stepping on their toes, but also just looking out for, for ourselves.” In addition to educating themselves, parents described that with time they became more assertive and took the initiative with coaches, asking for what they needed or thought was important in relation to their child’s skating. Anne shared that in the beginning she would go along with whatever the coach asked, but realized that she could “speak [her] mind and give [her] opinion.”

Communication was described as frequent, particularly around logistics, and initiated by both parents and coaches. Being personable was a central feature of communication. Zack commented, “if they sense … that you really care … they can see you as a coach, but as well as a person, and… in that case, it’s much easier.” When asked about typical interactions with her coach Anne described, “we talk about family, life … I talk to her about stuff that [daughter] has done at school sometimes and funny things that have happened, so we’ll have little conversations.” Openness and approachability were also important features of communication and working collaboratively. Anne and Petra suggested to other parents to not be afraid of asking the coach questions. As Petra advised, “let them do their job, that’s why you hired them, and if you have questions, instead of … sabotaging them or going behind their back, ask them, because there are certain reasons.” Coaches, in turn, spoke about being available to parents, as Cathy explained, “I hear a lot of parents, you know, say that the coach isn't approachable, that they just don't have enough time to talk, and that just
causes a lot of problems.” Parents and coaches were clear that they did not socialize with one another outside of skating, however, of the configurations, they were more likely to be friends after the athlete’s skating career was over.

Technical and interpersonal trust were both present in this configuration. Although it was important for coaches to be trusted technically as the expert, they recognized that they needed to foster interpersonal trust with parents first. Strategies for developing interpersonal trust included being honest, personable, and showing their care for the athlete. For example, Dorothy described, “they trust that … we’re there in her best interest always and that really is the point.” Parents also spoke about the importance of trusting that the coach is acting in the best interest of their child, as Petra shared, “the most positive thing is just knowing that [coach] knows what is best, he’s going to do what’s best.” Thus, for parents, interpersonal trust was closely linked with technical trust. The importance of trusting parents was also discussed by coaches.

**Coach-athlete centric configuration.** Four coaches (Ken, James, Brad, and Roger) and five parents (Janine, Lindsay, Tracy, Gina, and Rhonda) emphasized the coach-athlete relationship as the primary focus in the parent-athlete-coach (PAC) triad. In this configuration, both parent and coach viewed the coach as the expert and decision maker about skating, engaged primarily with the athlete, and with the parent operating in the background. For parents, it was important to respect what was between the coach and the athlete. Parents and coaches, however, differed in their views of the parents’ role. Coaches viewed the role of the parent as a provider of logistical support for the athlete, but overall,
hands off and not important in skating development and performance. Parents, on the other hand, described the PAC triad as working as a team, albeit with themselves subsumed.

The boundaries between coach and parent expertise were clearly delineated. Coaches managed all aspects of skating. There was a shared value among coaches and parents of letting the coach do their job and respecting their expertise. For Janine, Gina, and Rhonda, respecting the coach’s expertise meant being mindful of their limited understanding of the sport, both in their interactions with the coach as well as with their son or daughter. Janine, for instance, viewed her “hands off” approach as a positive influence in her daughter’s training: “it’s easier for her to just … she only hears one side, she only hears them, she doesn’t hear me … which is why I intentionally don’t talk to them about stuff that I have no knowledge about really.” Lindsay and Tracy, former skaters and coaches themselves, drew on their past experience to empathize with the coaches and reiterated the importance of respecting the coaches’ expertise. Likewise, coaches were cautious of overstepping parents’ expertise. Coaches in this configuration were not as concerned with non-sport domains such as school, friends, or family life. Instead, if they thought factors outside of skating were influencing training they enlisted the support of the parent. For example, James described, “if I think a kid is … struggling on the ice where I think the parent could be involved, I wouldn't hesitate to say … and they can step in.” Parents, on the other hand, asserted their expertise sparingly. They described situations where they were more involved, such as managing logistics around injuries, stepping in when they thought the coach’s behavior was not developmentally appropriate, or facilitating the coach-athlete relationship by helping the coach better understand their child.
Communication was described as minimal and as needed. Parents expressed that they try to keep communication channels clear and be respectful of coaches’ time, recognizing that they are busy professionals. As Tracy explained, “you … have to know the boundaries of when, where, how, why, because, that open line of communication is given out of respect … and it can be shut down pretty quick.” Janine, Gina, and Rhonda spoke about tailoring their approach to communication based on their observation of coaches’ preferences. Gina shared, “I had to learn how each of them worked and how I could get what I wanted out of them in a quick time.” While it was important to respect the channel of communication between the parent and coach, for Gina, she was also cautious of being too involved with the coach that it would negatively affect her daughter and her daughter’s training. She commented, “I didn’t want her to go on that hour to train knowing that there was some weird expectation from the parent or the coach that we talked about behind her back or even in front of her.” She further added, “if [daughter] felt comfortable and knew that I wasn’t going to report back to the coach, the coach wasn’t going to report back to me … then she could train freely.”

Coaches described keeping communication with parents to a minimum and centered on skating related topics. As Roger noted, “I don’t want to create any issues later so I’m not going to have … a 10-minute conversation about something that’s not pertinent to the skating, because I don’t want to keep having that in the future.” The coaches spoke about being clear and upfront with skating related information, and being on top of communication so they were initiating and informing before parents had any issues or questions. Coaches described various strategies they used to mitigate frequent interactions with parents such as communicating primarily through the athlete (Roger, Ken, James, and Brad). Coaches were
firm that they did not socialize with parents, and of the configurations, they were less likely to be personable in their interactions with parents. For Ken, he commented about the vulnerability he feels as a coach where parents and athletes can “walk whenever,” referring to the possibility that they can choose to leave to a different coach or quit the sport at any time. As Ken explained, “it’s been a learning process … as to how much I open myself up … it’s a designed approach where you have to seem approachable, … but … these people owe nothing to you and they could hurt you very badly.” Parents agreed that they did not socialize with coaches. Some parents (Rhonda and Lindsay), however, wished for more personable communication from the coaches. Lindsay recounted a conversation when she told her coach how hurt she felt that the coach did not tell her she was pregnant, she said to the coach, “I was really upset that you didn’t come to me, and tell me. Like you spend … 20 hours a week with my daughter … more hours in a week than I do, and I really thought we had a better relationship.” Being personable was connected to trust for parents.

Technical trust was high and linked closely with respect for the coaches’ expertise, while interpersonal trust varied. Coaches spoke about the importance of parents trusting their decisions or training plan. There was an expectation of technical trust from the beginning. They noted that they thought their past success producing high level skaters “automatically earned respect” (James). Coaches did not speak about trusting parents. Parents, on the other hand, were cautious about questioning their coaches, but noted that technical trust developed over time and was linked with interpersonal trust. As Janine shared, “I'm seeing … it's a plan … there's definite reasons for their actions, and I think in the beginning, I didn't know. And I didn't question it, but I didn't know why.”
**Contractual configuration.** For two coaches (Brayden and Holly) and one parent (Lucy), the parent-coach relationship was contractual. That is, coaching is a business where the parent is the client and the coach’s role is to serve the needs of the parent. It is a parent-centric and service-oriented model. Holly explained, “if I’m the service provider, everything I’m doing is providing value for others … how can I serve you?” From the parents’ perspective, the parent pays the bills and therefore should be able to have a say about what they want. Lucy, for example, expressed frustration about feeling sidelined by her daughter’s former coach, “it’s my money, I’m paying you $60 an hour … for like twenty grand a year for this sport, you would think I could get what I want.”

The coaches were not vying for expertise with parents, they considered themselves the “hired professional” (Holly) and as a result they were the expert. It was important for the coach to have control over training decisions and plans and to oversee everything so the parent does not have to worry. As Brayden noted, “I run it as a business, I run it as this is how as your manager I’ll take care of that, and this is why the strategy works.” The coaches empathized with the challenges of being a parent, in general, such as juggling kids’ schedules, work commitments, and family health, and spoke about tailoring their approach to the specific needs of the parent and child. For example, Holly shared about one parent who had 11 children. She explained how she does not expect the mother to have time to assist with getting her daughter’s dress made. She said, “I never bother her with, ‘can you get the costume?’ I’ll never do that, I’ll email her, just so you know, we’re working on this, this is the plan, this will be handled.” Coaches viewed the parent as part of the support system and responsible for relaying information about the athlete that would be important for the coach to know.
Being available, personable, honest, and providing feedback were important features of communication for the parent and coaches. Lucy, for instance, expected regular communication and coach responsiveness. When comparing her former and new coach she said, “I’ve found that in communicating, as busy as [new coach] is, she always gets back to me, whereas you can send an email to [former coach] and he’ll never get back to you.” Brayden described communication as a constant flow and something he does not put boundaries around, he said, “this is a 24/7 business … and if you want to win that’s what this is.” It was also important that parents felt comfortable approaching the coach and asking questions, whether in person at the rink or through text, email, or phone. The coaches spoke about being honest and direct in their communication with parents, this included being upfront with parents about their coaching strategy and giving honest feedback about the athlete’s progress. On the receiving end, Lucy spoke about wanting honest feedback. When describing her current coach, she expressed, “she can phrase things in a way that you can receive them, even if they are hard to hear.” Although Lucy did not have expectations for socializing with coaches beyond skating functions, the coaches were open to socializing with parents if it was “strategic” (Brayden) for their business.

Trust was considered reciprocal; coaches expected parents to trust their expertise, and in turn, they focused on developing interpersonal and technical trust with parents by providing a valuable service so their clients would continue to work with them. Open communication and honesty were closely tied to interpersonal trust. Lucy recalled a moment with her new coach where she gained interpersonal trust, she said the coach told her, “I don’t feel comfortable taking your money if this child is not going to take the corrections,” she continued, “and right there, I had major respect for her.” Holly also explained, “if I think
that a parent doesn’t think I have their kid’s best interest that’s really hard, and so I just have to communicate with the parent.” The presence of both technical and interpersonal trust was important for these participants.

**Conflict and coach-parent relationship break down.** All participants (across the three configurations) shared stories about having points of tension or disagreement in the coach-parent relationship. When there was misalignment in the configuration between parent and coach, either having different views about the nature of the relationship, expertise, or communication, conflict arose. Some participants shared about incidences that they were able to overlook or address and move on from, while others shared about ongoing disputes that they were currently working through. For example, for parents, points of tension related to the coaches being perceived as impersonal, a lack of transparency and feedback about training decisions, coaches overstepping the parents’ role, or coaches’ negative interactions with the athlete. Coaches, on the other hand, spoke about parents not following through on their responsibilities, requesting more time than the coach was able or willing to provide, overstepping coach expertise, or negative interactions with the child. Participants described multiple strategies for addressing and working through conflicts, such as, waiting 24 hours before acting, raising concerns in a light-hearted way, addressing concerns in-person, putting concerns in writing, or involving the club director or president. In some cases, participants made the relationship work, despite the configuration being out of balance, for example, because of geography or due to the caliber of the coach or athlete. This was the case for Sarah, who recently moved across the country so her 16-year-old son could train with a high-performance coach. Sarah wanted a collaborative relationship. She shared that she felt “sidelined” by the coach and described her disappointment with the lack of communication,
feedback, and openness to her input. She said, “it’s hard, it’s almost like you’re losing that control, and that was really hard for all of us, as a family, because now it’s like they communicate through the kid, not through us.”

When agreement or resolution could not be negotiated the parent-coach relationship broke down, leading to a coach deciding to no longer work with a parent and athlete, or parents choosing to no longer work with a coach, resulting in switching coaches and/or clubs. For seven parents and 12 coaches, disagreement or conflict with a coach or parent led to a relationship break down. For example, Lucy, had recently switched coaches and clubs due to ongoing conflict with her daughter’s former coach. She shared about her disappointment with the coach’s lack of professionalism, availability to meet with her, feedback, and care for her daughter. She recounted one of her last meetings with the coach where she said the coach “dumped” her and her daughter, “I felt like I was a kid being called into the principal's office … I said … ‘you're scolding me … but I'm a client … I put a lot of money … into this … you should be … asking me, how can I keep your business’?”

Coaches and parents spoke about the personal impact of conflict and relationship break down, and the potential affect it had on the athlete. As Sarah expressed, “I am unbelievably stressed … our home life is disrupted … it encompasses everything, every ounce, every pore is wrapped in this whole situation, so it affects everybody.” Parents noted that they tried to leave the athlete out of the conflict and that they were mindful of what they communicated in front of them. Coaches also tried to separate conflict with a parent from the athlete; however, they expressed that they found it difficult. When recounting how conflict with a skater’s father affected his desire to coach the skater, James shared, “I just feel like it's already defeated before I start … because of the dad … I actually don't want to coach
her anymore.” Coaches varied in the extent that previous negative experiences with parents affected them and how these experiences shaped their current approach to working with parents. For some coaches, the potential for the relationship to be burdensome led them to keeping parents at a distance, in line with the coach-athlete centric configuration. As James explained, “I find I do my job effectively if I don't have to deal with the parent as much.” Whereas, for other coaches, they acknowledged the uncertainty of the relationship, a “healthy paranoia” as Brayden described it, but also spoke about the uniqueness of each parent, and how they try to find ways to work with all parents. This was more consistent with the collaborative and contractual configurations.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to understand the nature of the parent-coach relationship, from both parents’ and coaches’ perspectives, in an early specialization sport context. The findings revealed important aspects of the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. First, although participants had a range of experiences, including negative and conflictual interactions, the majority of parents and coaches described relationships that were positive and enjoyable. Second, participants differed in the manner in which they described the nature of the relationship. Participants’ descriptions of their experiences clustered around three different configurations, which included collaborative, coach-athlete centric, and contractual. Third, salient characteristics of the relationship included views on expertise, communication, and trust, which manifested in different ways across the configurations.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Vanden Auweele, 1999), the coach-parent relationship was described by participants as generally positive, albeit, with times of conflict.
or animosity. Similar to studies on parent- and coach-related stressors, participants reported the presence of conflict and stress related to one another (i.e., due to lack of trust or communication; e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b; Knight & Harwood, 2009). However, this study extends the literature by showing that even though negative and conflictual interactions are present in the coach-parent dyad, they are only one aspect of the relationship. By focusing on the coach-parent relationship explicitly, as opposed to stressors or parent involvement in sport more generally, the study highlighted that there is more to the parent-coach relationship than problems and hassles. Rather, these findings show that parents and coaches work together to further athlete development, and relate with one another in positive, and at times, enjoyable ways.

The findings also show that the coach-parent relationship is experienced differently. The three configurations offer descriptors for understanding the subtle dynamics and differences within the parent-coach dyad. These findings have both similarities and differences with existing relational models in sport, such as the coach-athlete dyad (e.g., Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002). The collaborative configuration, for example, shared the task of not only skater development, but also development of athlete well-being. In addition, parents and coaches were also invested in maintaining and building their relationship. Most notable was the personable and mutual nature of the relationship. Both parents and coaches were respectful of one another’s expertise, often complementing each other’s actions, and were intentional about engaging personally and showing care in the PAC triad. The collaborative configuration most closely resembles high interdependence as reflected in the 3+1Cs model (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016), with high levels of trust and respect (i.e., closeness), a desire to work together and
remain committed to the relationship (i.e., commitment), and responsive, friendly, and cooperative behaviours (i.e., complementarity). In this configuration, however, the parent is more than a social network member that supports the coach-athlete dyad (e.g., Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). Rather, the parent is viewed as an important part of the team. This finding suggests notions of relational coaching (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016), which highlights that interpersonal connection (i.e., trust, respect, and commitment to work together toward one goal) between the coach and athlete is central for effective and successful coaching, could be extended to include interpersonal relationships with parents in certain sport contexts.

In contrast, the coach-athlete centric configuration, was predominantly task-oriented, emphasizing skater development and the coach-athlete relationship. Compared to the collaborative configuration, participants were less concerned with activities and interactions that fostered or maintained the coach-parent relationship, and there was minimal emphasis on interpersonal trust and personable interactions. Although there are similarities with previous research showing parents are an important part of the social network for the coach-athlete relationship, such as facilitating a working relationship between coach and athlete and managing logistics (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005), the findings highlight the distinct relationship features between the parent and coach, even when the coach-athlete relationship is foregrounded. That is, with high technical trust, communication as needed, and mutual respect for the time and expertise of the other, the parent-coach dyad worked cooperatively, albeit, with less emphasis on their relationship. These findings suggest that interdependence may not be as central in the coach-parent dyad as has been shown in the coach-athlete dyad (e.g., Jowett & Nezlek, 2012). Finally, the contractual configuration was both task and
relationship-oriented, in the service of business relations and customer service. In this case, the parent-coach dyad was understood as a transactional relationship from the beginning, which underscores the unique features of youth sport contexts where coaches are paid professionals, particularly, when paid directly by the parent.

Moreover, although not a defining feature of the nature of the parent-coach relationship, the findings support the literature on relational science, that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of all dyadic relationships (e.g., Hinde, 1997). This study provides preliminary insight about the interpersonal nature of conflict between coaches and parents. Consistent with the nature of conflict described in the framework of interpersonal conflict in sport relationships (Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2018), conflict in the parent-coach dyad arises when there is perceived disagreement between individuals in the relationship, for example, about views on expertise, opinions about the relationship, needs, or resources (i.e., time). Participants’ descriptions of conflict experienced in the relationship showed variations in frequency, duration, and intensity. Some instances of conflict involved isolated events while others were re-occurring or ongoing. Further, conflict was described negatively and participants highlighted consequences of conflict similar to research on coach-athlete dyads; for example, increased stress and emotional turmoil (e.g., Tamminen, Holt, & Neely, 2013), inhibited coaching effectiveness (e.g., Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, & Chung, 2002), and negative influences on the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). In some cases, the inability to resolve conflict led to relationship termination. This was particularly the case when parents and coaches disagreed about the nature of their relationship.
Balanced against the insights provided by the study, limitations should also be acknowledged. First, only mothers were involved in the study. It is possible that the sample was representative of the gender of the primary parent involved in figure skating, however, some coaches also spoke about their experiences interacting with fathers. It is unclear whether fathers would have described similar or different experiences of the coach-parent relationship. Second, intact dyads were not sampled. Most coaches and parents in this study were not working with each other, therefore, conclusions specific to dyadic interactions and relationship experiences could not be made. Finally, the findings were interpreted in light of the PAC triad, however, only the parent and coach perspectives were represented.

It is recommended, therefore, that future research designs aim to include father’s perspectives in the sample and move beyond individual levels of analysis. Future studies would benefit from focusing on the parent-coach dyad, using for example, dyadic interviewing (e.g., Clarke, Harwood, & Cushion, 2016) or contextual action theory for understanding joint actions and processes (e.g., Wall et al., 2016). Further, triangulating data with athlete perspectives would help deepen understandings not only of the coach-parent relationship, but the reciprocal and bi-directional processes involved in the parent-athlete-coach triad. Additionally, this study sets the stage for further research about the nature of the coach-parent relationship. Possible directions include systematically exploring the positive (i.e., growth-promoting) aspects of the relationship or examining antecedents and outcomes of the collaborative, coach-athlete centric, and contractual configurations. There are opportunities to conduct similar work in different countries (i.e., competitive figure skating in Russia) and other early specialization sport contexts such as gymnastics. In addition,
exploring the applicability of the 3+1Cs model (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016) for the parent-coach dyad may be useful.

This study underscores the relevance of the parent-coach relationship in competitive figure skating and offers practical implications for sport psychology consultants, coach educators, coaches, and parents. As a supplement to existing coaching strategies (e.g., Smoll et al., 2011) and sport parenting exemplars (e.g., Gould et al., 2016; Harwood & Knight, 2015), the findings describe different ways that parents and coaches relate to one another. It is not a one-size fits all nor is there a right or wrong way of engaging in this particular relationship. These findings encourage self-awareness and reflection, and offer parents and coaches three configurations that they can situate themselves within. What is important is knowing one’s needs and preferences for the relationship, taking into consideration the athlete’s perspective and needs, and the goodness of fit within the PAC triad. Furthermore, recognizing that conflict is an inherent part of the relationship, equipping parents and coaches with skills for relationship ruptures and repairs is needed. Borrowing from the coach-athlete literature, there are a number of maintenance and resolution strategies that are applicable to the parent-coach relationship. These include clarifying expectations, maintaining openness, and adapting to the other’s preferences (Rhind & Jowett, 2010). Additional potential strategies include addressing conflict early and directly, focusing on the conflict issue, working at the problem collaboratively with active listening, empathy, and tactful delivery of messages, using a mediator if needed (Wachsmuth et al., 2018).

In conclusion, this study offers preliminary insight into the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. While parallels are drawn to other dyadic relationships in sport, unique relational features of the coach-parent dyad are also
highlighted. This extends the interpersonal relationships in sport literature by contextualizing a less understood, albeit integral, relationship in youth sport. Fostering the relationship between parents and coaches has the potential to contribute to positive youth sport environments and development in competitive sport.
Chapter 3: Navigating Early Specialization Sport: Parent and Athlete Goal-Directed Processes

Parents and youth face a number of pivotal decisions that have the potential to influence athlete development (Côté, 1999; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). One such decision is whether and how early to commit and invest resources toward the development of elite-level sport performance. A popular assumption in sport is that the earlier athletes commit to and invest in a single sport, the greater the likelihood of developing elite status (Baker & Young, 2014). As a result, there is an increased number of athletes specializing at younger ages (e.g., 10 to 14 years old; Buckley et al., 2017) in order to promote expert development. Early sports specialization was recently defined as (a) involving intensive training and practice for more than 8 months per year, (b) limiting participation to a single sport, and (c) involving prepubertal children (i.e., around 12 years old; LaPrade et al., 2016).

Empirical evidence, however, suggests that early specialization is associated with negative consequences such as burnout, dropout, injury, and psychosocial concerns (i.e., maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies and greater risk of disordered eating; see LaPrade et al., 2016).

National and international sport bodies (e.g., International Olympic Committee, Bergeron et al., 2015; Sport Canada, 2016) increasingly advocate for youth to sample multiple sports to gain a diversity of experiences, to foster a sense of fun, and to develop fundamental skills prior to specializing in one or two selected sports. Early specialization sports (Sport Canada, 2016), such as gymnastics and figure skating, are an exception to this movement given that peak performance is typically attained prior to physical maturation (Deakin & Coblentz, 2003; Law, Côté, & Ericsson, 2007). According to national sport models of athlete development (e.g., Skate Canada, 2010), youth and their families are often faced
with the decision to specialize in a single sport as early as 9 years of age. The salience of early specialization has implications not only for youth in relation to their development (Bergeron et al., 2015) and parents in terms of family resources (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010), but also affects the interactions and relationship between parents and athletes (e.g., Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Clarke, Harwood, & Cushion, 2016).

Given that involvement in competitive youth sport has been described as a journey shared by children and their parents (Knight & Holt, 2014) it is surprising that few studies adopt dyadic perspectives for understanding athlete career development and transitions. Rather, much of the literature has relied on retrospective accounts of transitions frequently gathered through individual interviews (e.g., Côté, 1999; Gledhill & Harwood, 2015; Kristiansen & Stensrud, 2017; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2008). Although studies include parent, coach, and athlete perspectives on career development and transitions (e.g., Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a, 2010b; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Wuerth et al., 2004), the majority prioritize analyses at the individual level, that is on perceptions and behaviours, to the exclusion of understanding the interpersonal nature of transitions.

The dynamic and reciprocal nature of parent and athlete interactions in the sport context has been highlighted (e.g., Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Lauer et al., 2010b), and recently studies have emerged that attend to relational phenomena (i.e., communication, conflict, and interactions) that occur between parent and athlete (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Dorsch, Smith, & Dotterer, 2016; Prewitt-White, Fisher, Odenheimer, & Buchanan, 2016). For instance, Clarke et al. (2016) explored eight parent-child dyad’s (M athlete age = 14 years) experiences of their interaction and relationship in elite youth football. Clarke et al. found that the parent-child relationship was constituted by a
sense of closeness through the dyad’s interactions in sport and that the sport context, including upcoming transitions such as whether academy contracts would be renewed, also affected parent’s and athlete’s interactions. These findings suggest that exploring parent-child interactions amidst other transitions in youth sport may be a fruitful avenue for further research. Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand how parents and athletes engage together, in the present, when transitioning to (or not to) higher levels of commitment and training in an early specialization, competitive sport context. The research question guiding the inquiry was how do parents and athletes jointly navigate the transition to (or not to) higher levels of training and commitment in competitive figure skating?

**Theoretical framework.** To date, transitions related to specializing (i.e., increasing training and commitment in a single sport) in youth sport are typically conceptualized using theoretical frameworks that define athlete development as proceeding through normative stages and transitions such as Côté’s (1999) developmental model of sport participation (i.e., within the specializing stage; Clarke & Harwood, 2014; Harwood et al., 2010) or Wylleman and Lavallee’s (2004) holistic athletic model (i.e., the transition from initiation to development stage; Kristiansen & Stensrud, 2017; Pummell et al., 2008). Despite a breadth of knowledge based on these frameworks of athletes’ careers, other studies have highlighted that these normative stages and pathways to expert performance were not applicable for all athletes (e.g., Storm, Henriksen, & Christensen, 2012). Instead, Stambulova and Ryba (2013) suggested that athlete career development is idiosyncratic and involves diverse career trajectories that are culturally situated (i.e., inclusive of sport, country, gender, and ethnicity). To capture the ideographic and relational nature of transitions we used contextual action theory (CAT; Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996) to conceptualize specialization as a transition
process. Specifically, that the transition to higher levels of commitment and training is a process that involves intentional, goal-directed actions undertaken by athletes individually and jointly with significant others in their lives. Thus, the focus of this study was on the joint actions of athletes in competitive figure skating in Canada and their parents.

Contextual action theory is an integrative framework that privileges action, and in particular joint action, as a central construct and unit of analysis. This framework has been used in the counselling, career/vocational, and family literature to conceptualize the interactive and joint actions engaged in by people, specifically in transitional processes (e.g., Young et al., 2008). Reflecting a social constructionist epistemology, the focus of CAT is on the ways that actions are constructed between people over time. Action is conceptualized as a goal-directed phenomenon, although not necessarily rational, that encompasses manifest behaviour, internal cognitive and affective processes, and social meaning, that is, the understanding an individual, and the associated community, attributes to the action (Young et al., 1996). When individual actions are linked or interrelated with another person, they form a series of actions referred to as joint actions, such as a conversation between parent and child about the training schedule. Several joint actions over weeks, months, or years, constructed around a common goal or meaning, are considered a project or joint project (Wall et al., 2016). An example of a joint project may be negotiating educational options in the context of sport participation and family expectations. The focus of the present investigation was on the joint projects of parents and athletes related to the transition to higher levels of training and commitment in competitive figure skating.

Method

An instrumental case study design (Stake, 2000) organized each parent-athlete dyad
as a case for individual and collective analysis. Instrumental case study designs enable in-depth exploration of individual cases to develop an understanding of a larger phenomenon (Stake, 2000), in this study, the jointly enacted process of transition to higher levels of commitment and training in competitive figure skating. Consistent with contextual action theory, the action-project method (APM; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005), was used to identify the naturally occurring joint projects of the parent-athlete dyad. APM is a comprehensive, team-based, qualitative method that follows an interpretive hermeneutic moving back and forth between the data and the contextual action theory framework. The unit of analysis in this study was action and joint action investigated dyadically through conversations between the parent and athlete. Specifically, actions were analyzed at three levels (Wall et al., 2016; Young et al., 2005), including behavioral elements such as verbal and nonverbal behaviors (i.e., a parent nodding to acknowledge what their daughter said), functional steps or the means used in moving toward the goal (i.e., asking a question about the athlete’s practice session), and goals or the meaning of the action processes (i.e., to monitor their daughter’s training).

**Sampling and participants.** The study was approved by the first author’s institutional review board. Participants were recruited by contacting club directors from figure skating clubs in Western Canada that were primarily focused on the competitive stream (see Appendices K and L). The competitive stream, referred to as CompetitiveSkate, is a Skate Canada program for skaters wishing to compete in provincial, national, and international level competitions. Participants interested in the study were provided an information letter (see Appendix M) and asked to complete a screening questionnaire to ensure they met the inclusion criteria (see Appendix N).
A purposeful recruitment strategy was used to select five parent-athlete dyads currently engaged in the transition to higher levels of commitment and training as indicated by Skate Canada’s long-term athlete development model (LTAD; Skate Canada, 2010). The LTAD stage of ‘Learning to Compete’ was adopted as a guideline for the beginning of specializing in competitive sport. According to Skate Canada (2010), in the Learning to Compete stage (9-13 years for females; 10-14 years for males), it is suggested that a “metamorphosis from participant to athlete occurs” (p. 27). Proposed training time typically increases from 2 to 4 hrs per week to upwards of 15 hrs per week including off-ice training.

A provincial chair of skater development also served as a key informant who identified the pre-novice level as representing an important time of transition to higher levels of commitment and training. Pre-novice is the first level of skaters who take part in national level competition. Thus, general inclusion criteria included skaters at the pre-novice level or those about to compete in pre-novice in the next year, chronological age of 9-13 years, and a self-identified parent who was actively involved in their son or daughter’s figure skating.

Participant demographic information is provided in Table 3.1. A sample of five dyads was determined to be sufficient to facilitate an in-depth exploration of each case over time while also enabling comparison between cases. The rationale for the study sample size was based on considerations of feasibility and accessibility, as well as previous studies using APM that had a sample of five dyads.
Table 3.1. *Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyad</th>
<th>Parent Age Range</th>
<th>Parent Birthplace</th>
<th>Parent Work Status</th>
<th>Skater Age</th>
<th>Skater Birthplace</th>
<th>Years Skating</th>
<th>Training (hrs/wk)</th>
<th>Extra-curriculars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>29-38</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: All dyads except Dyad Three were mother-daughter dyads. Dyad Three was a father-daughter dyad. All parents were married. All skaters were competing at the pre-novice level.*

*Training hours per week were temporarily reduced to study for an entrance exam to a private school.*

**Research team.** The research team was comprised of six authors; one doctoral student, two master’s students, and three senior researchers. The lead author (JW) was a PhD student in Counselling Psychology with 6 years of experience in qualitative research. She had a background in competitive figure skating, as a skater, coach, and sport psychology practitioner. The second and third authors (KP and LB) were graduate student research assistants with training and experience in qualitative research. Neither of them had personal experiences in competitive sport. The fifth and sixth authors (SM and RY) contributed to the team-based analyses. The fifth author had a background in competitive dance and was a researcher with extensive experience studying parent-child relationships. The sixth author had over 40 years of experience in qualitative research in vocational and counselling psychology but limited personal experience in competitive sport. The fourth author (MB) was a researcher and practitioner in sport and exercise psychology who provided oversight related to the design and write-up of the study. All authors were familiar with the philosophical underpinnings of contextual action theory and careful attention was given throughout the study to ensure consistency with the social constructivist paradigm.
**Data gathering and analyses.** Data gathering and analyses occurred concurrently for each dyad. The detailed description of procedures and analyses that follow are organized chronologically to aid the reader in understanding how earlier analyses informed subsequent data collection. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the APM procedures and analyses. Data gathering took place over approximately 10 months, from January to November 2016, for each dyad and involved four phases including three face-to-face meetings and 6 months of biweekly telephone monitoring (Wall et al., 2016). The APM involves multiple procedures (see Appendix P for a detailed description of the protocol) to access information about individual and joint actions over time. Specifically, sources of data gathering corresponded with three perspectives of action, this included video recorded conversations between dyads to get at *manifest behaviour*, video playback of the conversation (i.e., video recall interviews) to access *internal processes*, and systematic analyses using the video recorded conversations and video recall interviews to get at *social meaning*. In addition, a longitudinal component involved telephone monitoring to track the *joint project across time*. An outline of the purpose, duration, and number of each of the research procedures is provided in Table 3.2.

The three meetings took place at the participants’ training centers. Each participant received an honorarium of $20 for each in-person meeting ($60 total). A pair of researchers was assigned to each dyad and conducted all the interviews and initial analyses for that dyad. For consistency, the first author was involved in all data collection and analyses for the five dyads.
**Figure 3.1.** Chronological overview of concurrent data collection and analyses. Shaded boxes denote analyses.

**Table 3.2. Phase, Purpose, and Duration of Research Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Duration/number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. First Meeting</td>
<td>Warm-up conversation</td>
<td>Set participants at ease and to identify a potential topic for the parent-athlete conversation.</td>
<td>31.12 / 5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent-athlete conversation</td>
<td>Record manifest action via a conversation which captures the typical actions and goals participants engage in together.</td>
<td>11.69 / 2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent video-recall</td>
<td>Collect data on the parent’s internal processes during the conversation.</td>
<td>34.69 / 7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athlete video-recall</td>
<td>Collect data on the athlete’s internal processes during the conversation.</td>
<td>28.80 / 8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Second Meeting</td>
<td>Parent narrative feedback</td>
<td>Provide parents with their individual actions and goals in the parent-athlete conversation.</td>
<td>11.72 / 5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athlete narrative feedback</td>
<td>Provide athletes with their individual actions and goals in the parent-athlete conversation.</td>
<td>10.43 / 2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint narrative feedback</td>
<td>Provide parent and athlete with their joint actions and goals in the conversation and identify the joint transition project.</td>
<td>13.14 / 3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Telephone Monitoring (TM)</td>
<td>Parent TM</td>
<td>Monitor project, actions, and internal processes.</td>
<td>13.54 / 4.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Duration/number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete TM</td>
<td>Monitor project, actions, and internal processes.</td>
<td>11.68 2.65 12a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Third Meeting</td>
<td>Warm-up conversation</td>
<td>Collect information about current activities and how the dyad's joint project progressed, and identify a potential topic for the conversation.</td>
<td>19.51 8.60 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-athlete conversation</td>
<td>Same as first meeting.</td>
<td>8.98 1.91 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent video-recall</td>
<td>Same as first meeting.</td>
<td>21.58 8.04 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete video-recall</td>
<td>Same as first meeting.</td>
<td>23.62 3.84 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M = mean duration in minutes; n = number of dyads, unless noted otherwise.

aAverage number of telephone monitoring calls.

**Phase 1: First meeting.** After informed consent from parents and assent from youth were obtained, the first interview began. The interview was video and audio recorded and started with a warm-up conversation with the two participants and two researchers. The participants were then invited to have a conversation (M = 11.69 min) together about their involvement in figure skating. At the end of the conversation each participant met separately with one of the researchers for a video recall interview. During the interview the conversation was played back to the participant and stopped at one-minute intervals. The participant was invited to share what they were thinking and feeling at the particular moment in the conversation segment that they had just watched. To help the athletes understand the concept of reflecting on their thoughts and feelings, a drawing of a person was presented with thought balloons. This stimulus assisted participants in understanding that there may be differences between what was manifest in the conversation and what was occurring internally.
for them. The researcher used probing and follow-up questions to clarify the participant’s responses. The average lengths of the video recall interviews were 34.69 min for parents and 28.80 min for athletes.

**Initial analysis of phase 1.** The purpose of the analysis was to identify a tentative joint project between the parent and athlete that would be reviewed by the participants in Phase 2. The four interviews from Phase 1 (warm-up, conversation, and two video recall interviews) were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist unaffiliated with the study. The two researchers who conducted the interviews carried out the initial analyses following APM procedures (for a detailed description see Wall et al., 2016). Analysis proceeded line-by-line with the levels of action (elements, functional steps, and goals) in the conversation systematically identified in 1-min intervals. The procedure involved collectively coding, from an APM a priori list of codes for verbal interaction (i.e., asks for information, clarifies, encourages, describes self; see Appendix Q), the specific elements or units of behaviour that make up the action for each participant. Next, the functional steps that each participant engaged in to reach the goal were identified and informed by the video recall interview data. The coded elements and functional steps were then used to describe the individual goal(s) and joint goal(s) for each minute of the conversation. Based on this systematic analysis, an overall joint project was inferred from the individual and joint goals (i.e., what the dyad members were doing together over time in relation to the transition to higher levels of commitment and training).

**Compiling narratives for phase 2.** The analyzed data record was then compiled into two individual and one joint narrative (three in total) descriptions of the conversation. Each narrative was approximately two pages in length, double-spaced, and written using plain
goal-directed language that described what the participants were doing in the conversation. For example, one of the narratives for a skater included the following description:

- One of your goals in the conversation was to update your mom about your skating. You did this by responding to your mom’s questions about the status of your new program. You were relaying conversations you had with your coaches and expressing your opinions about the choreography.

The joint narrative identified the functional steps, joint goals, and joint project engaged in by the dyad. For example, the joint narrative for one dyad included the following description of a joint goal in the conversation:

- Another joint goal seemed to be to help [Daughter] develop and maintain friendships in and outside of skating. [Mother] did this by encouraging [Daughter] to be social with skaters from other clubs and assuring her that befriending skaters from other clubs is okay to her coaches. [Daughter] participated in this by updating her mom about her communication with a skater from another club and describing her “embarrassing” experience sitting with friends from different clubs.

The research team then discussed these narratives until consensus was reached about the identified joint project. The narratives were presented to participants during Phase 2.

**Phase 2: Second meeting.** Approximately two months after the first interview the participants returned for a second interview. The first part of the interview involved each researcher meeting individually with one of the participants to review the individual narratives. The second part of the interview involved both researchers and both participants meeting together to review the joint narrative, including the identified joint project. In the first and second part of the interview participants were given a paper copy and the
Researchers read the narratives to the participants. Participants were invited to give feedback and make changes to the narrative and joint project if the description was not consistent with the participants’ memory of the conversation. Two dyads shared recent changes related to the joint project that resulted in slight revisions to the project for each of these dyads. All dyads agreed with the identified joint project.

**Phase 3: Telephone monitoring.** Following the second interview, each participant was contacted individually on a biweekly basis to monitor their joint project. During the telephone conversation participants were asked about whether they had any project related activities, the nature of these activities, what they were thinking and feeling during the activities, and if there were any barriers to the project. The total number of telephone monitoring calls ranged from 9-13 (\(M\) call length =13.54 min) to parents and 10-13 (\(M\) call length = 11.68 min) to athletes.

**Phase 4: Third meeting.** The final interview closely paralleled the first meeting. Parent-athlete dyads met with the same researchers, after a brief interview about current activities and how the dyad’s joint project had progressed, the researchers left the room while the parent and athlete had a conversation related to their project (\(M = 8.98\) min). Following the conversation, each participant met with a researcher for an individual video recall interview. Mean interview lengths were 21.58 min for parents and 23.62 min for athletes. The participants then met once again with the researchers to debrief the meeting and the study as a whole.

**Within-case analyses.** The same analytic process as described for the initial analyses above were followed for the interviews in Phase 4. The analyses of the conversation were compared for similarities and differences to the joint project in previous phases. A final case
summary was prepared, collating all analyses, and then circulated to the research team. The research team met to discuss each case separately and to identify emerging constructs which served as the basis for comparison in the cross-case analyses.

**Cross-case analyses.** The research team conducted cross-case analyses to identify potential similarities and differences across the cases. Three cross-case analyses, as opposed to comparing across the five cases once, were conducted to identify salient constructs (Yin, 2013). That is, the five cases were randomly grouped in two sets of three and one set of four, so that each case was discussed twice. This procedure in APM is modelled after the technique of triading (Kelly, 1955), which enabled the researchers to ask, “how are two cases alike and different from the third?” In the cross-case analysis that involved four cases, the researchers modified the technique, asking, “what is common with three cases and different from the fourth?” Common themes across constructs were identified and the research team discussed how best to cluster the projects for reporting.

A researcher journal was kept throughout data gathering and analyses to track personal reflections and decision-making during the study.

**Rigour and trustworthiness.** As is typically the case in APM, Lincoln and Guba’s (2000) suggestions for evaluating quality were used, this included the rigour of the method and trustworthiness of the interpretations. With respect to rigour, the APM involves a systematic and comprehensive procedure for collecting and analyzing data longitudinally. Multiple data gathering methods were used to access different perspectives on the same action. For example, video recording was used to observe manifest behaviour, the video recall interview accessed internal processes, and naïve observation by participants and researchers during the video recall interview, and by researchers during the analyses, focused
on social meaning. In addition, the longitudinal design enabled prolonged engagement with the participants. With respect to trustworthiness of interpretations, participants had the opportunity to react in detail to their data through the video recall interviews and to comment, add to, or make changes to our interpretations during the second meeting. This ensured that the researchers’ interpretations were adequately representing the experience and actions of the participants (Young et al., 2005). The detailed analyses, involving pairs of researchers, and the continuous discussion of emerging findings until consensus among the research team further contributed to trustworthiness by ensuring multiple perspectives on the data and guarding against bias related to selective interpretations.

Results

The aim of this research was to describe the joint goal-directed projects of parents and athletes as each athlete transitioned to higher levels of training and commitment in figure skating. Based on initial analyses and narrative feedback with each parent-athlete dyad, five distinct projects were identified and followed using 6 months of telephone monitoring. These projects represented several joint actions constructed around a common goal or meaning. The repeated and systematic analyses of the data set described in Table 3.2 led to the grouping of the projects based on common themes, namely negotiating commitments \((n = 4)\), progressing towards skating goals \((n = 4)\), and maintaining a developmental focus \((n = 3)\). These three themes represent commonalities across the five dyads’ projects. For each dyad, primary and secondary themes were identified. Primary themes captured what the dyad was primarily focused on together, while secondary themes represented the dyads’ joint actions that were present and a part of the project, but less salient (see Table 3.3). As a result, the total number of projects across the thematic clusters exceeds five.
Table 3.3. Joint Projects and Arrangement into Clusters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyad</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>Secondary Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>To engage together about skating while athlete is entrusted with more independence and parent’s concerns for well-roundedness are monitored and met.</td>
<td>Maintaining a developmental focus</td>
<td>Progressing towards skating goals; Negotiating commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>To negotiate parent’s involvement and athlete’s independence in her commitments and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Negotiating commitments</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>To reconcile different expectations for athlete’s athletic, academic, and social development in the context of their relationship with each other.</td>
<td>Negotiating commitments</td>
<td>Progressing towards skating goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>To work together to fine tune athlete’s training schedule and to manage the tension around athlete’s needs and personal development while connecting through skating.</td>
<td>Maintaining a developmental focus</td>
<td>Progressing towards skating goals; Negotiating commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>To work as a team to support athlete’s progression towards her dreams/goal of becoming an Olympian.</td>
<td>Progressing towards skating goals</td>
<td>Maintaining a developmental focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A secondary theme was not applicable for Dyad Two.

It also became clear that the transition projects were embedded in a broader parent-child relationship project, that is, the joint actions that parents and children enact together, which spans years. The parent-child relationship served as an important context for the joint actions related to the transition projects, and in turn, the joint actions enacted affected the relationship between the parent and athlete. The three clusters of transition projects and parent-child relationship projects are described in the following sections.

**Negotiating commitments.** Projects focused on negotiating commitments involved actions and goals related to balancing training, school, social, and other extra-curricular activities. Negotiating commitments was a primary theme for Dyads Two and Three, while for Dyads One and Four this was a secondary theme. Central to these projects was the process of growing responsibility for the athlete. The negotiating involved a back and forth
dynamic that looked different in each dyad. In some cases, the athlete asserted themselves, expressed their desires, and pulled for decision making power related to their commitments. For others, the athlete vied for less parental involvement in their activities. For instance, for one athlete (Dyad One) growing responsibility meant beginning to take public transit to skating and signing up for her own school courses. The parents’ functional steps, in turn, involved trying to respect their daughter’s desire for greater independence and responsibility by discussing and collaborating with them about the extra-curricular activities. However, in all cases, the parent ultimately had the final say and oversight. In these projects, the beginning of governance transfer (Young et al., 2008) was taking place, where the dyad was working out between them who had decision making power (related to scheduling and engagement in activities).

For example, one athlete (Dyad Four) used the first conversation to initiate talking about her desire to change schools. She wanted to move to the local sport academy where other skaters attended and enroll in the stream that accommodated sport training:

Mother: Why don't we just wait for now though because I think it [current school] is a good school (Daughter: I know), and they have … wait until we run into problems (Daughter: I know, but …) because I can always switch you.

Daughter: I know about education and … that … but the reason why I was telling you now even though we’re only halfway done the school year is … “why are you worrying about that now you still have like many months until that,” but it’s like I don't want to be like first day of school “Mom I want to change schools.” Like end of August I feel like this is going to be the time to discuss things … that’s just why I’m saying this now.
The daughter expressed in the video recall interview, “I know it seems really early to be talking about next school year but I feel like … I don't want to be rushing my parents.” During the conversation the parent listened and tried to understand her daughter’s desire to switch schools while reminding her that the current school was working well. Towards the end of the conversation the parent stated, “Well I’m not really willing to change anything just yet. I want to see how things go.” However, during the narrative feedback session the dyad reported that they had decided that the athlete would change schools at the start of the next academic year.

Negotiating commitments also involved different personal investments within the dyad, and at times, these investments were in conflict as was the case for Dyads Two and Three. For instance, at the start of the study, one athlete (Dyad Two) shared that her goal was to compete internationally in both skating and horseback riding. This surprised her mother. During the first conversation the mother brought it up:

**Mother**: You skating for six days. You spend so many hours and timing on it. You don't even dream for to be a really good … for yourself. I never thinking you are to be the horseback riding Olympics (laughing). **(Daughter)**: I’ll show you …). But how’s your … if you do that that means you have to spending time on it, and …

**Daughter**: And not do school then.

**Mother**: No do school?!? **(Daughter)**: laughing) Are you kidding?

**Daughter**: No (laughing). Only just kidding. Joking. It’d be awesome.

**Mother**: It’s not possible, but you know? So are you going to choose between

1 English as a second language. Transcribed verbatim.
skating and horseback riding?

**Daughter:** Yep one day.

By the second interview the athlete had decided to discontinue her involvement in skating. Much of the negotiating between this dyad related to whether the athlete would return to skating, the parent’s desire for her daughter to attend a private school and prioritize academics over skating and horseback riding, and the daughter’s growing involvement and interest in spending more time with her horse. The mother’s personal investments related first and foremost to ensuring a solid education for her daughter with the long-term perspective of university, as well as, her personal interest, love, and connection to the sport of figure skating. On the other hand, the daughter was invested in her new horse and was trying to negotiate as much time at the barn as possible. She respected her mother’s emphasis on academics and followed her lead regarding school related commitments but also asserted herself about what she wanted.

**Progressing towards skating goals.** Progressing towards skating goals refers to projects that focused on moving toward and attaining short- (i.e., specific skating elements or competition results) and long-term (i.e., making the Olympics) goals. Dyad Five’s project was primarily focused on a long-term goal of making the 2022 Olympics and involved weekly ritualized activities between mother and daughter. For three dyads, progressing towards skating goals was a secondary theme. Aspects of these dyads’ projects involved working towards progress in skating but it did not have the same specificity. Rather, in these cases the dyads were working out between themselves, implicitly and explicitly, expectations for progress.

For Dyad Five, progress was explicitly identified through joint actions, such as
formal goal setting practices, and involved both present and future foci. The joint goals included setting clear goals for the season and brainstorming and negotiating weekly goals and incentives. For example, in the final conversation, the dyad was negotiating goals for the week:

Mother: Ok, so what are we, what are our goals? (Daughter: I don’t know). One clean program a day? (Daughter: Sure. No, no, no …) A clean program, frozen yogurt?

Daughter: No … One clean program and I get to have a bath bomb again …

Mother: Ok, so, we’ll go the mall and you get a bath bomb if you have two clean programs? (Daughter: Um-hmm). They have to be consecutive days, they don’t have to be on the same day but they have to be like one one day, one the next day (Daughter: Ok).

Although the athlete established her long-term goal, the mother steered the project, providing structure and emotional support to guide her daughter’s training. For instance, the mother commented in the video recall interview, “lots of times I have to coax her into the right goals that are going to push her towards developing, cause sometimes her goals … don’t make sense.” The mother’s functional steps included observing most of her practices, helping with her daily routine (e.g., meals, doing her hair), talking to her about her lessons, and gauging her understanding of her skating (e.g., program requirements). A primary goal that weaved throughout the project for the mother was to determine the degree of her input in her daughter’s training, that is, knowing when to push and guide and when to let her daughter take the lead. This mother was intentional about seeking support from other parents and the coaches to help her navigate her involvement. She described herself as mindful of her
limited knowledge of skating, noting in the video recall interview that the technical aspects of skating are between her daughter and the coach. In her interactions with her daughter she frequently checked her understanding by asking for clarification or more information and acknowledged and paraphrased what her daughter had to say.

The daughter followed her mother’s lead but also took an active role in the project by negotiating weekly goals that involved setting more challenging goals, identifying incentives that further assisted her towards her goals such as healthy treats, and tracking her activities. A primary goal was to challenge herself to incrementally improve her skating skills.

Comparatively, the other three dyads had a more implicit focus on progress. There was a shared assumption between parents and athletes that improvement, and in some cases achievement, were a part of their involvement in competitive sport. However, these dyads did not engage together in formal goal setting. Rather, the dyads were working out between themselves expectations for progress in skating.

In Dyads One and Four, the athletes’ personal expectations were observed implicitly in their conversations with their mothers. Both athletes sought emotional support from their parent for the challenges and setbacks faced in skating (i.e., a “bad” training session (Dyad Four) or other skaters staying in a level so they could win (Dyad One)) through which their high personal expectations were revealed. The parents each acknowledged in the video recall interview that their daughters had high personal standards. In the conversation, the parents engaged with their daughters, provided emotional support, and worked to offset the high expectations through listening, sharing observations, re-framing perceptions, and re-directing the focus towards what was in the athletes’ control.

For Dyad Three, the parent set expectations for skating progress that were not shared
by the athlete. One of the goals enacted by the father was to hold his daughter to a certain standard in skating and to see improvement and progress. For example, he questioned his daughter about her progress on her double axel as illustrated by the following exchange in their final conversation:

**Daughter:** I am rotating my double axel.

**Father:** Is it landing? (Daughter: Yeah). Fully rotated? (Daughter: No). That’s the problem.

The father’s functional steps also included re-directing the conversation to what he thought she needed to do more in training. The father also challenged his daughter’s reasons for not meeting his expectations. The daughter highlighted and restated the progress she had made on her double axel, defended against comparisons her father made with other skaters, and provided external reasons for why she did not meet her father’s expectations (i.e., the ice conditions). She disclosed in the video recall interview that she wanted “to impress” her father with her skating. Her goals included to be heard by her father and to receive validation from him about the progress she had achieved.

**Maintaining a developmental focus.** Developmental focus refers to projects that involved actions aimed at the physical and psychological needs of the athlete, given their age, and emphasizing a holistic perspective with regard to personal development. Goals focused on (a) tailoring involvement in skating to accommodate growth and development and (b) developing the person and being well-rounded. These projects were predominantly steered by the parent, but the value of maintaining balance alongside skating was shared by the athletes. For Dyads One and Four, developmental focus was the primary theme. Both of these dyads also engaged in negotiating commitments and progressing towards skating goals,
however, the emphasis on holistic development was foregrounded. For Dyad Five, developmental focus was a secondary theme, subsumed under progressing in skating.

All three dyads, in their own way, were working together to tailor the athletes’ involvement in skating to accommodate growth and development. For some this meant ensuring there was time for the athlete “to be a kid” (Dyad Five) or to have time together as a family that did not involve skating (Dyad One). For others it meant being mindful of development such as growth spurts and the importance of developing self-confidence (Dyad Four). A primary functional step for parents involved monitoring the athletes’ training including their schedule, emotional (i.e., managing stress/pressure) and physical (i.e., nutrition, injuries) health, and relationships (i.e., with coaches and friends). Through the video recall interviews, it became clear that parents used different markers to assess whether changes or adjustments were needed. For Dyad One, the mother used her daughter’s level of enjoyment and happiness, whereas, in Dyad Four the mother relied on expressed and observed energy levels. The parents collaborated with the athlete to adjust the training schedule as needed. One parent (Dyad Four) commented in the telephone monitoring that they were “restoring some normalcy to the schedule, bringing the speed down a notch” and “taking it day by day in the busy season.”

Setting limits and educating the athlete about the importance of health and rest were other functional steps used. The parent from Dyad One noted in the telephone monitoring that she’s “got to make sure [she’s] the parent and [her daughter] is the child still.” Although she collaborated with her daughter, there were times she set limits to ensure there was balance in her daughter’s life. The athletes (Dyads One, Four, and Five) followed their mothers’ lead, responding to questions and updating them about their training and how their
bodies felt. One athlete (Dyad Four) also took initiative herself, focusing on staying on top of her health and setting appropriate boundaries so she would not overwork herself in skating. This included, for example, taking time off to recover when she hurt her back.

Developing as a person and being well-rounded were also goals for Dyads One and Four. This was a central focus of Dyad One’s project. As the dyad engaged together about different skating topics (i.e., choreography, competitions, training), it became clear that the mother highlighted ‘teachable moments’ to facilitate her daughter’s personal development such as independence, responsibility, and understanding of social interactions. For example, in the first conversation, the dyad talked about replacing a piece of equipment that the daughter lost:

**Mother**: You left it there?

**Daughter**: I think I don't know … we even looked and we didn’t see anything but I think what happened was it was on my chair and when I got up the chair folded and it probably got caught in between and we didn’t see it.

**Mother**: Yeah so one thing you have to remember to do is always

**Daughter**: Look in the chair (laughs)

**Mother**: Yeah but check everywhere. Don't leave your stuff lying around because a lot of it’s equipment that you need.

The mother encouraged, and at times advised, her daughter to be more disciplined and take ownership of aspects of her training, as well as to focus on what was in her control. The daughter tried to demonstrate to her mother that she was responsible and that she deserved more independence. In the video recall she shared that she felt frustrated that her mother continued to remind her about her lost notepad; she expressed that she was “being
responsible but everyone forgets things from time to time.”

For Dyad Four, a part of being well-rounded meant ensuring that skating was not the sole focus for the athlete. The athlete shared during the warm-up conversation that she does not like to make long-term goals as “anything can happen.” Although the dyad connected through skating, particularly given the mother’s knowledge of skating, they were also intentional about finding ways to connect outside of the sport together. Functional steps included ensuring they have time together in the evening as a family, picking berries and harvesting apples, going sightseeing while in a different city for a competition, and sewing together. The mother noted in the telephone monitoring that she thinks it’s important that her daughter is reminded that “[she] is not defined by her performance as an athlete” and that there are other things in her life.

**Parent-child relationship.** For all five dyads the skating related projects were enacted within the broader parent-child relationship project, that is, the series of joint actions that construct the relationship beyond skating. For four dyads (Dyads One, Two, Four, and Five), their shared involvement in skating was a means of personal connection and enjoyment with one another. Important functional steps included collaborating and working together as a team and emotional support and regulation.

Parents guided and steered the dyads’ projects by monitoring and inquiring while the athletes reinforced by ‘doing,’ updating, and vocalizing their wants and needs. Some dyads had a complementary style of relating with one another. Their conversations flowed, often with the parent taking the lead and asking questions and the athlete responding and providing information. They switched topics with ease, finished each other’s sentences, and were comfortable disagreeing and expressing their own perceptions. These dyads worked together
as a team.

Emotional support and regulation involved athletes expressing and processing their emotions including frustration, uncertainty, and worry with their parents. The parents, in turn, listened, empathized, acknowledged their daughter’s concerns, and at times offered encouragement or an alternative perspective. In the telephone monitoring the dyads described frequent connecting points about skating including conversations in the car, texting throughout the day, and the parent being present and observing training sessions. The athletes noted particular difficulties when their mothers were away. For example, one athlete (Dyad Four) shared in the telephone monitoring:

My other coach was in a bad mood and ‘freaked out’ at me … it was really hard because I had no one to talk to. Normally I would text my mom, and I tried to text my mom but the message was too big, greater than 500 words, and wouldn’t send. I went and talked to the off-ice coaches … it seems resolved now.

Skating used to be a way of connecting for Dyad Two, however, the athlete discontinued their involvement in skating while participating in the study and increased her involvement in horseback riding. As the dyad engaged together primarily around negotiating commitments, with the daughter desiring to have more independence and the mother trying to navigate her involvement and input in her daughter’s activities, they were also finding new ways of connecting together. Tension in their relationship was evident as a result of their conflicting goals as demonstrated in their conversation:

**Mother**: (Laughs). Do you miss skating?

**Daughter**: No. I do not.

**Mother**: I miss it.
Daughter: You don’t even skate, you miss it. (Laughs).

Mother: I miss when you are on the ice.

Daughter: You don’t like me horseback riding?

Mother: I like it, I like [horse name].

In contrast, for Dyad Three, their involvement in skating seemed to contribute to disconnection in their relationship. As the dyad worked together to reconcile different expectations for the daughter’s athletic, academic, and social development, their conflicting goals resulted in tension in their interactions. The parent viewed skating as “an investment that won’t have any return” and as taking away from the daughter’s development in other areas, particularly academics, and not contributing to opportunities for a future career. Skating for the daughter was an outlet to gain parental approval and prove she could do something well, given her father’s high expectations for her and her commitments. The dyad’s interactions during the conversations were strained. The father took the lead, he asked questions, tried to elicit responses, and gave input and advice. The daughter provided minimal responses, often used non-verbal responses, and at times changed the topic. In response, the father countered with a demand or challenged his daughter’s assertion (i.e., thinking it was an excuse), or continued giving his input with minimal acknowledgement of what his daughter was sharing. Both expressed frustration with the other in the video recall interviews. In this dyad, rather than the relationship in the background, providing a foundation to work together from as a team, the relationship was foregrounded. Although, the dyad was reconciling their differing expectations for the athlete’s commitments, they were negotiating how they connected with one another as part of their broader parent-child relationship project.
Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate how parents and athletes engaged together when transitioning to (or not to) higher levels of commitment and training in the context of early specialization, competitive sport. The findings revealed that each dyad engaged in unique projects, and subsequently unique pathways (Phillips, Davids, Renshaw, & Portus, 2010), as they navigated the transition to, and in the case of one dyad, not to, more specialized training in skating. The data revealed three thematic clusters of inter-related joint projects. Athletes and parents were negotiating commitments, progressing towards skating goals, and maintaining a developmental focus as they engaged together in the transition process. Also, not surprisingly, most projects involved a focus on future-oriented goals and progress in skating, which supports existing literature that underscores the importance of shared goals between parents and athletes (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2015; Knight & Holt, 2014). Extending this literature, the findings demonstrated the processes through which parents and athletes arrived at shared goals.

In addition, as elaborated below, this study supports existing notions of transitions as a dynamic and interactive process (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016), and furthers our understanding by highlighting the nuanced processes of the joint actions as they take place between parent and athlete over time. A main finding from this study corresponded to how parents and athletes prioritized a developmental focus and how non-sport development was embedded within the transition processes. The emphasis on well-roundedness and a holistic perspective for personal development is consistent with previous research in tennis and gymnastics (e.g., Burgess, Knight, & Mellalieu, 2016; Harwood & Knight, 2009a) which showed that parents experience stress related to their child’s development (i.e., educational
and social), given the all-consuming nature of their sport. Parents in this study adopted similar strategies, previously identified in the literature, to manage the developmental demands of sport and maintain balance, such as ensuring the athlete had time away from sport and reiterating the importance of education (e.g., Burgess et al., 2016; Harwood & Knight, 2009a). Additional strategies also emerged, such as highlighting ‘teachable moments’ within the sport context (e.g., Neely & Holt, 2014), to foster independence, responsibility, and social skills. Furthermore, beyond a focus on well-roundedness and balance, these findings showed that some parents also attended to important aspects of growth and development, such as tailoring training schedules around growth spurts. This was a relatively novel finding that aligns with a recent study by Gould, Pierce, Wright, Lauer, and Nalepa (2016), where expert coaches in U10 tennis recommended that parents gain more knowledge about the principles of child growth and development. Participants in the current study demonstrated how some parents translate such knowledge into practice.

For example, monitoring was one of the most frequent functional steps engaged in by parents towards the goal of having a developmental focus, which included observing and keeping track of the athlete’s schedule, emotional and physical health, and social interactions with coaches and friends. Parents used different markers to assess whether changes or adjustments were needed such as their daughter’s energy levels or enjoyment. Moreover, parents seemed to be socializing their daughters to have a developmental focus for their own involvement in skating. This was observed in the ways they collaborated and shared information with their daughters, and in turn, how the daughters took initiative themselves with monitoring their own health. Parents, however, also engaged in limit setting when they felt it was necessary to pull back or modify training (e.g., Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, &
Recommendations by the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine suggest that children who participate in early sport specialization should be closely monitored for burnout, injury, or overtraining (LaPrade et al., 2016). Although the recommendations do not specify who should do the monitoring, these findings suggest parents, in this early specialization sport context, engage in such behaviours.

Similar to previous research on adolescents’ within-career transitions (e.g., Gledhill & Harwood, 2015; Pummell et al., 2008), an important part of some participants’ projects was negotiating commitments, that is, balancing the demands of sport, school, and private life. A novel contribution of the present study, however, is an increased understanding of the ways in which youth development was embedded within this transition process. Specifically, parent-athlete dyads in this study were engaged in the developmental process of increasing adolescent responsibility and decreasing parental control through governance transfer (Young et al., 2008), while maintaining and renegotiating connection in the parent-child relationship (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Governance transfer is the process of shifting responsibility over different domains (i.e., schoolwork, sport, extra-curricular activities) from parental control to youth (Young et al., 2008). In this study, the beginning of governance transfer took place for some dyads as they negotiated decision making power related to commitments such as school and training schedules.

Furthermore, consistent with existing research on the parent-child relationship, sport was found to be a means of connection for participants (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016). For most of the dyads, skating was a medium through which parents and athletes shared experiences, fostered a shared love of the sport, and connected daily with one another. An important functional step for closeness and connection in the parent-child relationship was emotion
regulation and emotional support. This finding is consistent with previous research on emotional support in the parent-athlete dyad (e.g., Hassell, Sabiston, & Bloom, 2010; Wuerth et al., 2004) and links to more recent studies that recognize the social and interpersonal nature of emotion regulation (e.g., Tamminen et al., 2016) and communal coping (e.g., Neely, McHugh, Dunn, & Holt, 2017). However, with growing independence for the athlete, some dyads renegotiated how they connected in their relationship; as such, a dialectic between autonomy and connection was observed. Although it is widely referenced that parents’ involvement in sport decreases throughout the athletic career (Côté, 1999; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), recently scholars have challenged this conception (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2016). This dialectic offers one possibility for understanding the continued involvement of parents in sport while youth-athletes take on greater responsibility and independence.

Finally, the CAT framework offered a lens for conceptualizing the transition to higher levels of training and commitment as a relational and goal-directed process engaged in by athletes and their parents. By using this conceptualization, the findings move beyond research that contextualizes parents and athletes as individuals in interaction by attending to the dyadic level in the transition process. This study also extends knowledge related to athlete development that has largely relied on retrospective qualitative research methods to understand transitions (e.g., Gledhill & Harwood, 2015; Pummell et al., 2008). Most of the data were comprised of conversations, in real time, between parents and athletes themselves. This allowed for the actions of both athletes and their parents, as well as the relational nature of transitions, to be captured. Furthermore, the longitudinal component of APM enabled an understanding of the transition process over time.
There are some limitations to consider when interpreting the findings. First, participants in this study were self-selected and provided with small monetary incentive for their participation. Second, inherent to the research procedure, gathering data based on 10-15-minute conversations between parents and athletes may or may not be reflective of their ongoing engagement and relationship. In addition, the telephone monitoring relied on participants recollecting what had occurred since the last phone interview, there could have been some selectivity in terms of what they remembered or chose to share about their activities. Third, the sample consisted of primarily mother-daughter dyads. The joint projects of father/mother-son dyads or additional father-daughter dyads may differ from those described in this study. Finally, this study took place in a Canadian context of figure skating where parents are typically involved in their child’s sport. These findings may or may not be replicated in other countries.

Potential avenues for future research include systematically exploring the role of gender and culture in the parent-child relationship, particularly as it pertains to the transition to higher levels of commitment and training in early specialization sport. In addition, further exploration of how parents and athletes proceed with early specialization in other sports (e.g., gymnastics) and countries, while monitoring and accounting for important developmental considerations, may extend (or complement) the current study findings.

In conclusion, despite the potential negative consequences of early specialization, athletes and their parents continue to invest and commit to trajectories of sport participation aimed at high-level performance in early specialization sports. This study provides insight into the specific goals and strategies that parents and athletes use as they move forward with more specialized training in competitive figure skating. Parents and athletes not only
focused on negotiating the various commitments, demands on time, and expectations for progress, they also accommodated and fostered non-sport developmental tasks, a process steered by parents but equally engaged in and shared by the athlete.
Chapter 4: General Discussion

The purpose of this dissertation was to advance understanding of the relational processes of parents with coaches and athletes in the context of Canadian competitive figure skating. Two studies were conducted toward this end. The first study showed that the parent-coach relationship is generally positive and enjoyable, albeit with the presence of conflict, and that participants described the nature of the relationship in different ways. Participants’ descriptions of their experiences clustered around three configurations of the coach-parent dyad, in relation to the athlete, including collaborative, coach-athlete centric, or contractual. Pertinent themes were also identified across these three configurations which included (a) views on coach and parent expertise, (b) the when, what, and how of communication, and (c) trust which included interpersonal and technical trust. The second study offered insight related to how parents and athletes navigated the transition to higher levels of commitment and training in figure skating. The parent-child relationship served an important context from which parents and athletes negotiated commitments, progressed towards skating goals, and maintained a developmental focus.

As detailed below, the findings from these two studies reveal important aspects about parent-coach and parent-athlete relationships in skating and offer general insights for the study of parents’ relationships and involvement in youth sport. In addition, the findings highlight the role of parents in fostering psychosocial processes in sport settings that require early specialization. The objectives of this final chapter are to move beyond the discussion of findings presented in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to synthesize the main contributions of this dissertation in light of the literature. I will also discuss the strengths and limitations of this
program of research, consider potential avenues for future research, and note implications for practice.

**Contributions of Current Research**

**Sport context.** This program of research was positioned in the context of Canadian competitive figure skating which extends knowledge beyond sports, such as tennis and soccer, that are typically studied in the parenting in sport literature (Harwood & Knight, 2016). Focusing on skating, particularly the transition to higher levels of training and commitment, is an important contribution in light of position statements and guidelines that discourage sport specialization early in the sports career (e.g., Bergeron et al., 2015; LePrade et al., 2016). Few studies, if any, have focused explicitly on the psychosocial processes related to narrowing sport participation and increased training in sports that require early specialization. In addition, consistent with Knight and Gould (2016) these studies underscore how relationships and interactions are shaped by the broader social context of sport. The sport culture of figure skating situates coaches as paid ‘professionals,’ involves a substantive financial investment on the part of parents, requires high volumes of weekly training on a year-round basis, and compared to late specialization sports, sees younger athletes at the senior levels of competition (Cummins, 2007; Kestnbaum, 2003). The nature of this sport context lends itself to particular demands on coaches, parents, and athletes and their subsequent interactions. The findings from these studies suggest that parents are substantially involved in their child’s skating and that the parent-coach relationship, in addition to the parent-athlete and coach-athlete relationship, are important parts of the culture of competitive figure skating. These findings also highlight the relational diversity within parent-coach and parent-child interactions in the same sport context as described below.
**Parent-coach relationship.** This dissertation advances the study of parent-coach interactions by taking an exploratory approach that focused explicitly on describing both coaches’ and parents’ perspectives of the relationship. This contrasts with existing understandings of parent-coach interactions shown through studies on stressors and general parental involvement in sport (e.g., Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b; Knight & Harwood, 2009; Ross, Mallett, & Parkes, 2015). A key contribution of this dissertation is that the majority of parents and coaches described their interactions as relatively positive and enjoyable, despite the presence of conflict. This finding diverges from the prevailing narrative in the literature that presents the relationship between coaches and parents as problematic and stressful (Knight & Gould, 2016). Instead, these findings demonstrate that it is possible for the parent-coach relationship to be enjoyable while also involving interpersonal challenges. Such an understanding moves beyond artificial dichotomies of relationships as entirely positive or negative and provides support for a common understanding about relationships in general, that is, that conflict is inherent in all relationships to one extent or another (e.g., Hinde, 1997). In addition, this dissertation highlights the diversity present within the relationships between parents and coaches in skating. The configurations not only highlighted the different views about the relationship, but through the description of the themes, namely, expertise, communication, and trust within each configuration, the differences among parents and coaches were apparent.

These findings also provide empirical evidence that suggests that the parent-coach relationship can be a partnership that involves the sharing of resources in order to foster both athlete performance and well-being. For instance, although some coaches preferred to keep parents at a distance (i.e., coach-athlete configuration), others engaged, collaborated, and
worked with parents, most notably demonstrated through the collaborative configuration. The notion of approaching parents as a resource is discussed in the literature (e.g., Harwood, 2011; Harwood, Knight, Thrower, & Berrow, 2019), however, to my knowledge there is little empirical support for such an approach. These findings extend recent claims that at the heart of effective coaching is the ability to establish and maintain a relational connection between coach and athlete (Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). According to Jowett and Shanmugam (2016), a relational connection “makes a difference to technical coaching because it supplies coaches with the key to opening the door to their athlete’s capabilities, capacities, and potential” (p. 471). Partnerships with parents may be another component of relational coaching that has the potential to maximize athletes’ chances of success and development beyond sport.

**Parent-child relationship.** This dissertation also supports and expands knowledge of parent-child interactions in sport. Consistent with much of the literature to date, involvement in sport was a means of connection and closeness for most of the parent-athlete dyads (Clarke, Harwood, & Cushion, 2016; Felber Charbonneau & Camiré, 2019; Prewitt-White, Fisher, Odenheimer, & Buchanan, 2016). However, novel to this dissertation was the reciprocal nature between sport involvement and the parent-child relationship. Specifically, how the sport-related transition projects were embedded in the parent-child relationship, and in turn, how parent-athlete joint actions in skating affected the relationship such as fostering personal connection or disconnection. This finding parallels the ways in which parents and youth engage together in other domains as documented in the broader literature on parent-child relationships (e.g., Marshall et al., 2014, 2018; Young et al., 2008). Furthermore, these findings revealed how some non-sport developmental processes were enacted between parent
and child through their involvement in sport. This particular contribution not only furthers knowledge about developmental transitions in the context of sport (Kipp, 2017; Wylleman & Rosier, 2016) but also extends previous research that underscores the contextually bound nature of governance transfer (e.g., Marshall et al., 2014; Young et al., 2008). That is, in addition to domains such as school work and adolescents’ leisure activities, these findings identify another domain, competitive sport, in which the process of shifting responsibility between parent and child was observed.

**Application of a developmental focus.** This dissertation also contributes preliminary understandings about the ways in which a developmental focus that accommodates growth and development and promotes well-roundedness was prioritized relationally. These findings go beyond the existing literature that encourages broader definitions of success in sport and the acquisition of knowledge related to growth and development (e.g., Bergeron et al., 2015; Gould, Pierce, Wright, Lauer, & Nalepa, 2016; Holt et al., 2017) by showing the ways that parents, coaches, and athletes adopt and implement more holistic perspectives for sport participation. For example, how parent-athlete dyads engaged together towards goals related to personal development such as fostering independence, responsibility, and social skills; and how parents and coaches collaborated and shared resources in order to foster athlete well-being. This notion of prioritizing a developmental focus is consistent with calls for research focused on the ways that parents nurture psychosocial development (Harwood et al., 2019). In these studies, however, parents did not act alone. Instead, they fostered athlete growth, development, and well-roundedness through their relationships with their child and the child’s coaches.
**Conceptual framework and methodology for studying dyads.** Finally, this dissertation also involved the use of contextual action theory (CAT) and the action project method (APM) in Study 2. CAT provided the theoretical underpinning for this work and the APM provided the methodology that together enabled a goal-directed and prospective understanding of parents’ and athletes’ joint actions over time. Conceptualizing the transition to higher levels of commitment and training in sport as a joint process between parent and child offered a relational perspective for studying transitions that is different from the more typical focus on individuals in transition (e.g., Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Poczwardowski, Diehl, O’Neil, Côté, & Haberl, 2014). In addition, the use of CAT introduced an alternative framework for understanding the dynamic and reciprocal nature of relationships, which adds to the interpersonal relationships in sport literature that has largely emphasized the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016).

The findings from the use of CAT and APM are particularly novel in that they are based largely on data from conversations, in real time, between parents and athletes themselves, rather than retrospective accounts as is often the case in qualitative research. Also, the understanding of the joint processes between parent and child derives from multiple data collection points extending over 10 months which included parent-child conversations, individual reflections of thoughts and feelings through the video playback interviews, and 6-months of bi-weekly telephone monitoring. Using APM extends the existing interpersonal relationships literature that has predominantly relied on cross-sectional designs and self-report data (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Felber Charbonneau and Camiré, 2019; Nicholls & Perry, 2016; Stebbings, Taylor, & Spray, 2016).
Balanced against these conceptual and methodological contributions, the challenges involved in designing dyadic research were also encountered in Study 1. Although originally the intent was to study parent-coach interactions dyadically as well, due to structural and ethical concerns, the design had to be modified. Nonetheless, given the limited literature on parent-coach interactions, taking an exploratory approach using interpretive description to study the parent-coach relationship explicitly, and including both coaches’ and parents’ perspectives, offered a preliminary understanding of the relationship. This exploratory qualitative investigation also parallels the beginning of research on the coach-athlete and parent-athlete relationships reviewed in Chapter 1 (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Jowett, 2003; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Perego, 2002; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002).

**Strengths and Limitations**

One of the strengths of this dissertation is that it was able to make several contributions to knowledge as detailed above. In addition to these contributions, it is worth pointing out some further strengths of this program of research. As discussed, this dissertation moves beyond study designs that generally focus on the individual by including perspectives from both parents and coaches, as well as focusing on the dyadic processes between parents and athletes. The richness of data is also worth highlighting. Study 1 involved a total of 45 hours and Study 2 involved a total of 44 hours directly with the participants. Although the adequacy of data cannot be judged merely by numbers, the length of interviews and direct time with participants can contribute to the quality and depth of the data (Morrow, 2005). Moreover, data were collected from participants from eight figure skating clubs in Alberta and British Columbia which enabled broader perspectives than
would have been possible from a single club. Lastly, this dissertation introduces CAT and APM to the field of sport psychology and demonstrates that the method involving the video playback interview is applicable with younger parent-child dyads. To date, the method has typically been used in the counselling, career/vocational, and family literature and with dyads involving adolescent participants and those in early adulthood (e.g., Marshall et al., 2014, 2018; Young et al., 2008, 2015). The research subsumed within this dissertation provides added support for the utility of this methodology with those in early adolescence (aged 10-12 years) along with their parents.

Weighed against these strengths and contributions to knowledge, important limitations should also be acknowledged. First, as discussed previously, although this dissertation set out to extend knowledge of dyads that have, to date, received less attention in the literature, Study 1 did not involve intact dyads. As a result, conclusions related to specific parent-coach dyads and relationship experiences could not be made. Second, these studies were situated in the context of competitive figure skating in Canada. The nature of the parents’ relational processes with coaches and athletes may vary in different countries and or sporting cultures of figure skating (i.e., Russia, United States, or China). Third, the samples consisted primarily of mothers despite recruitment efforts that targeted parents in general. Although it is possible that the samples were representative of the gender of the primary parent involved in skating, it is unclear whether the inclusion of more fathers in any family configuration would have led to different findings. Finally, although the reporting of participants’ self-identified ethnicity was restricted in order to maintain anonymity, the majority of participants were born in Canada. This may or may not be representative of skating in Canada as a search for the demographics of the sport did not return any results.
Nonetheless, anecdotal and media accounts (e.g., Ewing, 2018) suggest a number of athletes and coaches are first- or second-generation Canadians. The extent to which a more diverse sample would have led to different findings is unknown.

**Future Directions**

In light of the contributions, strengths, and limitations of this dissertation, a number of potential avenues for future research emerge related to parents’ relationships with coaches and athletes in the context of early specialization sport. These studies explored relationships representing all members in the parent-athlete-coach triad. Exploring the nature of triadic relationships, particularly in a sport context like skating where parents, athletes, and coaches may work together for years, presents one avenue for future research. Looking specifically at differences related to gender and culture may highlight additional nuances within the relationships. There are also opportunities for comparing across the developmental level of athletes, such as the differences in triadic relationships during different stages of the athletic career. In addition, there are opportunities for exploring the differences in triadic relationships across different sports, including comparing across early specialization sports (i.e., gymnastics, swimming) as well as with late specialization sports.

Another avenue for further research is to focus on psychosocial processes situated in the context of early specialization sport, in general, given that the extant literature primarily emphasizes late specialization sports and the negative implications of specializing practices (e.g., Bergeron et al., 2015; LaPrade et al., 2016). Specific to parents’ relationships in this context, further investigation into the ways that parents and coaches work together to promote athlete health and well-being in early specialization sport may prove fruitful. For instance, extending the findings presented in Chapter 2, a follow-up study could compare
across the configurations to investigate similarities and differences in how parents and coaches work together (or not) to facilitate psychosocial development. Alternatively, extending the findings presented in Chapter 3, another follow-up study could explore the role of the coach related to increasing levels of commitment and training in early specialization sport. There are opportunities to conduct a second APM study focused on the parent, athlete, and coach triad. Attending to differences in gender, culture, age and level of the athlete, and/or certification and years of experience of the coach may highlight additional considerations.

A final pathway for extending this program of research is to build on the study of transitions conceptualized as a joint goal-directed process. One line of research would be to further explore the joint projects of parents and athletes who choose not to increase levels of commitment and training in early specialization sport, where they focus either on a different sport or discontinue sport participation all together. Given that only one dyad in Study 2 transitioned not to higher levels of commitment and training in figure skating, a follow-up study exploring other parent-athletes’ joint projects related to this transition could provide additional insights. There are also opportunities for investigating other transitions in sport from a relational perspective, including continuing to focus on parent-athlete processes, but also exploring coach-athlete and even parent-coach joint projects. For instance, given that it is not uncommon for elite level athletes to move away from home during their adolescent years, it would be interesting to explore the joint goal directed processes for parents, coaches, and athletes related to these migratory transitions (e.g., Richardson, Littlewood, Nesti, & Benstead, 2012).
Implications for Practice

The findings from this dissertation underscore the role of parents in the context of early specialization sport and show the ways that parents are engaged relationally with coaches and their child through sport. Currently there is a spotlight on the culture of sport in general related to the vulnerability of athletes amidst cases of abuse and maltreatment, mental health challenges, and inappropriate and demanding training environments (Knight, Harwood, & Gould, 2017). More than ever, there is a need to understand the role and involvement of parents for promoting positive developmental processes and outcomes and for safeguarding against the potential negative effects of sport. The findings from this dissertation are timely as they describe some of the relational processes through which parents are engaging in their child’s sport, and as such, offer implications not only for parents, but also for coaches and sport psychology practitioners.

Parents. In my experience as a sport psychology practitioner I have encountered the frequently referenced “pushy” parent who overidentifies with their child’s sport achievement (Smith & Smoll, 2002). Although, even more so, I have encountered parents who want to support their child’s sport involvement but are concerned about the potential negative consequences related to the demands of training and competition given the age of the athlete. One parent expressed that she was interested in participating in Study 2 because she has struggled with the increased quantity of training required for her daughter’s involvement in skating. These findings describe some of the ways that parents are engaged in their child’s sport that may be helpful for other parents who have similar concerns. For example, parents maintained a focus on well-roundedness, viewed their child’s training through the lens of growth and development, monitored their child’s levels of fatigue and tailored scheduling
accordingly, facilitated the coach-athlete relationship, and asserted themselves and raised concerns when they arose, such as when they perceived the coaches’ behaviour was not developmentally appropriate.

These findings also offer parents suggestions for fostering and maintaining relationships with coaches. Consistent with the literature these findings align with suggestions that encourage parents to share their child with the coach, to respect and trust the coach’s authority, and to follow the coach’s lead and guidance regarding training decisions (Harwood & Knight, 2015). However, these findings move beyond parents as solely relinquishing control and deferring to the coach by highlighting ways that parents actively share their expertise and connect personally with coaches, and ask for what they need or think is important in relation to their child’s figure skating. Rather than a list of general suggestions for parents, these findings promote the uniqueness of each parent-coach relationship and instead encourage self-awareness and reflection. Thus, in light of these findings, parents would benefit from reflecting on their own desires for their relationships with coaches. Parents may consider which of the configurations described in Study 1 most resonates for them. Questions to aid reflection include,

• To what extent do I want/am I able to be involved and to share my expertise as a parent with the coach?
• To what extent does my child want me to be involved with the coach?
• What are my expectations related to the content, frequency, and mediums of communication and feedback with the coach?
• How can I show trust and respect to the coach?
• How can I best support the coach to do their job well?
• When conflict arises, how will I manage it?

• How willing am I to adapt and flex to work with a coach who may have a different view about the parent-coach relationship?

**Coaches.** These findings also offer empirical support that is consistent with existing suggestions for coaches in the literature related to enhancing the parent-coach relationship (see Knight & Gould, 2016; Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011). For instance, coaches are encouraged to take a proactive approach to working with parents, to promote two-way communication, to offer parent education, and to create environments where interactions with parents are welcomed and encouraged (Hellstedt, 1987; Knight & Gould, 2016; Smoll et al., 2011). In addition, coaches are encouraged to develop and articulate their philosophies of coaching with parents and athletes (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012; Carless & Douglas, 2011; Jenkins, 2010). Relatively absent from discussions about developing a coaching philosophy are the coaches’ beliefs and values related to working with parents. It is thought that developing and articulating one’s coaching philosophy helps bring into focus the ways in which values and views shape practice and behaviours (Carless & Douglas, 2011). This dissertation provides evidence of the different perspectives and values that coaches have related to interactions with parents in skating. It is not a one size fits all approach nor is there a singular way of engaging in the coach-parent relationship. Rather, these findings underscore the importance of self-awareness and reflection. In light of these findings, coaches may consider which of the configurations described in Study 1 most resonates for them. Reflecting on the following questions may aid in the process:

• To what extent are parents important for the development of the athlete?
• To what extent am I willing to collaborate with parents and welcome their expertise?
• What do I need from parents to do my job well?
• How will I foster interpersonal and technical trust with parents?
• What are my expectations related to communication with parents?
• When conflict arises, how will this be managed?
• How willing am I to adapt and flex to work with a parent who may have a different view about the parent-coach relationship?

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are also a number of maintenance and resolution strategies from the coach-athlete literature that align with these findings and that are applicable for the parent-coach relationship. These include clarifying expectations, maintaining openness, and adapting to the other’s preferences (Rhind & Jowett, 2010). In addition, when conflict arises, it is important to address it early and directly, focus on the issue at hand, work on the problem collaboratively using active listening and empathy, and use a mediator if needed (Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2018). Finally, these findings underscore the need for shared empathy among coaches and parents (Harwood, 2011; Knight & Harwood, 2009). For example, both coaches and parents acknowledged the demands and stressors that are present for one another. Practically, for some, empathy translated to the delivery of a parent-oriented coaching model (contractual configuration) or respecting the coach’s time, knowing that they have busy schedules (coach-athlete centric configuration). While for others, empathy was enacted through personable communication and connection (collaborative configuration). Coaches and parents that approach their interactions with more
empathy would reduce some of the stressors parents and coaches experience related to one another (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; Knight & Harwood, 2009; Knight & Gould, 2016).

**Practitioners.** While these implications are also relevant for sport psychology practitioners working with parents and coaches, two additional considerations are worth noting. First, recognizing the importance of the parent-child relationship in the context of figure skating, practitioners may consider helping parents and athletes identify their joint projects and ways they could more effectively engage together towards their shared goals. Young and colleagues (Young & Domene, 2018; Young, Domene, & Valach, 2015) previously developed an intervention based on the APM used in this study that may be applicable toward this end. At the core of this intervention is an analysis of the parent-child relationship through the lens of CAT. For example, as was the case for the parent-child dyads in Study 2 (Chapter 3), part of their projects involved connecting through sport. For Dyad 2, the mother and daughter were in the process of re-negotiating their means of connection as the daughter quit skating and increased her involvement in horseback riding. The intervention, in this case, could be to help the dyad identify other means and ways of connecting that also included the daughter having greater responsibility and the parent relinquishing control.

Alternatively, engaging parents in formal goal-setting practices with athletes may be another way of promoting the value of the parent-child relationship in youth sport. This was also encouraged by Kaye et al. (2015) who noted the dyadic transmission of achievement goals between parents and athletes. Involving parents in formal goal setting practices is particularly valuable for younger athletes as was seen in Dyad 5 in Study 2 (Chapter 3) where the process of formal goal-setting was part of their weekly routine. Educating parents
about goal setting principles and how to support their child in the process has the potential to assist the athlete with setting realistic goals and builds in accountability for goal attainment, rewards, and recalibration. It also has the potential to facilitate shared goals among parents and athletes (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2015; Knight & Holt, 2014).

Second, these findings offer implications for practitioners that deliver parent education and support programmes (e.g., Dorsch, King, Dunn, Osai, & Tulane, 2017; Knight & Newport, 2017; Lafferty & Triggs, 2014). Based on the findings in this dissertation, practitioners could integrate education related to child growth and development and help parents understand how they can approach their child’s sport with a developmental focus. This may include practices such as monitoring their child’s sense of enjoyment and energy levels, as well as training (load) for indicators of burnout (i.e., decreased motivation, lack of enjoyment, fatigue) or overuse injuries. Helping parents understand how their observations could inform action, such as how best to communicate such knowledge with coaches or how to advocate for changes in training schedule may be valuable. In addition, educating parents about the ways that they can promote well-roundedness and personal development through sport. For instance, helping their son or daughter interpret their experiences in sport, highlighting teachable moments, and ensuring there is time for school, social, and family activities.

**Conclusion**

In summary, this dissertation provides further evidence that parents are integral participants in youth sport settings, particularly those that require early specialization. Despite the commonly held view that parents are social supports, influencers, or external assets (Harwood et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2017), taking a relational perspective situates
parents as actively engaged in their child’s sport. In addition, by focusing on parent-coach and parent-child interactions these studies illuminated differences across parents’ relationships and highlight that parenting in sport is nuanced and not a one-size-fits-all approach. In a position paper on parenting expertise in youth sport, Harwood and Knight (2015) suggested that parents engage in “a consistent cycle of triangular responsibilities that revolve around managing and supporting the needs of their child, managing themselves and their own well-being, and managing their interactions with others in the youth sport environment (p. 32). This program of research describes some of the processes involved and enacted by parents as they undertake these responsibilities.
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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to Club Directors for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

Dear Club Director:

Hello! My name is Jessie Wall, and I am conducting a research project on the parent-coach relationship in competitive figure skating as part of my PhD in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. This project is carried out under the supervision of Dr. Richard Young, Registered Psychologist. The goal of the research is to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. We are particularly interested in learning about the similarities and differences in how parents and coaches’ experience the relationship.

I am contacting you to request your help with recruiting parent participants for the study. Enclosed with this letter is an introductory letter to prospective parent participants that provides details about the study. I was wondering if you would be willing to circulate the introductory letter to your club membership?

The study involves an individual interview where we will be asking parents about their personal experiences in the coach-parent relationship. We are looking for parents with a son or daughter, skating in the competitive stream for a minimum of one year.

I would be happy to meet with you on the phone to discuss the specifics of the study and to answer any questions you may have. This research is funded by a Sport Canada and federal government grant. I myself have a figure skating background; I competed at the junior competitive level and I was a NCCP Level 1 figure skating coach.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Registered Clinical Counsellor
Professional Member, Canadian Sport Psychology Association
Appendix B: Coach Recruitment Poster for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

How do coaches and parents describe their experiences of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating?

A Study on the Parent-Coach Relationship in Competitive Figure Skating

COACHES!
We are seeking coaches to participate in the study if...

➢ You are a coach with a minimum of one-year experience coaching skaters in the competitive stream.

Benefits of Participation
You may find it helpful to talk about your experience in the coach-parent relationship. The study will also provide valuable information that will help other families and professionals involved in figure skating.

Coaches will receive $100 for their participation in the study.

Involvement
1.5 hour in-person or telephone interview
Appendix C: Study 1 Introductory Letter for Coaches (Chapter 2)

Dear Prospective Coach Participant:

The goal of this research is to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. We are particularly interested in learning about the similarities and differences in how parents and coaches experience the relationship.

What's Involved?
The study involves individual interviews where we will be asking parents and coaches about their personal experiences in the coach-parent relationship.

We are looking for coaches with a minimum of one-year experience coaching skaters in the competitive stream.

If you consent to participate in the study, we will have an in-person or Skype interview. During the interview we will ask you questions about your current relationships with parents including interactions, roles, and what contributes to positive and negative experiences of the relationship.

The interview will take place at a time and in a place that is convenient for you. The total time required for participation in this study is approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcript will be shared with you for verification and you will be invited to clarify or add anything you wish related to the questions that were asked. Transcripts will be used in the process of data analysis.

Why should I participate?
You may find that talking about your experiences in the coach-parent relationship helpful to you.

The results of this study may provide helpful information and education to you, other parents and coaches, club directors and professionals who work with skating clubs.

Coach participants will receive $100 for their participation in the study.

What if I decide to change my mind about participating?
Your decision about getting involved in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents, audio and video recordings will be identified only by code number or pseudonym (false name), and will be password protected, encrypted and stored in a locked filing cabinet. Only members of the research team will have access to the documents, audio recordings and video recordings. Your skating club will not have access to this information.

A head coach or director of a skating club may have forwarded this letter to you in confidence, and he or she has not shared with me the names or contact information of people receiving this letter. Only those parents and coaches who contact me for more information or to indicate interest in participating in the study will become known to me. I will not inform the individual who provided you with this letter with the names of parents or coaches who decide to be involved or declined to participate in the study.

Once this research is completed, it will result in a doctoral dissertation that will be housed in the UBC library and available to the public upon request. The findings may also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals or other media outlets. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Who are the researchers?
I was a figure skating coach and competed at the junior competitive level. Currently, I am a member with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association and a Registered Clinical Counsellor providing sport psychology and counselling services to athletes. Dr. Richard Young is a Registered Psychologist and Professor at the University of British Columbia.

Interested?
If you wish to participate in this study, or would like more information about the study before deciding, please contact me (information below). The principal investigator for this project is Dr. Richard Young. He can be reached at [Richard.Young@ubc.ca](mailto:Richard.Young@ubc.ca)

Thank you so much for your interest in the study.

Sincerely,

Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Appendix D: Parent Recruitment Poster for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

How do coaches and parents describe their experiences of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating?

A Study on the Parent-Coach Relationship in Competitive Figure Skating

PARENTS!
We are seeking parents to participate in the study if...

- You are a parent with a son or daughter skating in the competitive stream for a minimum of one year.

Benefits of Participation
You may find it helpful to talk about your experience in the coach-parent relationship. The study will also provide valuable information that will help other families and professionals involved in figure skating.

Parents will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card for their participation in the study.

Involvement
1.5 hour in-person or telephone interview
Appendix E: Study 1 Introductory Letter for Parents (Chapter 2)

Dear Prospective Parent Participant:

The goal of this research is to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. We are particularly interested in learning about the similarities and differences in how parents and coaches experience the relationship.

**What’s Involved?**
The study involves individual interviews where we will be asking parents and coaches about their personal experiences in the coach-parent relationship.

We are looking for parents with a son or daughter, skating in the competitive stream for a minimum of one year.

If you consent to participate in the study, we will have an in-person or Skype interview. During the interview we will ask you questions about your current relationships with coaches including interactions, roles, and what contributes to positive and negative experiences of the relationship.

The interview will take place at a time and in a place that is convenient for you. The total time required for participation in this study is approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcript will be shared with you for verification and you will be invited to clarify or add anything you wish related to the questions that were asked. Transcripts will be used in the process of data analysis.

**Why should I participate?**
You may find that talking about your experiences in the coach-parent relationship helpful to you.

The results of this study may provide helpful information and education to you, other parents and coaches, club directors and professionals who work with skating clubs.

Parent participants will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card.

**What if I decide to change my mind about participating?**
Your decision about getting involved in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents, audio and video recordings will be identified only by code number or pseudonym (false name), and will be password protected, encrypted and stored in a locked filing cabinet. Only members of the research team will have access to the documents, audio recordings and video recordings. Your skating club or coach will not have access to this information.

A head coach or director of a skating club may have forwarded this letter to you in confidence, and he or she has not shared with me the names or contact information of people receiving this letter. Only those parents and coaches who contact me for more information or to indicate interest in participating in the study will become known to me. I will not inform the individual who provided you with this letter with the names of parents or coaches who decide to be involved or declined to participate in the study.

Once this research is completed, it will result in a doctoral dissertation that will be housed in the UBC library and available to the public upon request. The findings may also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals or other media outlets. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Who are the researchers?
I was a figure skating coach and competed at the junior competitive level. Currently, I am a member with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association and a Registered Clinical Counsellor providing sport psychology and counselling services to athletes. Dr. Richard Young is a Registered Psychologist and Professor at the University of British Columbia.

Interested?
If you wish to participate in this study, or would like more information about the study before deciding, please contact me (information below). The principal investigator for this project is Dr. Richard Young. He can be reached at Richard.Young@ubc.ca

Thank you so much for your interest in the study.

Sincerely,

Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Appendix F: Coach Demographic Information for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

COACH DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Collected by the researcher in-person or over the phone.

Date: ______________________

1. Name: _____________________________

2. Age: __________

3. Sex:
   ❑ Male
   ❑ Female
   ❑ __________

4. Were you born in Canada? Yes/No
   4a. If no, where were you born? ________________________________
   4b. How long have you been in Canada? _________________________

5. What is your ethnic/cultural background? ________________________

6. Educational background:
   ❑ Some high school
   ❑ High school
   ❑ Some post-secondary
   ❑ Post-secondary degree
   ❑ Some graduate study
   ❑ Graduate degree
   ❑ Other: ______________________

7. What is your coach level (e.g., NCCP Level 1, 2, 3)? ______________

8. How long have you coached figure skating? ________________

9. How many clubs have you worked at/with? __________

10. Approximately how many hours/week do you coach? ________

11. Are you currently employed elsewhere? ______ If so, where? ________

12. In what way do you see coaching fitting into your foreseeable future?
   __________________________________________________________________

13. Approximately how many skaters do you work with? ________________

14. What is the range of age/ level of your skaters? ______________________
15. In general, how would you describe your interactions with the parents of the competitive skaters you work with? Is this similar or different from recreational skaters?

☐ Neutral  ☐ Negative  ☐ Positive

16. In general, how would you describe the level of communication between yourself and parents of competitive skaters?

☐ Poor  ☐ Average  ☐ Excellent

17. In general, how often do you communicate with the parents of your competitive skaters?

☐ 2-3 times per week  ☐ Once per week  ☐ Once per month  ☐ Other: _____________

18. What is your primary mode of communication with parents (i.e., email, text, in-person)?

_______________________

19. How do you try to work intentionally with parents? What do you do?


20. What days/times work for you to schedule a 60-90 min interview?

_______________________

I will check with the research team to see if you are a good fit for the study, and we will call you back to let you know, and maybe schedule an interview.

Thank you for contacting us! We appreciate your willingness to participate in our study.
Appendix G: Parent Demographic Information for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

PARENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Collected by the researcher in-person or over the phone.

Date: _______________________

1. Name: _______________________

2. Age: ___________

3. Sex:
   ■ Male
   ■ Female
   ■ ___________

4. Relationship status:
   ■ Single
   ■ Partnered
   ■ Married/Civil Partnership
   ■ Separated
   ■ Divorced
   ■ Other: ___________

5. How many children do you have? _______________________

6. How old is your son/daughter that is involved in figure skating? ___________

7. Were you born in Canada? Yes/No
   7a. If no, where were you born? _______________________
   7b. How long have you been in Canada? _______________________

8. What is your ethnic/cultural background? _______________________

9. Educational background:
   ■ Some high school
   ■ High school
   ■ Some post-secondary
   ■ Post-secondary degree
   ■ Some graduate study
   ■ Graduate degree
   ■ Other: ___________
10. Employment status. Are you currently…? (check all that apply)
   - Employed for wages
   - Self-employed
   - A homemaker
   - Part-time
   - Full-time
   - Other: _____

11. Parents: What was the highest level of sport that you competed?
   Sport: _______________
   Level: _______________ (e.g., international, national, provincial, regional, etc.)

12. How long has your son or daughter been involved in figure skating? _____

13. What level of competition (i.e., juvenile, pre-novice)? ___________

14. How many coaches does your son/daughter have? _____

15. How long has your son or daughter been with their current head coach? _____

16. How would you describe the level of communication between the coach and yourself?
   - Poor
   - Average
   - Excellent

17. How often do you communicate with the coach?
   - 2-3 times per week
   - Once per week
   - Once per month
   - Other: _______________

18. What is the primary mode of communication with the coach (i.e., email, texts, in-person)? ________________

19. How do you try to approach your relationship with your son/daughter’s coach? What do you do?

20. What days/times work for you to schedule a 60-90 min interview? ________________

I will check with the research team to see if you are a good fit for the study, and we will call you back to let you know, and maybe schedule an interview.

Thank you for contacting us! We appreciate your willingness to participate in our study.
Appendix H: Coach Consent Form for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

Consent Form - Coach

Title of Study: The Coach-Parent Relationship in Competitive Figure Skating

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Young, Registered Psychologist, Professor
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education

Co-Investigator: Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education

Sponsor: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Jessie Wall for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.
Purpose of this Research
The goal of this research is to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. We are particularly interested in learning about the similarities and differences in how parents and coaches experience the relationship. This knowledge will assist skating clubs, coaches, parents, and sport psychology practitioners to understand the important issues experienced by parents and coaches.

You are being asked to participate because you are a coach with a minimum of one year experience coaching skaters in the competitive stream.

Study Procedures
If you consent to participate in this study, we will have an in-person or Skype interview. During the interview we will ask you questions about your current relationships with parents including interactions, roles, and what contributes to positive and negative experiences of the relationship.

The interview will take place at a time and in a place that is convenient for you. The total time required for participation in this study is approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcript will be shared with you for verification and you will be invited to clarify or add anything you wish related to the questions that were asked. Transcripts will be used in the process of data analysis.

Confidentiality
All information submitted by you will be strictly confidential. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed and given a pseudonym (false name) to ensure confidentiality. All names and locations will be changed to further ensure confidentiality upon transcription. Only the research team and the transcriber will have access to the recordings, which will be encrypted, password protected, and kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Young’s research office at UBC.

Potential Risks
There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. As with all research that involves the disclosure of personal information, there is a possibility that such disclosure may create temporary discomfort for participants. Participants may chose to not answer a question, or may ask to stop the interview at any time.

You will be provided with a list of counselling and other resources. You may wish to seek assistance independently of your involvement in this research study to address any sensitive or challenging issues that may arise in the context of the study.

Potential Benefits
You may or may not find that talking about your experiences in the coach-parent relationship with the researcher helpful to you.

The results of this study may provide helpful information and education to you, other parents and coaches, club directors and sport psychology practitioners who work with skating clubs.
How the Results will be Used
The results of this research will be included in a dissertation that will become a public
document in the University of British Columbia library once completed. The findings may
also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals, and other media
outlets.

Remuneration
You will be given an honorarium in the form of $100 cash. Remuneration is not dependent
on completion of the study.

Right to Withdraw and/or Omit Specific Details
If, during the course of the interview, you feel uncomfortable about the subject matter, you
have the right to omit specific details without prejudice or negative consequence. Your
participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw
from the study at any time.

Contact for Information about the Study
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study you may
contact the principal investigator, Richard Youngh, at 604-822-6380 or email
Richard.Young@ubc.ca.

Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Participants
If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or
your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant
Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-
mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent

- I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may
  refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
- My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own
  records.
- My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (Please Print)

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

Signature                                      Date

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
Appendix I: Parent Consent Form for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

Consent Form - Parent

Title of Study: The Coach-Parent Relationship in Competitive Figure Skating

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Young, Registered Psychologist, Professor
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education

Co-Investigator: Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and
Special Education

Sponsor: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Jessie Wall for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.
Purpose of this Research
The goal of this research is to understand the nature of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. We are particularly interested in learning about the similarities and differences in how parents and coaches experience the relationship. This knowledge will assist skating clubs, coaches, parents, and sport psychology practitioners to understand the important issues experienced by parents and coaches.

You are being asked to participate because you are a parent with a son or daughter, skating in the competitive stream for a minimum of one year.

Study Procedures
If you consent to participate in this study, we will have an in-person or Skype interview. During the interview we will ask you questions about your current relationships with coaches including interactions, roles, and what contributes to positive and negative experiences of the relationship.

The interview will take place at a time and in a place that is convenient for you. The total time required for participation in this study is approximately 1.5 hours. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcript will be shared with you for verification and you will be invited to clarify or add anything you wish related to the questions that were asked. Transcripts will be used in the process of data analysis.

Confidentiality
All information submitted by you will be strictly confidential. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed and given a pseudonym (false name) to ensure confidentiality. All names and locations will be changed to further ensure confidentiality upon transcription. Only the research team and the transcriber will have access to the recordings, which will be encrypted, password protected, and kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Young’s research office at UBC.

Potential Risks
There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. As with all research that involves the disclosure of personal information, there is a possibility that such disclosure may create temporary discomfort for participants. Participants may chose to not answer a question, or may ask to stop the interview at any time.

You will be provided with a list of counselling and other resources. You may wish to seek assistance independently of your involvement in this research study to address any sensitive or challenging issues that may arise in the context of the study.

Potential Benefits
You may or may not find that talking about your experiences in the coach-parent relationship with the researcher helpful to you.

The results of this study may provide helpful information and education to you, other parents and coaches, club directors and sport psychology practitioners who work with skating clubs.
How the Results will be Used
The results of this research will be included in a dissertation that will become a public document in the University of British Columbia library once completed. The findings may also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals, and other media outlets.

Remuneration
You will be given an honorarium in the form of a $20 Starbucks gift card. Remuneration is not dependent on completion of the study.

Right to Withdraw and/or Omit Specific Details
If, during the course of the interview, you feel uncomfortable about the subject matter, you have the right to omit specific details without prejudice or negative consequence. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Contact for Information about the Study
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study you may contact the principal investigator, Richard Young, at 604-822-6380 or email Richard.Young@ubc.ca.

Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Participants
If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent

- I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
- My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.
- My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

_______________________________________ ______________
Name of Participant (Please Print)

_______________________________________
Signature

_______________________________________
Date

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
Appendix J: Interview Guide for Study 1 (Chapter 2)

Orientation to Individual Interview

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and your willingness to share your experience of the coach-parent relationship in figure skating. I recognize that the nature of this subject is private and, therefore, respect your courage to volunteer and be a part of this study.

The purpose of this study is to understand parents and coaches’ experiences of the coach-parent relationship in competitive figure skating. Throughout the interview, I may ask for clarification or for more details about your experience. I hope that your participation in the study may be beneficial for you, as it might enhance your self-awareness and increase your understanding of your experience.

Your involvement is voluntary. You have a right to omit details of your experience and/or to withdraw from the study at any moment without being penalized in any way. Please keep in mind that the information you share with me will remain confidential. A first-name pseudonym will be assigned to the recording and only the research team will have access to your identity. However, policies on research ethics require a few standard exceptions to confidentiality:

- If a coach/parent expresses an intent to harm themselves or other, I must disclose information as necessary to protect those involved.
- If the researcher has a reasonable reason to believe that anyone under the age of 19-years-old needs to be protected from abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or neglect, I must disclose that information to the Ministry for Children and Families.
- If I am served with a valid subpoena, court order, or search warrant, we must comply.

Do you have any questions before we begin?”
General Interview Guide

*Spirit of the guidelines.* This set of guidelines is not a checklist. It serves as a guide to facilitate the interview to make full use of the experiences and thoughts of the parents and coaches.

*Organization and use of the guidelines.* The guidelines are divided into six broad categories of topics for discussion.

I. Opening the Interview
II. Relationships
III. Typical interactions
IV. Performance & Development
V. Retrospection – other/previous relationships
VI. Closing the Interview

I. Opening Questions

- [Coaches] As a starting point, can you tell me the story of how you got involved in coaching?
- [Parents] Can you tell me the story of how your son/daughter got involved in skating? (descriptive/experience question).

II. Relationships

*Broad Experience Questions (narrative interviewing)*

- [Coaches] Before you began coaching, what were some assumptions you had about working with parents?
- [Parents] Before your son/daughter got involved in competitive skating, what were some assumptions you had about working/relating with coaches in competitive skating?

- [Coaches] Can you tell me about what it has been like working with different parents throughout your coaching career?
  - Follow-up: Can you tell me about some of the differences between competitive and recreational parents?

- [Parents] Can you tell me what it has been like working with different coaches throughout your son/daughter’s involvement in skating?

Follow-up prompts:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you explain that a bit more for me?
[Note how are they thinking about parents (e.g., easy vs. hard)? What makes it easy? Certain behaviours?]

• Have you noticed any similarities or differences in how your relationship with (competitive skater’s) parents/coach(s) develops, changes, and/or evolves over the years as you work with them?

• Is there a particular relationship that is standing out to you as you share with me? Can you tell me the story of that relationship, from the start until now?

Current Relationships

• Can you tell me about what your current relationships with competitive skater’s parents/coaches looks like (descriptive question)?

• [Coaches] How is this similar or different than when you first began coaching?

• [Parents] How is this similar or different than when your son/daughter first started skating? (depends on years of involvement)

  o Follow-up: What are some of the changes or things you do differently now when relating with parents/coaches?

III. Interactions

• What does a typical week, even last week or this week, look like in terms of interacting with parents/coaches? (Behaviour question).

• What is the difference between interacting with parents/coach(s) (a) at training and competition, and (b) practices/competitions and casual/private interactions (if relevant)? (contrast probe).

• Suppose I was a new coach/parent and I asked you what I should do to get along with the coach/parent really well, what would you tell me? (role playing question).

IV. Performance & Development

• What role, if any, does your relationship with parents/coaches play in the skaters training, and performance? (Presupposition question; Opinion question).

• In what way, if any, do you see your relationship with the coach/parent influencing the development of the youth/skater in general (beyond skating)? ((Presupposition question; p. 369).

• Is there anything you look for in a parent-skater team/coach before you take them on as a client/decide(d) to work with them?
V. Retrospection

- Can you tell me the story of your most negative experience working with a parent/coach. (Presupposition question)?
  - Follow-up: After a conflict or difficult interaction, what are the residuals? How does it affect you personally?

- Can you tell me the story of your most enjoyable or positive experience working with a parent/coach?

VI. Closing the Interview

- If you were a researcher interested in this topic, what kind of questions would you ask your informants/participants? (discovering questions from informants).

- We need to wrap up our time for today. Thank you for sharing your experience with me, I’ll give you a transcript of the interview. Please feel free to add anything you think may expand what you have said so far. I’ll appreciate any comments that refer to things we’ve talked about (taking leave).

    _______ The End _______

Sample Probes and Follow-Ups

- Would you elaborate on that? Could you say something more about that? That’s helpful, I’d appreciate if you could give me more detail (elaboration probe).

- When did that happen? Who else was involved? Where did that happen? (Where, when, who, what, how; detail-oriented questions).

- How does (name phenomenon of interest) compare with (other phenomenon mentioned)? (contrast probe).

- It’s really helpful to get such a clear picture of what the relationship between you and your coach/parent(s) is about; We are about half-way through the interview now and I think a lot of really important things are coming out of what you’re saying; I really appreciate your willingness to express your feelings about that (reinforcement and feedback).
Appendix K: Recruitment Letter to Club Directors for Study 2 (Chapter 3)

Dear Club Director:

Hello! My name is Jessie Wall, and I am conducting a research project on transitions in competitive figure skating as part of my PhD in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The goal of the research is to understand how parents and youth (skaters) work together as they invest and commit to higher levels of training and competition in figure skating.

I am contacting you to request your help with recruiting participants for the study. Enclosed with this letter are an advertisement and an introductory letter to prospective participants that provides details about the study. I was wondering if you would be willing to circulate the introductory letter and advertisement to your club membership?

I am looking for parent-youth pairs who are willing to talk about their experiences in figure skating. Specifically, skaters who are 9-13 years old in their first year of Pre-Novice or who will be competing Pre-Novice in the next year, and a parent who is actively involved in their son or daughter’s figure skating.

If you are available and interested I would be happy to meet with you on the phone or in person to discuss the specifics of the study and to answer any questions you may have. I myself have a figure skating background; I was a NCCP Level 1 figure skating coach and competed at the junior competitive level.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Student
Appendix L: Study 2 Recruitment Ad (Chapter 3)

**A Study on Transitions in Competitive Figure Skating**

How do parents and skaters work together as they invest and commit to higher levels of training and competition in skating?

**Skaters & Parents!**

We are seeking parents and skaters to participate together if...

- You are a first year Pre-Novice competitor or will be competing Pre-Novice in the next year.
- You are 9-13 years old.
- You are a parent actively involved in your son or daughter’s figure skating.

**Benefits of Participation**

Participation may help as you make important decisions and goals about your involvement in figure skating and other areas of your life, and will provide valuable information that will help other families and professionals involved in figure skating.

Individuals will receive $20 Starbucks gift card per meeting, for a total of $60 per person.

**Involvement**

- 3 face-to-face meetings & semi-regular phone/email check-ins | Approximately 8-10 hours over a period of 8-9 months
Appendix M: Study 2 Introductory Letter for Parents and Athletes (Chapter 3)

Dear Prospective Participant:

This letter describes a research project being conducted at the University of British Columbia. The goal of the research is to understand how parents and youth (skaters) work together as they invest and commit to higher levels of training and competition in figure skating.

**Who Can Participate?**
We are looking for parent-youth pairs who are willing to talk about their experiences in figure skating. Specifically, skaters who are 9-13 years old in their first year of Pre-Novice or who will be competing Pre-Novice in the next year, and a parent who is actively involved in their son or daughter’s figure skating.

**What’s Involved?**
Participation in this study involves three face-to-face meetings, as well as bi-weekly phone or email check-ins over the course of 6-months.

At the first meeting, parent-youth pairs will take part in a brief, video-recorded interview with myself and another researcher. This interview will be followed by video-recorded conversation between the parent-youth pair on a topic of their choosing that is related to their involvement in figure skating. Following the conversation, the parent and youth will watch a video playback of that conversation separately, guided by a researcher who will ask the parent or youth to recall his or her thoughts and feelings while speaking with the other. Total time for this first meeting is approximately 2 hours.

At the second meeting, approximately 1 month after the first, parent-youth pairs will review a short, written summary of the conversation from the first meeting. This summary will outline a possible ‘figure skating project’ unique to the parent-youth pair. Both the parent and youth will be asked whether the identified project represents their experience, and if not, how it could be changed to better represent it. Once an agreeable figure skating project is identified, it will then be monitored by brief, weekly check-ins (phone calls or emails, as per the preference of the parent and youth). Total time for this meeting is approximately 45 minutes.
Finally, the third face-to-face meeting will follow the same format as the first meeting described above, and will also require approximately 2 hours. In sum, the total time involved in this whole project will be about 8 to 10 hours over the course of 8 to 9 months.

**Why should I participate?**
Participation in this study may help you identify and describe your goals as parent and youth involved in figure skating and how you work together to achieve these goals amidst other areas of your life (e.g., family, school, friends, other recreational activities). In addition, your participation in this study could provide valuable information that will help other families looking to commit and invest in higher levels of training and competition and professionals working with competitive figure skaters.

Each participant will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card per meeting, for a total of $60 per person.

**What if I decide to change my mind about participating?**
A parent and youth’s decision about getting involved in this study is entirely voluntary, and both parent and youth need to be in agreement about this. Even if both parent and youth have agreed to participate, however, either one may later choose to refuse to participate in any section of the study and/or withdraw from the research entirely. Refusal to continue with the study, or to participate in parts of the study, will bear no negative consequence for the parent or youth.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**
Yes. Parent-youth identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents, audio and video recordings will be identified only by code number, and will be password protected, encrypted and stored in a locked filing cabinet. Only members of the research team and I will have access to the documents, audio recordings and video recordings. Your skating club or coach will not have access to this information.

A head coach or director of a skating club may have forwarded this letter to you in confidence, and he or she has not shared with me the names or contact information of people receiving this letter. Only those parents and youth who contact me for more information or to indicate interest in participating in the study will become known to me. I will not inform the individual who provided you with this letter with the names of parents and youth who decide to be involved or declined to participate in the study.

Once this research is completed, it will result in a doctoral dissertation that will be housed in the UBC library and available to the public upon request. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

**Who are the researchers?**
I was a figure skating coach and competed at the junior competitive level. Currently, I am a member with the Canadian Sport Psychology Association and a Registered Clinical Counsellor providing sport psychology and counselling services to athletes. Dr. Richard Young is a Registered Psychologist and Professor at the University of British Columbia.
Interested?
If you wish to participate in this study, or would like more information about the study before deciding, please contact me (information below). You are welcome to leave me a confidential voice-mail message if I am not available, and I will return your call as soon as possible.

The principal investigator for this project is my research supervisor, Dr. Richard Young. He can be reached at the University of British Columbia at

Richard.Young@ubc.ca

Thank you so much for your interest in the study.

Sincerely,

Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Student
Appendix N: Study 2 Telephone Screening Form (Chapter 3)

Telephone Screening Form

Date of Screening Call: _______________________________________________________

1. P-1 Name (Parent): ___________________ 2. P-2 Name (Youth): ___________________

3. P-1 Gender: □ Male □ Female □ Other  4. P-2 Gender: □ Male □ Female □ Other

5. P-1 Which range includes your age?
   a. □ 29-38
   b. □ 39-48
   c. □ 49-58
   d. □ 59+

6. P-1 Born in Canada? □ Yes □ No

7a. If no, where? ___________________ 7b. How many years in Canada? ________

8. P-2 Year of Birth: 20________

9. P-2 Born in Canada? □ Yes □ No, if no, where? ______________________

10a. If no, where? ___________________ 10b. How many years in Canada? _________

11. Languages spoken in home? ________________________________________________

12. What is P-1’s marital status?
   a. □ Married
   b. □ Common-law
   c. □ Separated/divorced
   d. □ Other: ______________________

13. What is P-1’s current work situation?
   a. □ Unemployed
   b. □ Employed part-time
   c. □ Employed full time
   d. □ Homemaker
   e. □ Other: ______________________
14. What is P-1’s highest education level?
   a. □ Did not complete high school
   b. □ High school
   c. □ Some college courses
   d. □ College degree or post-secondary training program
   e. □ Some university courses
   f. □ Bachelor’s degree
   g. □ Masters degree or higher

15. What grade is P-2 currently enrolled? _________

16. How many years has P-2 been involved in skating? ________________

17. What is P-2’s current skating level? ________________

18. How many hours per week is P-2 currently training? ________ Is this different from the previous year, if so, how? __________________________

19. Is P-2 currently involved in other extra-curricular activities, if so, what? ____________

20. Can you say briefly what some of your concerns are, if any, about your son/daughter’s continued commitment and investment in figure skating?

21. What telephone number is best to reach you?

22. What days/times are you and your son/daughter available to interview?

Ask to speak with P-2. Explain that the goal of the study is to understand how skaters and their parents work together as they commit to higher levels of training and competition in figure skating. “We want to learn about what it is like for you and your parent to be involved in competitive figure skating”. Ask P-2 questions #15-19.

I will check with the research team to see if you are a good fit for the study, and we will call you back to let you know, and maybe schedule an interview.

Thank you for contacting us! We appreciate your willingness to participate in our study.
Appendix O: Study 2 Athlete Assent (Chapter 3)

Participant Assent Form

Title of Study: Transitions in Competitive Figure Skating Study

Invitation
I am being invited to be a part of a research study. A research study tries to understand my parents’ and my experiences in competitive figure skating. It is up to me if I want to be in this study. No one will make me be part of the study. Even if I agree now to be part of the study, I can change my mind later. No one will be mad at me if I choose not to be part of this study.

Why Are We Doing This Study?
I have recently begun skating at the Pre-Novice level or I will soon be skating at the Pre-Novice level. There have been a number of changes to my training, school and other recreational activities because of this. I have been working with my parents as we make decisions about my figure skating. This study is trying to understand how parents and youth (skaters) work together as they commit to higher levels of training and competition in figure skating.

What Will Happen in This Study?
We will be asking parents and youth (skaters) about their experiences and involvement in competitive figure skating.

If I agree to be in this study, I will go to three face-to-face meetings and have semi-regular phone and/or email check-ins over a 6-month period. The total time I will be involved in this study will be 8 to 10 hours over the course of about 8 to 9 months.

At the first meeting, I will participate together in a video-recorded interview with mom or dad and two researchers. Then I will be invited to participate in about a 10-minute conversation with my parent on a topic we choose related to my involvement in figure skating. I will then go with one of the researchers and re-watch a video of the conversation that just happened. My mom or dad will go with the other researcher. As I watch the video taped conversation the researcher will ask me to recall my thoughts and feelings as I spoke with my parent.

During the second meeting, about 1 month after the first meeting, I will be given feedback on the first meeting from the researchers. They will tell me about a joint
project that I am working on together with my parent that is related to my involvement in
figure skating. I will be asked to give feedback about whether the project sounds like
something I am doing and whether I would like to change anything, if at all. The researchers
will then check in with me every two weeks by phone or email about this project, this will
happen for about 6-months.

Finally, I will participate in a third face-to-face meeting which will be similar to the first
meeting described above.

Who is Doing This Study?
Dr. Richard Young and Jessie Wall will be doing this study. They will answer any questions
I have about the study. I can also call them at [522] 822-6380, if I am having any problems
with the study.

Can Anything Bad Happen to Me?
There are no known reasons that something bad could happen to me. I might feel a little
uncomfortable being video-recorded and / or watching myself on the video recordings. I may
choose to not answer a question, or may ask to stop the interview at any time.

Who Will Know I am in the Study?
Only the researchers who are involved in the study will know I am in it.

When the study is finished, the researchers will write a report about what was learned. This
report will not say my name or that I was in the study. My parents and I do not have to tell
anyone I am in the study if we don’t want to.

If at any time during the study the researchers believe that I am not safe or that someone is
harming me they have to tell the Ministry of Children and Family Services because it is the
law.

When Do I Have to Decide?
I have as much time as I want to decide to be part of the study.

Signature
If I put my name at the end of this form, it means that I agree to be in the study. I will get a
signed copy for myself too.

Name of Participant (Please Print)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix P: Study 2 Informed Consent (Chapter 3)

Consent Form

Title of Study: Transitioning to Elite Early Specialization Sport: Parent and Child-Athlete Goal-Directed Processes

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Young, Registered Psychologist, Professor University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Co-Investigator: Jessie Wall, M.A., Ph.D. Student
University of British Columbia
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education

Sponsor: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Jessie Wall for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia.
Purpose of this Research
The goal of this research is to understand how parents and youth (skaters) work together as they invest and commit to higher levels of training and competition in figure skating. We consider this an important transition in figure skating. We are interested in learning about participant’s experiences in competitive figure skating and how they manage their involvement amidst other important areas of life such as school, family, friends and other recreational activities.

You are being asked to participate because you are either (a) 9-13 years old and currently or soon to be competing in Pre-Novice or (b) a parent that is actively involved in your son or daughter’s skating.

Study Procedures
We will be asking parents and youth (skaters) about their experiences with planning and navigating their involvement in competitive figure skating.

If you consent to participate in this study, your involvement will consist of three face-to-face meetings and bi-weekly phone and/or email check-ins over a 6-month period with your parent or son/daughter. The total time involved for participation in this project will be 8 to 10 hours over the course of approximately 8 to 9 months.

The face-to-face meetings will be video- and audio-recorded. They will be conducted in a private and comfortable location.

At the first meeting, your involvement will consist of participating together in a video-recorded interview with two researchers. Then you will be invited to participate in an approximately 10-minute conversation with each other on a topic selected by you and related to the youth’s involvement in figure skating. Finally, you will each separately view a video playback of the conversation during which a researcher will ask you to recall your thoughts and feelings as you spoke with your parent or son/daughter. The information you share during the video playback interview will not be shared with your parent or youth.

During the second meeting, approximately 1 month after the first meeting, you will be given feedback on the first meeting by identifying a joint project that you are working on together relative to the youth’s involvement in figure skating. You will be asked for feedback about whether the identified project represents your experience, and how you would like it to change, if at all. This project will be monitored by phone calls or emails (your choice) every two weeks for a six-month period.

Finally, a third face-to-face meeting will follow the same format as the first meeting described above.

Potential Risks
There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study, but people sometimes feel a little uncomfortable being video-recorded and / or watching themselves on the video
recordings. Also, personal or sensitive issues may arise during interviews. Participants may choose to not answer a question, or may ask to stop the interview at any time.

You will be provided with a list of counselling and other resources. You may wish to seek assistance independently of your involvement in this research study to address any sensitive or challenging issues that may arise in the context of the study.

**Potential Benefits**
You may or may not find that talking about your involvement in figure skating with the researchers and your parent or son/daughter to be helpful to you.

Participation in this study may help you identify and describe your goals as parent and youth involved in figure skating and how you work together to achieve these goals amidst other areas of your life (e.g., family, school, friends, other recreational activities). In addition, your participation in this study could provide valuable information that will help other families looking to commit and invest in higher levels of training and competition and professionals working with competitive figure skaters.

**Confidentiality**
Any information you share with us will remain strictly confidential. Legal limitations to confidentiality include danger to self, danger to others and child abuse. If the researcher or interviewer has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, he or she has a legal duty under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* to report the matter to the Ministry of Children and Family Services.

All documents, audio recordings, and video recordings will be identified only by code number, and will be encrypted, password protected, and kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Young’s research office at UBC. The only people who will have access to this material are members of the research team. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

**How the Results will be Used**
The results of this research will be included in a dissertation that will become a public document in the University of British Columbia library once completed. The findings may also be published in appropriate academic and/or professional journals.

**Remuneration**
Travel costs for traveling to and from interviews at UBC will be reimbursed, and you will be given an honorarium in the amount of $20 (gift card) per person for each face-to-face meeting (a total of 3). Remuneration is not dependent on completion of the study, and will be proportional to your involvement.

**Choosing to Stop Your Participation**
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
Contact for Information about the Study
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study you may contact the principal investigator, Richard Young, at 604-822-6380 or email Richard.Young@ubc.ca.

Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Participants
If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent

- I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.
- My signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.
- My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

__________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant (Please Print)

__________________________________________________________________________
Name of Parent Guardian, if Applicable (Please Print)

__________________________________________________________________________
Signature Date

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.
Appendix Q: Interview Protocol for Study 2 (Chapter 3)

Data Collection and Interview Protocol

After having responded to an advertisement/notice of the research study, met inclusion criteria in a telephone interview, and received verbal information about the study and informed consent, parent-youth dyads, with youth between the ages of 9-13 competing in their first year of Pre-Novice or soon to be competing in Pre-Novice in the next year, will participate with one of their parents who is actively involved in their figure skating in the following sequence of activities. The activities may be conducted on the UBC Point Grey Campus or in a private and comfortable location at a recreational facility.

First Meeting

The two participants will attend the first interview session together. Two research assistants will conduct this data gathering session.

The interview will begin by seeking signed informed consent from the parent and assent from the youth. The informed consent and assent form will be read aloud to the participants while they have copies on which to follow. The participants will be asked if they have any questions. When any questions have been answered, the consent and assent forms signed, and the participants given copies to retain, the video and audio recording equipment is turned on.

The primary objective of this data collection session is to record an actual conversational interaction between the parent and youth about their shared issues and actions related to the youth’s involvement in figure skating, and to solicit each participant’s reaction to seeing a videotape replay of their conversation.

Warm-up. The research assistants undertake to facilitate a conversation between the participants by asking the following questions:

Youth
- Please tell us about your involvement in figure skating.
  - When did you start?
  - What are you currently doing/working on?

Parent
- Please tell us about your involvement in your son/daughter’s figure skating?
  - What is your role?
  - Why is your son/daughter’s involvement in skating important for you?

Youth
- How do you feel about what your parent just said about your figure skating and their role?
- How do you manage your involvement in figure skating with other important areas in life (e.g., family, friends, school, other recreational activities)?
**Parent**
- How do you manage your son/daughter’s involvement in figure skating with other important areas in your life and your son/daughter’s life?

**Youth**
- What are your goals for this season (short-term)?
- What do you hope to achieve in your future with skating (long-term goals)?
- How do you see skating fitting into your life when you’re older? What do you hope to do?

**Parent**
- What are your short (this season) and long-term goals for your son/daughter’s skating?
- What do you hope for your son/daughter’s future beyond skating (life goals)?

**Both Parent and Youth**
- What are some of the challenges you encounter in your involvement in figure skating?

- What are some recent conversations that were important to you, regarding your involvement in figure skating? What did you discuss?

[Researchers summarize/list topics that participants identified].

- Are these issues still important to you? How would you feel if we asked you to have a conversation about one of these topics together now without us (the research assistants) in the room?

- We invite you to have a conversation about your involvement in figure skating, here on video.

*Conversation.* Once the participants have agreed on a topic, the researchers indicate that they will leave the room, and that the participants should inform them when their conversation is finished. They participants are informed that the length of the conversation is entirely up to them, but conversations of about 10 minutes have often been the case in previous studies where this method was used.

*Self-confrontation interview.* Immediately following the conversation between the parent-youth dyad, each partner will separately review the videotape recording of the conversation with one of the research assistants. In this procedure, the video is played in one-minute segments. After each segment, the research interviewer stops the video and asks the participant, “What were you thinking and feeling during that segment?” Follow-up questions include inviting greater detail or if the participant has answered only part of the question, e.g. “You described your feelings, can you tell me more about what you were thinking?” “Is there anything else you recall about what you were thinking or feelings at that moment?”
Debriefing and paying of honorarium. Immediately following the self-confrontation, the following individual debriefing is provided.

“Again, I want to thank you for participating in this study. Are there any questions or concerns you have before we finish the session today? [Research assistant answers questions]. The information that you have provided will be very helpful to us in understanding important transitions in competitive figure skating. We will look at the information you have provided in detail over the next month or two, and then call/e-mail you to schedule a time we can meet to give you feedback. Of course, it is your right to withdraw from the study at any time.”

The participants are then paid the honorarium of $20 (gift card) and bus fare or parking passes if needed. Receipts for the payment are signed.

Second Meeting

At the second interview, each participant meets separately with one of the research assistants to receive a 1-2 page narrative summary of the conversation that took place in the first interview session. The narrative summary is written in lay language, appropriate to the age of the participant, using goal-directed language. The narrative summary is reviewed with the participant, and any participant questions are answered. Subsequently, the participants meet together with the two research assistants to receive a written joint narrative summary of their conversation, and the tentative identification of a joint project that appears to be going on between them. The participants are invited to modify the identified project as they see fit. They are also reminded that this project will be followed for the next six months by the researchers, by separate telephone calls or emails to each of them, every two weeks. The participants are asked if there are any further questions, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time is noted.

Each participant is paid an honorarium of $20 (gift card), and bus fare, if needed. Receipts for the payment are signed.

Bi-Weekly Monitoring via Telephone

The researcher will monitor each participant’s participation in the dyad’s identified joint project through a telephone call or email from a research assistant to the participant every 2 weeks.

Conversation warm-up. “During our last meeting we came up with the following project that you and your parent/youth share. Is that still the focus of what you are doing together, or has it changed? If it has changed, how has it changed?”

- “Did you have any project-related activities, either by yourself or with your parent/youth since the last time we spoke? What were the kinds of project-related things you did since the last time we spoke?”

- Was the participant alone, or with their parent or youth, when doing the activity?
• Get the details, and then ask, “Do you remember what you were thinking or feeling at that time?”

• “What barriers did you have in getting to share experiences, in talking to your parent/youth in the past couple of weeks, or in getting to the project at all?” (e.g. didn’t see each other much, too busy, etc.)

• “Has anything been going on with your project that we haven’t talked about yet?”

**Third Meeting**
The third face-to-face data collection interview proceeds much like the first interview; that is, warm-up, conversation, and debriefing.

Explain the final data gathering session. Up to 2 hours, like the first meeting, with a conversation between the parent and youth, which is videotaped and then played back separately for feedback.

*Warm-up.* Thank participants for returning to the third interview session. Remind them that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

*Conversation preparation.* “For the past 6 months, you have been receiving phone calls from us regarding your activities regarding a project (or task) that you have been working on together. How would you describe what that project (or task) is about?” [Allow for one person to respond and then invite the other person to contribute, clarify, etc.]

The research assistants facilitate a conversation with the participants by asking the following questions:

**Both Parent and Youth**
- To what extent have your individual and joint goals been achieved?
- What has been helpful for you as you work on this project?
- What has not been helpful/ what has been challenging for you as you work on this project?
- To what extent did participating in this study help you?

- “We would like to invite you to have one more conversation about that project (or task) together, here on videotape, as we did the last time. Can you imagine what you will talk about?”

Allow for one person to reply, and then encourage the other person to comment on the topic:
- “How do you feel about the topic your parent/youth suggested?”

- “Are there other topics that you would like to discuss that are important to the project (or task) you undertook, or another topic related to your involvement in figure skating that you would like to discuss?”
Continue until the dyad seems focused on a topic or two for the conversation, and then invite them to have the conversation.

*Conversation.* Once the participants have agreed on a topic, the researchers indicate that they will leave the room, and that the participants should inform them when their conversation is finished. The participants are informed that the length of the conversation is entirely up to them, but conversations of about 10 minutes have been often the case in previous studies where this method was used.

*Self-confrontation interview.* Immediately following the conversation between the dyad, each participant will separately review the videotape recording of the conversation with one of the research assistants. In this procedure, the video is played in one-minute segments. After each segment, the research interviewer stops the video and asks the participant:

- “What were you thinking and feeling during that segment?”

Follow-up questions include inviting greater detail, or if the participant has answered only part of the question:

- “You have described your feelings. Can you tell me more about what you were thinking?”
- “Is there anything else you recall about what you were thinking or feeling at that moment?”

*Debriefing and honorarium.* Immediately following the self-confrontation, the participants are debriefed.

- “Again, I want to thank you for participating in this study. Sometimes participating in studies of this kind can raise questions or concerns that haven’t been discussed or answered. Before you leave, are there any concerns or questions that you have that you would like to ask or discuss at this time?” [Research assistant answers questions.]
- “The information that you have provided will be very helpful to us in understanding parent and youth involvement in competitive figure skating, and how parents and youth plan and navigate greater commitment and investment to higher levels of training and competition”.
- “If you would like to receive a report of our findings, please provide us with your email address. We will send you a summary of the findings from this study.”

The participants are paid the honorarium of $20 (gift card) each, and parking or bus fare, if needed. Receipts for the payment are signed.
Appendix R: Study 2 Codes for Analysis (Chapter 3)

Codes for Analysis

Acknowledges
Minimal statement, such as um-hm, that acknowledges the statement by the other.
“Yes”, “sure”, “OK”,

Advises
I think the best idea for you is to get a job in the short term and then think about your educational concerns in the long-term

Agrees
“Yes, I agree”; “that’s true”; “you’re right”; “I concur”; “We see eye to eye”

Ambiguous Response
Response is unclear, not readily interpretable, has more than one possible meaning, hazy or fuzzy meaning

Answers Question

Apologizes
“Sorry, I apologize”, “Oops”, “my bad”

Approves
Positive evaluative or judging statement (affirms)
“It’s a great idea that you’re _______”

Validates
“That’s fantastic”, “it’s good”, “it’s fine”

Asks for clarification (further explanation or expansion)
“Can you tell me more about that?”
“I’m wondering which of your dilemmas seem to have the most importance for you?”
“Can you expand on that?”

Asks for confirmation
“Am I getting this right?”
“Is that what you mean?”
“So, you’ll be here for next week’s appointment?”

Asks for a feeling state
“How do you feel about that?”
“What does it feel like when you _______?”
“Tell me more about that sadness”

Asks for information (more factual in nature)
“When was it that you moved out of your parent’s home?”

Asks for justification or reasons
“Why was that?”
“What was your rationale for making that choice?”

Asks for opinion or belief
“What do you think about that?”
“What do you believe to be the most important aspect of becoming an adult?”
Asks for speculation or hypothetical scenario (challenges)
“What if...?” “Let’s say ______ happened? “ “How do you think you would handle that?”

Clarifies
Usually in response to ‘asks for clarification’. Involves giving more information to clear up an ambiguity or misinterpretation

Complains
“My employer gives me every crappy shift. It ruined my weekend plans.”

Confirms
“So you are coming for dinner tonight?”
Response to a request for future information

Continues other’s statement
After an interruption
Continues own statement after a pause

Demands
Tells the other what to do

Describes the future
“My mother will be visiting next week.”

Describes other [in the annotation, mention who the ‘other’ is]
“It seems to me that you ________ “(is usually used with express perception)
“It sounds to me that your sister is really trying to work things out with the family”

Describes the past
“I told my mother that I was grateful for everything she’s done for me.”
“I went to college 5 years ago”
“When I was a kid, I was bit by a dog and now I can’t seem to get over it”
“I used to hate my brother”

Describes possibility or hypothetical situation
“If I can’t get into UBC, I know I will be disappointed”

Describes self
“I suck at tennis”
“I’m a generous person”
“It really wasn’t like me to behave that way”

Describes situation or event

Disagrees (denies)

Disapprove
Negative evaluation or judging statement
“I don’t like them”
“She really should have known better than to behave like that”

Dismissive or diminishing statement
“Oh, c’mon”, “Don’t be silly”, “That’s nonsense” “Whatever”

Elaborate
Extends a pervious statement
Provides more information, adds depth to a previous statement, gives a deeper explanation
**Encourages**
Gives confidence or cheer

**Evaluative or judging statement**
Focused on a phenomenon, or event, or person with approving or disapproving

**Expresses anger**
Irritation, exasperation, rage, disgust, envy, torment
“I was so pissed off with him”; “I was furious”

**Expresses belief or disbelief** (concrete as opposed to tentative)
“I just know things are going to work out”; “I don’t believe in God”; “I can’t believe this is happening to me”

**Expresses desire**
I need, I want, I wish...

**Expresses disgust**
Usually more of a facial expression, distaste, expression of not liking or loathing
“It totally grossed me out. It was disgusting to be in that cell with all those crack addicts”

**Expresses dissatisfaction**
“School isn’t what I thought it would be”
Expressions of dissatisfaction; sometimes coded with expression of sadness or some other emotion

**Expresses doubt**
“I’m not sure I can handle that; I doubt I have the ability to get into university”
Questioning – has emotional content; not about indecisiveness
“I don’t know about that, I don’t know if that fits for me”
Possible others – disagrees, dismissive statement

**Expresses fear**
Horror, nervousness
Overwhelmed, expressing a lot of concern

**Expresses frustration**
“It totally sucks that I didn’t get the job I wanted”

**Expresses gratitude**
“Thank you”; “I really appreciate what you’re doing here”; “I’m thankful for this opportunity”

**Expresses humour**
Tells a joke, says something funny (either intentional or not)
Contextual use of humour, use of wit, lightheartedness, kidding around

**Expresses joy**
Happiness, cheerfulness, zest, contentment, pride, optimism, enthralment, relief

**Expresses like**
Liking of idea, object, person; not love

**Expresses love**
Affection, lust, longing

**Expresses perception or opinion or hunch**
It’s usually a tentative statement or interpretation
“Correct me if I’m wrong, but I think....”
Expresses realization
expresses an ‘ah-ha’ moment in the present tense
“I realize that these people are very important to me”; “Wow, I never thought about that before” (add surprise to the code);
“Oh no, really. I hadn’t thought about that consequence before” (add disappointment to the code)

Expresses sadness
Suffering, disappointment, embarrassment, shame, neglect, regret, sympathy
“I was so depressed about it”; “I was really hurt when my stepmother attacked me like that”

Expresses surprise
More of a facial expression
“Oh wow!”; “I was really surprised that she reacted that way”

Expresses Uncertainty
Is about decision-making, not being able to sort something out, not able to accurately predict
“I’m not sure”; “I can’t decide what option to take”

Expresses understanding
I get that; I see where you’re coming from; That makes sense; I see what you mean

Expresses worry
“I’m worried about my exam”

Incomplete statement
Can be questions, statements, or sentences

Interrupts
Invites or elicits a response
Use of a hand gesture to elicit a response from a client
“you know what I mean?” “right?”

Laughs

Paraphrases
Repeats a pervious statement; repeats a previous statement in your own words

Partial agreement
“Sort of”; half-hearted agreement

Pause
Silence; a pregnant pause; a break in the sentence or dialogue

Praises
Compliments, admiring remark, accolade, congratulates
“good for you”, “look at you”, “congratulations”, “it’s terrific that you have such great insight” 203

Provides explanation

Provides information
“You can get an application on line if you go to the website”
Reflects affect
Capturing an image that is beyond what was previously stated
Beyond paraphrasing
Advanced empathy, empathy
“You felt disappointed when you didn’t get into UBC this year”

Reflects cognition
Advanced empathy, empathy
“That was a tough situation for you”; “You didn’t think that was the right way to go”; “So you’ve been thinking about a number of career options over the last year”

Requests
Asks the person to do something; Asks for
“Could you sign this form?”

Speculates
In response to ‘Asks for speculation’; Talks conjecturally

States a plan
“I’m going to go to school next term”; “I will be here next week for my appointment.”

Suggests
“I’d like to suggest that your father didn’t mean to hurt your father”

Unintelligible response
Cannot be understood on tape or though interpretation