

**A Qualitative Study of Elite
Canadian Ice Dancers**

by

Deanna M. Tomietto

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
Master of Science**

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ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ELITE CANADIAN ICE DANCERS

The purpose of this study was to examine qualitatively and describe the world of the elite ice dancer including such topics as lifestyle, training schedules, time commitment, support networks, relationships, goals, other activities, responsibilities, and pressures. This study also investigated the components that create a conducive training environment for these athletes. The participants were 12 elite ice dancers and three head coaches at two training sites in southern Ontario. In-depth interviews were completed using an interview schedule developed by the researcher's personal experiences and also a review of literature. Observation data were collected during training sessions before and after interviews were conducted, and were used to evaluate or validate information obtained from the interviews. Analysis of the data was based on transcriptions of the interviews, and was both inductive and emergent in nature.

From the interview and observation data, themes shared by the participants emerged into five major categories: Factors Necessary for Success; Coaching and Technical Aspects; Personal Benefits; Problematic Issues; and Social Aspects. Factors that were necessary for success included communication, common goals, supportive family, supportive friends, and success in ice dancing. Coaching and technical aspects included relationships with coaches, supplemental training, process of forming partnerships and the political nature of judging. Personal benefits included the advantages of partnerships and developing maturity through involvement in skating. Problematic issues included financial pressures, sacrifices, competitive relationships at the arena, personality differences, and demands

of living away from home. Social aspects included traditional gender roles and romantic expectations of couples.

Major conclusions illustrated ice dance as a sport with athletic demands, the controversy over political judging of ice dance, the hardships these athletes face with school and living away from home at an early age, and also the socialization of these athletes into traditional gender roles. It was concluded that this study described the world of elite ice dancers in Canada, and added to a limited body of research on elite athletes.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Ice dancing began as a social activity parallel to the dance craze in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century (Nowosad, 1980a). Since then it has flourished to become one of the four competitive categories of the sport of figure skating. The development of standardized tests and competitions progressed as the social aspect diminished. Although as a social activity it has all but disappeared, ice dancing has developed into an extremely competitive sport. The first international competition was held at the World Championships in 1952, however, it was not until 1976 that it became an official Olympic event (Petkevich, 1984).

Although ice dancing has relatively few competitors when compared to singles skating (Nowosad, 1980b), it is a very demanding and competitive sport. An ice dance couple must display both athleticism and beauty, through technical expertise and creative interpretation. Often ice dancing is not referred to as a true sport due to its theatrical nature, however, it is a remarkably strenuous activity that requires earnest commitment and discipline.

As an elite sport, ice dancing along with pair skating, provides a rare occurrence of men and women competing together as couples. The situation is unique, in that while other sports pair men and women together, such as in tennis or badminton mixed doubles, the social nature of ice dancing dictates that the ice dancing couple appear as more than just a team for competitive purposes. "Skating convention implies that when a man and a woman perform together they demonstrate the existence of a relationship." (Nowosad, 1981, p. 32). The relationship between an ice dancing couple is

essential to their success: there should be a portrayal of a romantic relationship and the communication involved must be evident. According to Nowosad (1981), the "...communication [between skating couples] may evoke a romance or simply a sensitive duality but the range of expressive possibility is as far-reaching and complex as those same situations which exist in everyday life." (p. 32). While free skating pairs in figure skating also form a coupling of a man and a woman, the relationship and social nature of such does not constitute the same magnitude of importance as in ice dancing. Nowosad (1981) supports this in the following assertion: "...in figure skating, as the ice dancers adhere to and expand on this convention of communication, the [free skating] pairs skaters move further and further in the opposite direction." (p. 32).

The researcher has a particular interest in ice dancing because of her background and experience in this sport, as a former elite ice dancer with several years of national and international experience, and as an official figure skating judge for eight years. She has been involved in figure skating and ice dancing for twenty years and possesses a profound knowledge of the sport, which will benefit the research, in terms of content, design, and relationship with participants. However, the researcher has been retired from elite competition for seven years and has refrained from judging for two years, during which minor changes in the sport of ice dancing have occurred. The acknowledgment of such personal experience provides an assertion of the researcher's subjectivity and biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine qualitatively and describe the world of the elite ice dancer.

The objectives were as follows:

1. To investigate the world of the elite ice dancer;
2. To describe elite ice dancers and the environment in which they train, including such topics as lifestyle, training schedules, time commitment, support networks, relationships, goals, other activities, responsibilities, and pressures;
3. To investigate the components that create a conducive training environment for elite ice dancers.

Rationale

The ice dancing literature is limited and what does exist has focused primarily on technical components, as well as the physiological and psychological aspects of training. This study investigated the world of the elite ice dancer. This study did not describe the technical *how-to's* of ice dancing, but it encompassed and described the life of elite ice dancers, incorporating a range of topics, in order to gain a better understanding of their reality in terms of life as elite athletes.

This study added to what is currently a limited body of literature. The social interaction involved in the lives of such elite athletes has been virtually ignored. In ice dancing, this interaction is paramount to the success and well-being of these athletes, as was discussed in the introduction.

This research employed qualitative research methods, which Locke (1989) and Sage (1989) suggested to be legitimate when studying the social aspects of sport and physical education environments, where contextual information is essential to understanding. From this viewpoint, this study has

the potential to generate knowledge that previous research has failed to achieve. The skating arena as *laboratory* provided a unique source of information.

This research extended the literature as it created knowledge concerning ice dancers, figure skaters, and elite athletes. The importance of studying such aspects of elite athletes is embedded in the difficulties and commitments involved, which could explain the subsequent pressures and stress. This could lead to a greater sensitivity of others toward these athletes, which in turn could foster support from other athletes, coaches, friends, and parents alike. Coping strategies may be identified and discussed. This research may also aid in the identification of elements that enhance the training of elite ice dancers. All of these components should only help those involved to achieve greater success.

Participants in this study were given an opportunity to be involved in academic research that may raise new and important issues as they emerge from the research itself. The end product is a detailed description of the competitive ice dancing environment and the situations that unfolded during the research.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the concept of grounded theory, as coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory posits that theory will emerge from the data. It is an inductive process that is empirically discovered and open-ended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This view is befitting to qualitative research methods as it is "... more likely to be responsive to contextual values..." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41), and is able to "...encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered..." (p. 41). Furthermore, the categories and themes unfold from the data during analysis, as opposed to

being set a priori. Thus, the categories are grounded in the data, and not forced to fit into predetermined categories.

Definition of Terms

Several terms are unique to ice dancing and will be defined here, as will the necessary terms involved in qualitative research methods.

Competitive Levels

There are different competitive levels for ice dance couples, only three of which hold a national competition: Novice, Junior, and Senior. However, recently the Canadian Figure Skating Association added Pre-Novice to the national championships. Each level is restricted by dance test qualifications.

Competitive Dance Test. Competitive dance tests are comprised of specified stroking and isolated ice dance exercises, four compulsory dances, and a free dance. The specific compulsory dances and the length of the free dance program are dependent upon the level (Novice, Junior, or Senior) of the competitive dance test. The Senior Competitive Dance Test does not include any stroking or isolated ice dance exercises. These tests must be skated in couples and are evaluated by a panel of three qualified judges.

Novice. Novice ice dance couples must have both partners under 19 years of age as of July 1 of the competitive year, and are restricted to those couples who have passed the qualifying Novice Competitive Dance Test. Such couples are eligible for the Canadian Championships if they have not competed in ice dancing at the Novice Canadian level more than once and have not won the Novice Canadian ice dance event previously. This level of amateur ice dance competition involves three compulsory dances and a 2 minute and 15 second free dance: there is no original dance program for the Novice competitors (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Junior. Junior ice dance couples are restricted to those couples who have passed the qualifying Junior Competitive Dance Test. They are eligible for the Canadian Championships if they have not competed in ice dancing at the Junior Canadian level more than two times and have not won that event previously. There are no age restrictions. This level of amateur ice dance competition involves two compulsory dances, an original dance, and a 3 minute free dance (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Senior. To be eligible for the Senior level of amateur ice dance competition, couples must have passed the qualifying Senior Competitive Dance Test. No other restrictions apply. This competition involves two compulsory dances, an original dance, and a 4 minute free dance (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Components of Ice Dance Competition

Ice dance competition can involve three types of performances: compulsory dances, an original dance, and a free dance.

Compulsory Dances. In this first phase of ice dancing competitions, all couples must skate the same steps and positions, creating the same prescribed pattern on the ice, to the same pre-recorded music. These dances are based on various rhythms involved in traditional ballroom dancing. In junior and senior competition, two such compulsory dances are performed which are worth 10% each of a couple's total score, whereas in novice competition, three such compulsory dances are performed which, when combined together, are worth 50% of each couple's total score. Judges award two marks to each couple for each compulsory dance skated; the first mark for Technique and the second mark for Timing/Expression (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Original Dance. This is a 2 minute performance in which each couple performs original steps and positions in the character of ballroom dancing, at their own discretion, to their choice of music. This ballroom dance music is based on a prescribed rhythm for all couples, which is set one year prior to implementation. This portion of ice dance competition is performed following the compulsory dances for the Junior and Senior couples only, and is worth 30% of the total score. Judges award both a composition and a presentation mark to each couple for their original dance (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Free Dance. Ice dance couples perform the free dance portion of competition last. This program involves original steps and choreography to music of their choice. Among other restrictions, which are imposed to preserve the dance character, a maximum of five lifts are allowed, provided that while lifting the woman, the man's hands do not go above his shoulders. This program is worth 50% of the total score and each couple is awarded two marks by each judge: a composition and a presentation mark (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

The International Skating Union recently invoked minor changes to the ice dance rules for the Original Dance and the Free Dance programs, but these were not applicable to the skaters in this study.

Marking

The sport of ice dancing is judged by a panel of officials which are responsible for assigning two marks to each component of an ice dancing competition. For a compulsory dance each judge awards a technique mark and a timing/expression mark. For both an original dance and a free dance each judge assigns a composition mark and a presentation mark. Each mark

ranges from of 0.0 to 6.0, with 6.0 being a perfect score (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Technique Mark. The technical merit mark is only awarded for compulsory dances and considers the following elements: accuracy of steps, edges, positions, and pattern; difficulty of steps; carriage/style, and unison (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Composition Mark. This mark is awarded for the Original Dance and the Free Dance events. Composition is based on the content of the original steps, skating technique such as edges and flow, as well as ice coverage (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Timing/Expression Mark. The timing/expression mark is awarded for compulsory dances only and is based on the following elements: timing in correct rhythm to the music, and expression of the character of the dance (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Presentation Mark. This mark is awarded for dance events other than compulsory dances, and takes into account the original steps created by each couple for either an Original Dance or Free Dance. The presentation mark is the second mark awarded by the judges and takes into account the following criteria: timing, expression of the character of the dance, unison and style (Canadian Figure Skating Association, 1997).

Qualitative Research Methods

The following terms are related to qualitative research and are necessary to define for those who are unfamiliar with such methods.

Purposive Sample. A purposive sample is non-random and involves selecting a sample of participants based on predetermined criteria that are related to the objectives of the research (Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

Triangulation. Triangulation is defined as validating information "...against at least one other source..." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283). Such other sources can be in the form of data sources; multiple investigators; theories; and methods of data collection, recording, and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

Member-checks. Member checks are a form of establishing internal validity, or "credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300) in qualitative research, and involve the researcher returning to the participants with the preliminary analysis of the data for validation purposes (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Layering. Layering involves recording the researcher's thoughts and reflections about the content of the data, as well as the research process itself. This exercise can be done several times, and is facilitated by the use of different coloured pens for subsequent layers (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Delimitations

1. This study was limited to elite ice dance couples currently competing, with a commitment to a structured partnership.
2. This study was limited to ice dance couples currently competing at or aspiring to the Novice, Junior, or Senior level, as only these couples were eligible for the national championships at the time of this research.
3. This study was limited to training facilities in southern Ontario, as there are no elite ice dancing training centres in Manitoba.

Limitations

1. This study was limited by the few number of elite ice dancers in Canada. A maximum of 16 couples can qualify for the national championships at the Novice and Junior levels, whereas a maximum of 12 couples can qualify for the Senior level.
2. Training facilities for elite ice dance couples exist in few regions of Canada. This was also a limitation of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

This review includes literature that is considered relevant to the present study. Two major sections will be discussed: qualitative methodology and related literature.

Qualitative Methodology

The present study used a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is an evolving methodology in the study of sport (Locke, 1989). It involves observation in a natural setting, shared interaction between the researcher and the researched, as well as inductive analysis, in which the theory is emergent from, and thus grounded in, the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research is based on the assumptions of multiple realities, changing and context-bound truth, and value-bound research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Purposive sampling is also involved in qualitative research, and confidentiality must be ensured for all participants. The researcher must enter the research site and attempt to establish a role within it, in order to gain the trust of the participants. Qualitative methods include interviewing, observation, archival record searches, and other unobtrusive methods (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). While no quantitative measurements are recorded when employing these methods, data are collected through the use of audio and video recording devices, field notes, journals, and diaries. Transcripts of interviews and/or observation sessions must be completed prior to analysis, which is subjective in nature, and consists of building categories from the smallest units of data that emerge following coding and layering (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The qualitative researcher aims to establish reliability and

validity throughout the entire research process. The reporting of qualitative research is a challenging task that involves capturing the context of the situations and environment, through the use of rich description, narrative vignettes, and direct quotes from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Qualitative Research in Physical Education and Sport

This section includes a discussion of qualitative research methods applied to physical education and sport settings, as well as a review of interview techniques.

Locke (1989) provided a comprehensive overview of qualitative research as applied to physical education. He addressed this topic in three sections: a tutorial, a set of guidelines for quality, and a discussion of the future of qualitative research in physical education. The tutorial section began with a clear definition of qualitative research and more importantly how it is done. The central assumptions of qualitative research were presented. These included the researcher as a sensitive instrument; a set of multiple realities making up one's social world; research not being value-free but value-based, and "...validation [coming] from the reader." (Locke, 1989, p. 4). Stages of the research process were outlined with examples. Locke presented operational headings which were from an actual qualitative dissertation. He also demonstrated the changing, emergent nature of qualitative research as well as the importance of "...capturing the context" (p. 8) of the situations. Unobtrusiveness and cross-checking were suggested as means of ensuring trustworthiness of the data (Locke, 1989).

Methods of analyzing qualitative data were also discussed in this first section. Locke (1989) discussed the use of the narrative, vignettes, and direct quotes in order to achieve the primary goal of the qualitative researcher

which "...is to produce description - the richest, most comprehensive description possible." (p. 9).

The second section of Locke's (1989) essay addressed the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. This section was organized by answering typical questions that arise in qualitative research regarding reliability and validity.

Finally, the future of qualitative research in physical education was addressed in the third section of Locke's (1989) essay. Publication was suggested to be at the forefront of the survival and progression of qualitative research in physical education. Locke suggested some guidelines in combating concerns raised by journal reviewers. Such guidelines included acknowledging the researcher's experience and biases; describing the context richly; explaining how and why emergent issues changed during the study; including a complete detailed account of procedures used for data collection, recording, and analysis; interpreting the participants' experiences justly; and including description and accommodation of ill-fitting cases of data.

Bain's (1989) essay on qualitative research in physical education both evaluated and expanded on Locke's (1989) review. She stated that Locke should have provided a "... glossary of terminology." (Bain, 1989, p. 21) that would be both easily accessible and comprehensive. This criticism was both accurate and insightful as such a glossary would result in qualitative researchers simply referencing Locke's essay instead of including very "...lengthy descriptions of methods." (Bain, 1989, p. 21). Bain also suggested that Locke provided insufficient references regarding the theory behind qualitative research.

Locke (1989) made no attempt to distinguish one qualitative perspective and its methods from another. Bain (1989) offered such a distinction between perspectives and chose to focus on critical research in physical education. Bain discussed the theory underlying this approach with regards to research being value-bound and dedicated to change. She stated that an important goal of qualitative research is "...to empower those being researched..." (Bain, 1989, p. 22). The author suggested that the sharing process between the researcher and participant not only reinforces the interpretation, but also may serve to empower participants to act for change (Bain, 1989). Sharing prevents exploitation and ignorance of the participant's voice and also acknowledges the responsibility the researcher holds to his/her participants (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Sage (1989) concluded that Locke's (1989) essay was important because it introduced many readers to some alternatives to conventional methods of research in physical education. However, Sage aspired to supplement Locke's essay in three sections. The first section presented the concepts of grounded theory as termed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory, which involves comparative analysis, proposes that the theory emerges from the data, using an inductive process, and this dictates that hypotheses are the end point of such methods.

Sage (1989), in the second section entitled qualitative sport studies, presented three different types of studies: symbolic and interpretive, feminist, and socio-cultural. The author briefly outlined some examples of each type of study. These examples are useful for comprehension of the theoretical approaches involved.

In the concluding section Sage (1989) endorsed qualitative research as a respected means of inquiry in physical education. This review did indeed supplement Locke's (1989) essay on qualitative research in physical education: Sage provided a closer look at different approaches of qualitative research in sport and physical education.

Siedentop (1989) observed that some attempts at endorsing qualitative research have resulted in merely a critique of quantitative or traditional research. He stated that this is of no help to either approach. Furthermore, this opposition only facilitates alienation and negates understanding of each approach.

Siedentop (1989) supported Locke's (1989) discussion of qualitative research. However, the author addressed some concerns he had developed pertaining to qualitative research. He presented the view that qualitative and quantitative research hold many similarities including the intensity of study; emerging patterns dictating changes in design; description being preferred over interpretation; the importance of context; and inductive processes. On the other hand, Siedentop argued that qualitative research has no initial check of the research instrument, whereas quantitative research does. However, one way of achieving such an initial check in qualitative research involves articulation of the researcher's biases beforehand, in order to consciously work to avoid them (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Siedentop (1989) warned of the danger involved in qualitative research due to the subjectivity of the researcher as instrument. However, the notion of multiple realities can counteract this danger to the reliability and validity of the data (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulating the data through the use of several sources and/or methods, as well as

conducting member checks also serve to avoid contamination of the data (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

Siedentop (1989) also suggested that in employing a rich description of data and context there is a danger that what becomes trusted is the writer's skills and not the data itself. This is an important caution of which to be aware in undertaking the report of qualitative research (Siedentop, 1989). The author stated that qualitative researchers "...do not express judgments" (p. 39). However, in qualitative research, the researcher both recognizes and acknowledges his/her own experience, as this serves to place the researcher in the context of the research process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). On the other hand, quantitative researchers strive for objectivity and being unbiased (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers make no such claims at detached objectivity (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Oakley, 1981).

In conclusion Siedentop (1989) drew very clear lines about the purpose of qualitative research. He stated that qualitative research was an integral part of the "...descriptive stage of scientific inquiry" (Siedentop, 1989, p. 39). He also suggested that qualitative research can provide a different view for its users, particularly in educational settings. Qualitative research does indeed present new perspectives from which to investigate phenomenon in various settings, not just educational ones (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Interview Techniques

Since interviews were the main method of data collection in the present study, it was necessary to review pertinent literature regarding techniques involved in interviewing. This section addresses such issues as scheduling, setting, appearance, language, time constraints, recording

procedures, reading speed, listening responses, structuring, and phases of the interview.

According to Molyneaux and Lane (1982) interviews are defined "...as 'conversations with a purpose'..." (p. 1). An interview is a two-way process involving both the researcher and the researched, and as such it is important to encourage a sharing of information. Indeed, Brenner, Brown, and Canter (1985) suggest that the value of the research interview is that it permits those involved an opportunity for "...sharing and/or negotiation of understanding..." (p. 3). Furthermore, Gorden (1980) maintains that the principal purpose of the interview is "...the exchange of information..." (p. 23), which dictates that "...the flow of information must be two-way" (p. 23).

Scheduling of participants should be purposive, with regards to the effects of the sequence chosen (Gorden, 1980). The sequence will be dictated by the research design and the situations in the research setting, in terms of gaining access to other participants through co-operation and recommendation of those initially interviewed. Specific information may be sought, in which certain participants with such knowledge will be scheduled first.

The setting is often overlooked, however, it is an essential component to effective interviewing. Molyneaux and Lane (1982) suggest the setting should be quiet and comfortable, with minimal, if any, distractions. However, privacy is paramount to the interview setting (Gorden, 1980; Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). These authors also suggest that the setting foster neutrality and equality, in terms of the physical arrangement, yet be organized to facilitate communication. In choosing a setting, it is also important to check for electrical sources, if they are needed for recording devices. Any

special needs of the participants should also be considered when deciding upon a setting (Molyneaux & Lane, 1982).

When conducting an interview, the interviewer should dress appropriately to convey the desired impression of competence (Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). The appearance of the interviewer should also be suitable to the situation the participants are located in, in order to strive for unobtrusiveness.

The communication level and experience of the participants should be considered when designing and asking the questions. The use of inappropriate vocabulary and jargon should be avoided to prevent confusion (Gorden, 1980; Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). However, pilot work is suggested for the purpose of establishing suitable communication levels and language (Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

A clock or watch should be in view of the interviewer in order to keep track of the interview. The issue of time can affect interviews, in terms of the speed and inclusion and/or exclusion of topics, as well as constraining responses. The interviewer and the participants should be aware of any time restrictions before the interview actually starts (Gorden, 1980).

Recording procedures involved in interviewing include note taking, tape recorders, and video cameras. Note taking is unobtrusive, but only records minimal information (Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). While video recording captures nonverbal as well as verbal information, it is very noticeable and obtrusive. The obtrusive effects of tape recording can be minimized by smooth operation of small devices, however, notes should also be recorded by the interviewer in order to capture non-verbal information that is lacking by the use of the tape recorder (Gorden, 1980). Ethical considerations dictate that permission to record the interview be obtained.

During the interview, the researcher should read the questions at a slow yet consistent pace in order to produce clarity and comprehension for the participants (Gorden, 1980). Also, according to Molyneaux and Lane (1982), during the interview it is crucial to engage in "active listening" (p. 109), which is comprised of four techniques: the "mm-hm response" (p. 111), "restatement of content" (p. 111), "reflection of feeling" (p. 112), and "uses of silence" (p. 118). The mm-hm response, which is exactly what it sounds like, indicates to the participant that the interviewer is listening and attentive. Restatement of content involves repeating or summarizing the participant's answers in order to check the researcher's understanding. Reflection of feeling involves a verbal attempt to articulate the participant's emotions. When employing the latter two techniques it is essential to note the response of the participant in order to determine accuracy. Finally, the use of silence can be effective in interviewing. It is important to consider that the participant may need time to think about the question and articulate an answer, or that the question could be sensitive to the participant.

Structuring is also an important aspect of interviewing and should be used throughout the interview, in order to orient the discussion (Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). It involves brief statements of what is to come, with regards to questions and/or topics.

The interview is broken down into three phases: the opening, the body, and the end. The opening phase of the interview involves establishing a focus, as well as the trust of the participant. This is accomplished through an introduction to the interview that includes the purpose, future use, researcher's background and experience, and topics to be covered (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). Maintaining the appropriate level of interaction in order to achieve the goal of the interview is essential in

the body of the interview (Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). According to Molyneaux and Lane, the end of the interview can include a summary of what was discussed, an evaluation check of the participant's interview experience, and/or a discussion of future appointments or plans.

Related Literature

This section of the review encompasses literature related to the present study. Due to the journalistic nature of the ice dancing literature, it was necessary to expand the literature review to psycho-social research with figure skaters. Although this research was informative, it was also very limited. Therefore, it was imperative to broaden the literature review to research with elite athletes, which yielded other relevant information. The research with other sport participants was included to demonstrate methodology related to the present research. Thus, psycho-social research will be addressed with respect to ice dancers, figure skaters, elite athletes, and other sport participants.

Psycho-Social Research of Ice Dancers

Nowosad (1980a, 1980b) wrote a pair of articles pertaining to ice dancing. Neither article included the methods used to generate the information, nor any theoretical perspectives employed, but Nowosad did provide valuable information on the topic of ice dancing.

Nowosad (1980a) provided an historical view of how and why ice dancing began. He discussed the social nature of its background that was parallel to the dance craze in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The development of standardized tests and competitions progressed as the social aspect diminished. Judging became paramount in ice dancing as it grew into acceptance as a competitive domain in the sport of figure skating.

This article provided an important historical and contextual account of the development of ice dancing.

Nowosad (1980b) discussed competitive ice dancing as a sport, with a focus on Canadian ice dancing couples. Ice dancers were described as unique and separate from single figure skaters. Controversy concerning the judging and subjective elements of ice dancing were presented. Technical and creative elements of ice dancing were reviewed using examples and direct quotes from competitive couples, coaches, judges, and officials alike. This article provided an overview of the competitive setting in ice dancing with particular reference to Canadian participants.

Bezic (1982) outlined the components essential to success for pair and ice dance couples. She discussed such issues, apart from the obvious physical compatibility, as responsibility, goal setting, maturity, moral and financial support, decision making, off-ice training, and most importantly communication. She presented suggestions based on personal experience as both a competitive pair skater as well as a coach/choreographer. This article made no reference to any theoretical perspective, but provided an intimate view of the challenges pair and dance couples face, based on personal experience.

Five articles provided in-depth profiles of elite ice dance couples in Canada and the United States (Duhatschek, 1981; Huck, 1981; Milton, 1982; Stafford, 1981; Walmsley, 1988). All of these articles provided personal information concerning the life of an ice dancer, and were useful in understanding the world of the elite ice dancer and thus formed important background knowledge for this research.

Duhatschek (1981) provided an in-depth profile of young Novice Canadian champion ice dancers. This article covered a range of topics including commitment to skating, training, school, outside activities, trainers, moving away from home, parental support, goal setting, and communication between partners. The author presented this profile very much in the skaters' own words.

Huck (1981) provided a descriptive account of an elite Canadian ice dance couple. The topics included sacrifices involved, training, work, school, outside interests, relieving stress, parental encouragement, and moving away from home. The article focused on the rationale behind their move to a big city in order to train, in terms of facilities and visibility.

Milton (1982) presented a detailed narrative account of Canadian champion ice dancers Tracy Wilson and Robert McCall. This article discussed their success and potential but focused, for the most part, on the importance of communication between the two partners in all aspects of their skating.

Stafford (1981) presented a descriptive account of an elite American ice dancing couple. Topics included commitment, schedules, training, school, outside interests, moving away from home, family support, goal setting, communication, and enjoyment of ice dancing.

Walmsley (1988) also profiled Canadian Olympic ice dancers Wilson and McCall. The high pressure situations and commitment to a grueling training schedule of 35 hours a week were discussed, as well as support systems and tremendous financial costs. Walmsley hinted at the social nature of ice dancing as she referred to the context of the ice dance couple as a marriage. She also addressed the creative and theatrical nature of ice dancing and the challenge its athletes face in gaining respect as such.

A recent 1998 Sport Discus search revealed no additional research-based articles on ice dancing.

Psycho-Social Research of Figure Skaters

Three types of research articles are presented on the more general topic of figure skating: qualitative interview research with former elite figure skaters, a journalistic yet descriptive article regarding an elite figure skater, and a psychometric analysis of non-elite figure skaters.

Firstly, a series of three articles describing an in-depth qualitative interview study of former elite figure skaters provided important background information for the present study (Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989; Scanlan et al, 1991). The first article served as an introduction to the research and presented data about the sample and the participants' development of commitment (Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989). The second and third articles presented and discussed the results of "sources of enjoyment" (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989, p. 65) and "sources of stress" (Scanlan et al, 1991, p. 103), respectively. The study involved in-depth interviews as well as questionnaires (Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989). The authors explained the rationale for using the chosen methodology, as well as the inclusion criteria for the purposive sample of former elite figure skaters.

Scanlan, Ravizza, and Stein (1989) outlined how they contacted and introduced the research to their participants via a letter and telephone call. The interview schedule was developed through data collected from pilot interviews with coaches, parents, and current figure skaters. Scanlan, Ravizza, and Stein (1989) explained that the interviews were unstructured with probing levels predetermined, and that two consultants provided guidance in these matters.

Two of the authors conducted the interviews, with each one interviewing half of the total number of participants. This decision was based on their prior experience and status within the skating community. Scanlan, Ravizza, and Stein (1989) established a good rapport with their participants by discussing their own backgrounds, how the data would be used, reasons for tape recording the interviews, guaranteeing complete confidentiality, and outlining the topics that would be covered.

The components of the research were presented in an informative chart outlining the seven phases of the interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaires used were part of the interview schedule and rated both sources of stress and sources of enjoyment, using a 7-point Likert scale. The final part of the interview schedule involved the participants' evaluation of the interview experience itself. The conditions and setting of the interviews were well described, and all participants evaluated the interview as a positive experience. The authors also felt that the research experience was a positive one.

The second article presented an in-depth description of the inductive content analysis used in determining the emergent themes of sources of enjoyment, expressed by this same sample of former elite figure skaters (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989). Quotes from the transcriptions of interviews formed the basic units of analysis. These units were defined as the starting point of the analysis, which was conducted by two researchers. These researchers, who were both trained in the procedures employed, analyzed the data independently. The analytical processes were explained in detail, including the inductive nature; clustering, which is made up of both contrasting and comparing; building upon higher level themes; and consensus validation. Consensus validation was described as the agreement of the two

independent analysts, and it was suggested as a means of decreasing each analyst's personal bias (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989). A trained research assistant conducted a reliability check, which was observed to be 92%.

Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza (1989) presented the themes of enjoyment in five categories, including "social and life opportunities", "perceived confidence", "social recognition of competence", "act of skating", and "special cases" (p. 75-79). All themes were reported by using both qualitative and quantitative means, which demonstrated triangulation. Data was reported qualitatively by including detailed narratives and direct quotes. Quantitative methods of reporting data were also employed by stating frequency distributions of the themes. However, the authors acknowledged that the qualitative reporting methods were top priority, with the quantitative reporting methods used as a supplement.

Scanlan, et al's (1991) third article on former elite figure skaters reported on the participants' sources of stress. A reliability check of the stress data conducted by a research assistant yielded a measure of 91%. The authors categorized the stress data into five themes: "negative aspects of competition" (p. 106), "negative significant-other relationships" (p. 112), "demands or costs of skating" (p. 114), "personal struggles" (p. 115), and "traumatic experiences" (p. 116). Again, these themes were described both qualitatively, through the use of narratives and direct quotes, and quantitatively, by frequency analysis.

This series of articles on in-depth interviews with former elite figure skaters provided detailed accounts of the research processes involved, including rationale, researcher status, participants, interview schedule, interview techniques, analytical techniques, emergent themes, and assumptions (Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza,

1989; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). The results of this research yielded a vast array of information regarding issues and concerns pertinent to the present study on the social world of the elite ice dancer. These three articles were useful in designing the present study.

Wright (1987) presented an insightful and richly described account of an interview with elite Canadian figure skater Brian Orser. Although no methods and theoretical approaches were included, Wright offered an inside view of the life of an elite figure skater. This was accomplished by addressing a comprehensive list of topics from training and support systems to enduring ridicule and vandalism. Wright described each issue encountered with honest narrative and direct quotes from Orser, his coaches, and noted Canadian officials. This article provided a great deal of information regarding schedules, technical components, commitment, pressures, financial costs, psychological training, and judging procedures involved in figure skating.

Finally, Vealey and Campbell (1988) conducted a psychometric analysis of non-elite American figure skaters. Although their research was quantitative, it is related to the present research as it provided an in-depth study of psychological characteristics of figure skaters. The authors used questionnaires to investigate achievement goals and their effect on self confidence, anxiety, and performance of both male and female adolescent figure skaters. Two theoretical approaches influenced this research: the past research on both achievement goal and competitive orientations, as well as sport confidence.

The purposive sample chosen was well described and the selection criteria and rationale were explained. The criteria and rationale excluded skaters "...at the senior and national levels" (Vealey & Campbell, 1988, p. 231) because such skaters were considered elite.

Six questionnaires were used in this study. Achievement goal orientations were measured using Ewing's Achievement Orientation Inventory, which was composed of 15 items rated by a 5-point Likert scale. Achievement orientations were determined by factor analysis of each item.

Vealey's Competitive Orientation Inventory was used to measure competitive orientations, both outcome and performance. This index was a matrix format of 16 cells, with each cell representing a different sport situation. A rating from 0 to 10 was completed by each subject as to their perceived satisfaction in the situation. Both a performance orientation score and an outcome orientation score were computed for each skater, using a variance analysis approach.

Self confidence was measured using Vealey's Trait Sport-Confidence Inventory which was made up of 13 items that were scored using a 9- point Likert scale. A score for each skater was obtained by summing all of the responses they made. Pre-competitive state self-confidence was measured using Vealey's State Sport Confidence Inventory. The number of items included in this inventory was not stated. This inventory used a 5-point Likert scale, and a total score was obtained for each skater by summing their scores for each item. Pre-competitive state anxiety was measured using Martens' Competitive State Anxiety Inventory for Children. This inventory used a Likert scale and contained 10 items.

Finally, demographic information including age, gender, experience, and competitive level was obtained through a demographic questionnaire developed by the authors. Figure skating performance was measured by ordinal scores of final placement obtained from competition officials, which were based on the subjective ratings of judges, as all such competitions are.

Vealey and Campbell (1988) found that enjoyment and accomplishment in skating were characterized as intrinsic motivation, whereas recognition of sport competence was characterized as extrinsic motivation. They discussed possible reasons why the findings did not match the conceptions of past research, which included three distinct and separate orientations of ability, task, and social approval. One such reason suggested by Vealey and Campbell was the elite level of the competitions they chose their sample from. This contradicted one of the criteria for choosing the sample which was to exclude senior and national level skaters on the basis that these skaters were to be considered elite. Vealey and Campbell (1988) specifically stated "...elite skaters were excluded..." (p. 231) and yet they presented the possibility that their participants were involved in elite competitions, which involve different orientations than recreational activities.

Vealey and Campbell (1988) also suggested that future research should use different methodologies, in particular interviewing and participant observation. This strengthens the rationale behind the present study regarding the world of the elite ice dancer, which employed these two methods of data collection.

Psycho-Social Research of Elite Athletes

This section of related literature includes qualitative studies with elite athletes involving interviews, ethnography, interviews paired with questionnaires, and lastly a quantitative summary of past psychological

research concerning young elite athletes. Athletes considered to be elite for this section of the literature review include those at the intercollegiate, national, international, or Olympic levels.

Meyer (1990) investigated the attitudes of female intercollegiate athletes toward their academic roles, using semi-structured interviews. She was influenced by past research of this type using male intercollegiate athletes (Adler & Adler, cited in Meyer, 1990), and aimed to compare her findings with this past research.

A sample of female intercollegiate volleyball and basketball players was selected on a non-random purposive basis, and the rationale for doing so was clearly stated and explained. The settings were not described. However, Meyer (1990) discussed the establishment of trust and a good rapport with the participants. Confidentiality was also ensured.

Meyer (1990) stated that topics covered in the interviews included "academic expectations", "classroom and academic experiences", "attitudes of self and others", "athletic experiences", and "role of gender" (p. 46). These were explained with the use of a sample question, since no set interview schedule was adhered to.

Meyer (1990) did not state the method of analysis. However, categories followed the order and labeling of the five topics covered in the interviews. The author integrated the results of the past research conducted by Adler and Adler (cited in Meyer) appropriately, in order to provide an effective and powerful means of comparison between their study and her own. Meyer used member checks to validate the data, and she included direct quotes of her participants' comments regarding the interview experience itself.

Using an interactionist perspective, Stevenson (1990) examined the early careers of international athletes through the use of in-depth yet informal interviews. A sample of national team athletes described in a previous study (Stevenson, 1989) served as the sample for this research as well. This sample was purposive, and included rookie members of six national teams from Canada and Great Britain: Female field hockey teams, men's rugby teams, and the men's water polo teams were included from both countries. Specifically, his research was focused on how these top athletes were introduced to their sports, and how they developed commitment to their sports.

Stevenson (1990) organized his findings into two main categories: introduction to sport and involvement in sport. The first of these two categories discussed "sponsored recruitment" (p. 241), as well as "coerced recruitment" (p. 243) by family, peers, teachers, and coaches. Gender was also discussed pertaining to introduction to sport, as was "seekership" (p. 243). Stevenson summarized the introduction to sport with the conclusion that parents were the dominant sponsors in the early stage of an athlete's career.

The second topic, involvement in sport, was presented in two sub-categories: "introductions and commitments" (Stevenson, 1990 p. 244), and "the process of commitment " (p. 247). Sport involvement included decision-making, evaluating, and discontinuation of athletic career. Stevenson discussed sport commitments in terms of "entanglements" (p. 247), "commitments" (p. 248), and "reputations and identities" (p. 249).

Stevenson (1990) concluded that these athletes, for the most part, were introduced to their sport through supportive sponsorships, evaluated the relationships involved, and underwent decision-making when making a

commitment to their sport. Stevenson suggested that class, ethnicity, and race play important roles in an athlete's life, but did not address these issues in his study.

Using the ethnographic approach, Chambliss (1989) conducted interviews with elite swimmers and coaches in the United States. He spent one and a half years traveling with a nationally recognized swim team with membership as a participant observer. The author shared transportation, meals, and residence, with these athletes and coaches, and was also provided access to all competitions, training sessions, meetings, and social gatherings. Chambliss acknowledged his own position and bias in his research as a swim coach. Since the team he spent time with included athletes of various levels, his research was both cross-sectional and longitudinal. This, as well as the use of both interviews and participant observation, of both athletes and coaches, provided evidence of triangulation, in terms of different methods and different sources.

Chambliss (1989) discussed a definition of excellence as a difference achieved qualitatively by top athletes. He outlined three categories of such difference including technique, discipline, and attitude. He then organized the report around disproving assumptions held about talent, with the use of both narrative vignettes and direct quotes. The author used these same methods to discuss the conclusion that excellence is mundane and qualitative in nature. Throughout this report Chambliss used examples of the concepts discussed. He also recognized the multidimensional aspect of sport and the social world involved.

An older study by Balazs (1975) investigated the psycho-social aspects of female Olympians in swimming, gymnastics, track and field, and skiing, using in-depth personal interviews and two questionnaires. The

questionnaires included a Personal Data Questionnaire, developed by the author, and the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. The purposive sample was well described, but inclusion criteria were not included. The interview schedule and questions were not presented, but the topics raised were outlined in a table. The participants' experiences were categorized according to life stages, "...childhood, adolescence and young adulthood." (Balazs, 1975, p. 269). Balazs did not include any references to the rapport or relationship between herself and her participants.

The Personal Data Questionnaire included background information such as age, order of birth, siblings, sibling sport participation, and age of sport involvement. The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, a standardized psychological instrument, was used to assess achievement autonomy and aggression. She stated that the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule scores of the female athletes in her study could be directly compared to other females in the general population with similar age and education.

Balazs (1975) summarized the findings of her interviews indicating that the outstanding female athlete showed a strong drive, effective goal setting, supportive family atmosphere, and motivating parents and coaches. Heterosexuality was addressed as being well developed. The purpose of investigating heterosexuality was unclear, and although Balazs reported that some athletes were married, she failed to indicate if the marriage was supportive or stressful to the female athlete.

The results of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule stated that these elite female athletes had high achievement needs as well as high autonomy needs. These athletes also scored higher on aggression and heterosexuality when compared to the general female population.

Balazs (1975) attempted to provide a narrative of her participants' sport experiences by incorporating direct quotes into her report. The issues previously mentioned that are pertinent to qualitative research and that Balazs failed to address had yet to be developed at the time of her study. She presented several significant issues with regards to elite athletes including values, family/support systems, and goal setting.

Klein (1982) conducted in-depth interviews to investigate the identity of elite female athletes. The author first discussed the philosophical and theoretical aspects of conducting qualitative research from a sociological perspective. He reviewed issues pertinent to qualitative research such as minimal social distance between researcher and researched, the inductive nature, the sharing aspect, the personal investment of the researcher, and the importance of context.

Klein (1982) acknowledged the starting point in his research as the assumption that an elite athlete's commitment to sport is so strong that it permeates his/her entire life. This led to the assumption that the identity of an elite athlete is related, both directly and indirectly, to the uniqueness of the world of sport.

Klein (1982) did not include a clear description of the sample, nor how the sample was chosen. He also failed to include a description of the interview in terms of schedule, questions, development, location, time, rapport, ethics, reliability, and validity. Klein did not indicate the recording procedure he used, nor did he state how the data was analyzed. The discussion of the results focused primarily on the contradictions female athletes face. The author did not effectively describe the contextual information, nor did he use direct quotes to provide his participants with a voice in his research. This was an example of poor qualitative research and it

demonstrates the need for good qualitative research, which is the aim of the present study.

Feltz and Ewing (1987) offered a review of the research conducted on young elite athletes from a psychological perspective. They stated that while psychological research on youth sports has covered such topics as "...aggression, anxiety, attributions; coaching behaviors and reinforcement; moral development; participation motivation; social evaluation; self esteem; self-concept; and social integration" (Feltz & Ewing, 1987, p. S98), little of this research has been done using elite young athletes. They stated that two important areas of research with elite young athletes have emerged - motivation and stress.

The motivation research has investigated why athletes participate in sport. Feltz and Ewing (1987) summarized the findings of several studies that produced four categories of elite young athletes which were labeled "ability-oriented", "sport-mastery oriented", "social-approval oriented", and "sport-venture oriented" (p. S99).

Feltz and Ewing (1987) indicated that research investigating psychological stress among young elite athletes has reported that these athletes experience little stress both before and after competition. It was reported that athletes in individual sports had higher measured levels of stress before competition than those in team sports. However, Feltz and Ewing reported that little is known about the long-term effects of stress among elite young athletes.

Feltz and Ewing (1987) summarized and discussed the demographic information and mean sport competition anxiety test scores of nine studies involving elite young athletes participating in a variety of sports including gymnastics, wrestling, distance running, speed skating, and hockey. Topics

covered in these studies included demographics; anxiety; confidence; participation motives; and attitudes toward training, control, and achievement. The authors reported that anxiety was most frequently measured using Marten's Sport Competition Anxiety Test, which is a psychometric instrument.

Feltz and Ewing (1987) offered suggestions for future research. One important consideration was the definition of elite athletes, which should be clearly described and explained. This issue is pertinent to the proposed study with elite ice dancers. Feltz and Ewing also suggested that new and different research perspectives are necessary in order to investigate psychological aspects of elite young athletes in terms of a set of related research questions. This suggestion strengthens the rationale supporting the present research, as a qualitative perspective was used.

Psycho-Social Research of Other Sport Participants

Three examples of qualitative research involving interviews, memory work, and a questionnaire/interview schedule are included in this section on sport participants other than elite athletes.

Sage (1987) observed and conducted in-depth interviews with high school teacher/coaches in a field study spanning five months. He clearly stated the rationale for using qualitative methods, and also the research questions that guided his research. The theoretical perspectives in this study included organizational, occupational, and role theories, and each were explained in relation to the research. The non-random purposive sample was well described, as were the settings. Sage discussed the efforts made to obtain permission and gain entry into the research settings. He aimed for trust and unobtrusiveness in his research. Sage also explained limiting his

research to include only male teacher/coaches as there were very few female counterparts. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The analysis was organized with well-defined categories containing both vignettes and direct quotes. Sage (1987) included categories such as "teacher/coach role overload" (p. 218), "teacher/coach inter-role conflict" (p. 219), "coach/family inter-role conflict" (p. 220), "differential commitment" (p. 222), "a coaching identity" (p. 223), and "withdrawing from coaching" (p. 223). This study provided an important example of qualitative research that was well done and effectively reported.

Laitinen and Tiihonen (1990) employed creative methods to produce a narrative of the male experience in sport. Their article was divided into two parts: a report of research conducted during sociology of sport seminars, and a personal account of one man's experience in sport. A gender studies perspective guided the research, and this was evident in Laitinen and Tiihonen's reference to the importance of both women's and men's accounts in the understanding of patriarchy and oppression. While the first section of the paper was written from a woman's perspective, the second section was written from a man's perspective. Feminist methods were employed to work for social change.

The data in the first section of the article represented memories written by male students in sociology of sport seminars. The objectives and instructions of these exercises were well defined and explained. The report of this research included both descriptions and direct quotes to portray the various emergent themes.

The second part of the article included the voice of one of the participants in the seminars, as it was an actual account of one man's memory work in these sociology of sport seminars. Presented were the themes involved in achieving manhood through sport, with several references to sex and love. It represented a story told about one man's personal experience with sport.

The inclusion of both a woman's and man's perspective on men's experiences with sport was unique and insightful. Each author acknowledged their personal experience and bias in doing this research, and both included narratives and direct quotes to give their participants a voice in the report as well.

Interviews can also be conducted in the form of a questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively. Dubois (1986) used an interview schedule that contained 13 items to investigate sport value orientations in young soccer players. This research also tested two theories related to sport values - selection theory and social interaction theory. A purposive sample was recruited and well described, including socioeconomic status, race, and gender. The sample approximated the target population of the soccer league. A sub-sample including the entire population of an instructional soccer league was also used in this study.

The interview schedule used by Dubois (1986) permitted three possible responses to each item: "important", "somewhat important", and "of little or no importance" (p. 32). To combat ordering effects, two interview schedules were used. Dubois acknowledged that the items were developed from the work of past researchers as well as the guidance of two physical education experts. A quantitative reliability check was observed to be .91 using the test-retest method.

Results indicated that the values of skill improvement, fair play, fun, sportsmanship, fitness, and being a team player were ranked highest by both samples and that breaking the rules to win was ranked lowest by both samples.

Participants were interviewed both before and after the soccer season to assess any changes in sport values. Chi square was used to determine statistical significance of any change in values from pre- to post-season. The instructional league showed changes in values of fitness, sportsmanship, and friendship, whereas the competitive league showed changes in fitness, sportsmanship, competition, and social status.

Support for both selection and social interaction theories was discussed, as was a rival hypothesis of a significant difference in prior sport experience between the competitive and instructional leagues. Dubois (1986) also admitted his failure to factor out gender effects. Although the samples were representative of the target populations, these populations differed significantly in the male-female ratio. He suggested that in future research male-female differences be investigated. This study demonstrated an alternative interview method of using an interview schedule as a questionnaire.

Summary

This review confirmed qualitative research as a valid means of inquiry in physical education and sport settings. The present research employed such methods and in doing so contributed to the progression of qualitative literature in sport.

Although the research and literature specific to ice dancing is limited and is of a journalistic nature, the articles included in this review provided a wealth of information pertaining to the research design and development of

the research instrument for the present study. This review provides support for the significance of the present investigation into the social world of elite ice dancers.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Procedures

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main research. Four couples from one training centre were recruited. These pilot interviews indicated a saturation point with eight interviews. The ice dancers in the pilot study ranged in age from 17 years to 24 years, and possessed 6 to 12 years of ice dancing experience. Of the four couples who participated, three were competing at the Junior level and one was competing at the Senior level. All but one skater had competed at the National level, and three of the skaters had represented Canada at international competitions.

The interview schedule used in the pilot study was derived from personal experience of the researcher, and from a review of the literature. The instrument was then revised, aided by a review of techniques involved in interviewing (Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985; Gorden, 1980; Molyneaux & Lane, 1982).

Analysis of the data was based on transcriptions of the interviews, and was both inductive and emergent in nature. These interviews yielded six themes, these being, "communication", "common goals", "supportive family and friends", "sacrifices", "political nature of judging" and "creative aspect of ice dancing".

Upon reflection of the pilot experience, the researcher decided on changes for the present study. Observation was added in order to triangulate the information obtained in the interviews. Also, head coaches were recruited for interviews. This also acted to triangulate the data from the interviews with the skaters. The addition of a formal section evaluating the

interview experience itself was added at the end of the interview schedule. This was important in developing trust between the researcher and participants (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Other minor changes were made to the interview process to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

The pilot data were used to supplement the narrative report of the main research.

Participants

A purposive sample is non-random and involves selecting a sample of participants based on predetermined criteria that are related to the objectives of the research (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Lincoln and Guba (1985) support purposive sampling in qualitative research as it "...increases the scope or range of data exposed ... and because [it] can be pursued in ways that maximize the investigator's ability to devise grounded theory..." (p. 40). For the present study, a non-random purposive sample of ice dancers was chosen based on the following criteria:

1. current competitive elite ice dance couples;
2. competing at the Novice, Junior, or Senior level;
3. training at centres in southern Ontario.

The decision to choose current competitive ice dance couples was dictated by the nature of the study and research questions involved: The investigation of relationships between partners in particular, is best addressed by studying ice dancers currently in partnerships. The study included only elite ice dancers, defined as those couples currently competing at or aspiring to the Novice, Junior, or Senior level, since only these competitive levels were eligible for national competition at the time. There were no elite ice dancers training in Manitoba at the time this research was conducted. Through personal knowledge and information from the Canadian Figure Skating Association

(D. Smerdon, 1992), it was found that the main areas for ice dance training were Montreal and southern Ontario. From these two possible locales, the latter was chosen on the basis of personal accessibility, a greater number of centres, and the lack of any language barrier.

Coaches involved in the training of elite ice dancers in southern Ontario were identified through personal knowledge and validated by the Canadian Figure Skating Association (D. Smerdon, 1992). These coaches and/or training centre directors were contacted via letters explaining the purpose and process for the research. Two of the four centres responded favourably.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the head coaches and/or centre directors through letters and telephone calls. Once ice time schedules were set, an initial meeting was conducted by the researcher in order to introduce the research project to the participants and also to schedule interview appointments as well as observation periods.

As stated above, previous pilot interviews indicated a saturation point with eight participants, however this pilot work was conducted at one training centre. Therefore, the decision to recruit six participants at each training centre was warranted. Furthermore, the participants in the present study represented each level of National competition. In summary, three couples each from two separate training centres were recruited. Therefore, twelve ice dancers, or six couples, participated in this study, as well as their respective head coaches. Fourteen interviews were completed in total, however, for clarity the skaters will be referred to as participants in this report. Data from the interviews with the head coaches acted to complement the narrative.

The participants ranged in age from 12 to 22 years, with a mean of 17.25 years. They possessed from four to 16 years of figure skating experience, with a mean of 10.42 years. Ice dancing experience ranged from 1 year to 9 years, with a mean of 5.17 years. Of the six couples who participated in this study, two each were competing at the Novice, Junior, and Senior levels. Four of the ice dancers had represented Canada at international competitions. Eight of the 12 participants had competed at the National level prior to the study, whereas two had competed at the Divisional level (one level under National) and the remaining two participants had competed at the Provincial level. Although two of the couples were recently formed (one year together or less), the remaining four couples had been competing together for two to five years.

Each training centre involved in this study had a head coach, however, one site had a married couple that coached together. These three coaches at the two research sites had competed in ice dancing for 8, 10 and 11 years respectively, before going into coaching for 7, 12 and 18 years respectively. All three coaches involved had competed in international ice dance competitions in their amateur days, and all had coached ice dance teams in international competitions.

All participants at the respective research sites completed the on-ice portion of their training together, which was overseen by a common head coach. On-ice training involved 4 to 7 hours a day, 5 to 6 days a week, for 11 to 12 months of the year. Off-ice training included approximately 7.5 to 15 hours a week, some of which was done on an individual basis. Both of the training centres had at least two hours per week of scheduled off-ice training for their dancers.

Procedures

This study involved two methods of data collection; interviews and observation. Each method is addressed separately in this report. Interviews generated the main source of information, with data from observation acting as a supplement. The first week at each site was spent observing, in order to gain a feel for the setting, and also to immerse the researcher in the environment. Interviews began in the second week and were interspersed with both observation, as well as transcriptions. This schedule was tentative, and was revised at the discretion of the researcher. Three weeks were spent at each of the two sites observing and conducting interviews, resulting in a total of six weeks spent collecting data.

Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with the ice dancers on a personal, one-to-one basis. The head coaches of both training centres were also interviewed to supplement the interviews with the skaters. These interviews were semi-structured: a predetermined list of open-ended questions guided the interviews with opportunity for elaboration when deemed necessary by the researcher.

Interview Schedule. The interview schedule was derived from personal experience of the researcher, and from a review of the literature, and then revised in terms of the purpose, wording, and ordering of questions. As discussed previously in this chapter, a pilot study was conducted using the revised instrument. Minor changes were made to the schedule based on an analysis and reflection of the pilot experience. The revised list of interview questions is included in Appendix A. The purpose and rationale for these questions is included in Appendix B.

Interview Setting. The setting for the interviews at each site was determined upon examination of the training centres and also in consultation with the participants, head coaches and staff. Privacy and comfort were of the utmost importance in choosing the setting.

The setting at both research sites was an enclosed private room. Everyone else was instructed not to interrupt the interviews, except in the case of an emergency. The rooms were heated and well-lit by large windows and electric lighting. Two comfortable chairs were provided for all interviews, and participants were encouraged to relax and become comfortable. Tissues were made available by the researcher, as was a clock so that both parties could monitor the time during the progression of the interview. Most participants reflected that these two items were sensitive to their needs and helped to foster a good rapport between the researcher and the participants.

Only one interruption occurred in all of the interviews. At the first research site, during a late interview with a female participant following a night-time training session, there were repeated attempts to break into the training centre via the door of the interview room. As we were the only two inhabitants left in the building, we telephoned the police to inform them and have them come to check the surroundings and the building. No further incidents occurred, and although both the researcher and the participant admitted to being frightened, after a short break to calm ourselves, we resumed the interview. The pause also served to re-orient the researcher to the interview, which in turn facilitated the participant's subsequent response. Upon completion of the interview, we accompanied each other to our respective vehicles to ensure our safety.

Interview Process. Using the interview schedule, the average interview lasted for approximately one hour. The process of interviewing was both exhausting and repetitive. Therefore, a maximum of two interviews per day was conducted, with a two day break between interviews, in order to prevent fatigue and boredom on the part of the researcher, as well as permit time for preliminary transcribing. This decision was made following the pilot study in which several interviews were conducted over the period of two days, with five occurring in one day. These interviews were scheduled too close together to warrant enough time for the researcher to transcribe, as well as distance herself from, the previous interviews.

All interviews were tape recorded, using a microcassette recorder with a voice-activated internal microphone. This device was chosen because of its accuracy in recording information, while being somewhat unobtrusive due to its small size and voice-activated function. All twelve participants stated that being tape recorded did not bother them. In fact, several skaters remarked that they forgot about the tape recorder altogether. Nicole, a 17 year-old Senior competitor stated: "...it was weird at first...being tape recorded...but then I forgot about it". Brian, a 20 year-old Junior competitor, "...didn't even remember that the interview was being recorded". A brief explanation of the project and the researcher's background experience oriented the participants into the interview. All participants were informed of their rights regarding refusal of participation, withdrawal of participation at any time, as well as the right of refusal to answer or discuss any questions they did not want to. Confidentiality was guaranteed for all participants involved by assurance that the tape recording of the interviews would not be heard by anyone else but the researcher, and by the use of fictitious names in any future reference to

the participants, including the transcription. Informed consent was obtained, both on tape and written, following these explanations.

Interview techniques recommended in the review of literature were used, including appearance, time constraints, language, reading speed, listening, responses, structuring, and the establishment of trust with the participants (Brenner et al, 1985; Gorden, 1980; Molyneaux & Lane, 1982). The researcher appeared neat and well groomed. The language used in the interviews was deemed appropriate, and the use of jargon was facilitated by the experience of the researcher as a former elite ice dancer. The researcher attempted to read slowly to produce clarity of the questions, and the four listening responses discussed in the literature review, as well as structuring, were employed by the researcher. Establishing trust facilitated the achievement of a good rapport with the participants. This was accomplished through a sharing process between the researcher and participants.

Transcriptions

Tape recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, as Gorden (1980) suggested that this strengthens the analysis of the data. Kirby and McKenna (1989) agree with this suggestion as it allows the researcher to get close to the data. Transcription of the interview tapes was facilitated by the use of a computer with word processing software and hard-drive storage capacity, as well as both headphones and earphones, the use of which was dependent on the clarity of the recording.

The use of bold typing for each participant's words and normal typing for the researcher's words made the subsequent analysis easier. Each transcription was then printed out and assigned a label to indicate the interview number only. Extra spacing was incorporated into the hard copy of each transcription to allow for ease of building themes.

The process of transcription was a lengthy one, that involved rewinding and pausing the tape numerous times. During the transcription of these tapes, a one hour interview tape took approximately seven hours to transcribe. Approximately 90 to 100 hours were spent transcribing the interview tapes for the present study.

Observation

Observation was also used as a method of data collection to supplement the information obtained in the interviews. A different type of information was sought during observation - contextual information, in terms of interaction among those involved. This was the best way to describe the environment of the training facilities. However, observation was also used to evaluate or validate information obtained from the interviews.

The possibility of participant observation, with the researcher actively involved on the ice during training sessions was explored. However, through discussion with the coaches and skaters, it was decided that non-participant observation, while sitting in the stands of the arena, was the best option, so that training sessions were not disrupted. Field notes, regarding content as well as the researcher's reflections and reactions, were recorded, either during or immediately after a session. A range of 22 to 23 hours was spent observing on-ice training sessions at each of the respective research sites, with approximately half of these hours occurring prior to the interviews and the remaining half between the interviews.

Analysis

Analysis of the interview data was based on the transcriptions. The content analysis was inductive and emergent in nature, and involved the building of categories from initial coding and layering of the data (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Layering the data consisted of

recording the researcher's thoughts and reflections about the content of the data, as well as the research process itself. This exercise was done several times, and was facilitated by the use of different coloured pens for subsequent layers. Each exercise of layering involved an increasingly more narrow focus in order to build the themes. Once layering was complete and the themes had been uncovered, the researcher cut out each unit of analysis and organized each common theme into a separate file. This organization aided the writing of the final report.

Analysis was an ongoing process from the start of data collection, in order to facilitate recall, focus, and interactive reflections on the part of the researcher (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Ongoing analysis was necessary in order to determine the saturation point of the data. Member checks were conducted in which the researcher returned to the participants with the preliminary analyses for validation. This process was also facilitated by the continual analysis of data.

The observational data were also categorized inductively as it emerged from the coding and layering of the notes. This process was also ongoing from the starting point of data collection. The information generated from the observation sessions supplemented the interview data. This is reflected in the written report where the observation data are integrated appropriately with the discussion of the interview data.

The written report produces a detailed description of the ice dancing environment as well as emergent situations and themes. The narrative approach is employed extensively, and direct quotes from the participants are integrated in order to demonstrate the concepts, as well as provide an interpretation in the words of the participants themselves. Thus, the researcher's interpretation is not the only viewpoint included in the report of

this research. The researcher aimed to prevent exploitation of her participants by including their collective voice.

The results are presented both qualitatively, as described above by the use of the narrative and direct quotes, and quantitatively, by the use of a frequency distribution of the emergent themes. Each major theme discussed is stated in terms of a percentage, representing the proportion of the twelve ice dancers who expressed the particular theme. However, this method of reporting the themes or categories is considered supplemental to the qualitative reporting methods.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research involves both internal and external reliability (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Each type of reliability will be discussed separately.

The present study used a mechanical recording device and rich description, which according to Thomas and Nelson (1996) are two ways of reducing threats to internal reliability.

External reliability, on the other hand, concerns the content of the information obtained (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). It is suggested that clear descriptions of the following criteria help to achieve external reliability of qualitative data: 1) the role of the researcher; 2) participants and why they were chosen; 3) social setting or environment; 4) data collection methods; and 5) how the data will be analyzed and the basis of such (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). All of these issues have been addressed in the report of this research. Participants are well described, and the rationale for their inclusion has been previously discussed. The status or role of the researcher as a former elite ice dancer and official judge of ice dancing was also presented.

The setting of the interviews has been described. The data collection methods for the present research have been discussed, as have the analytical methods.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research also includes both internal and external validity (Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Each type will be discussed separately in terms of the present study.

Internal validity can be improved through long-term data collection, triangulation, and member checks (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection in the present study lasted three weeks at each site, in order to build trust and facilitate unobtrusiveness. Triangulation is defined as validating information "...against at least one other source..." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 283). Such sources can be in the form of data sources; multiple investigators; theories; and methods of data collection, recording, and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thomas & Nelson, 1996). This study involved triangulation in terms of data sources, as well as methods of data collection, recording, and analysis. Different sources of information involved both ice dance couples and their coaches, while both interviews and observation were the methods of data collection.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), internal validity in qualitative research is referred to as "credibility" (p. 300), and member checks are "...the most crucial technique for establishing credibility." (p. 314). The use of member checks, as discussed in the analysis section of the procedures, involved validation of the preliminary analysis from the participants themselves. Every participant at both research sites positively evaluated the preliminary findings.

External validity involves the notion of "user generalizability" (Thomas & Nelson, 1996, p. 380), which suggests that "...generalizing is left to those who can apply the findings to their own situation" (p. 380). It is suggested that this process is facilitated by rich description of the contextual information involved in the research (Locke, 1989).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), external validity in qualitative research is referred to as "transferability" (p. 300), and is achieved through "...thick description [which is] necessary to enable someone... to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated..." (p. 316).

Summary

The above sections describe in detail the methodology that was used in this qualitative study. In-depth interviews and observation were the methods of data collection, and reliability and validity have been established.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The results of this study are presented both qualitatively, by the use of the narrative and direct quotes, and quantitatively, by the use of a frequency distribution of themes. The data emerged into nineteen themes grouped under five major categories. Each theme discussed is also stated in terms of a percentage, representing the proportion of the twelve ice dancers that expressed the particular theme. The pilot data will also be used to supplement the narrative. Views from each head coach are also presented, where applicable, and observational data are included to supplement the narrative.

For ease of reading, the following tables list the pseudonyms and provides a summary of the participants and their partners, as well as the head coaches.

Pseudonym	Age	Competitive Level	Partner
Nicole	17	Senior International	Brent
Brent	19	Senior International	Nicole
Elizabeth	19	Senior National	Colin
Colin	22	Senior National	Elizabeth
Stephanie	14	Junior International	John
John	18	Junior International	Stephanie
Dianne	17	Junior Divisional	Brian
Brian	20	Junior Divisional	Dianne
Caroline	17	Novice National	Scott
Scott	15	Novice National	Caroline
Glynnis	12	Novice Sectional	Evan
Evan	17	Novice Sectional	Glynnis

Table 1: Summary of participants: pseudonyms, age, competitive level and partner.

Pseudonym	Years Coaching	Highest Level Coached	Years Ice Dancing
Alex	18	Senior International	11
Rosie	12	Senior International	10
Max	7	Senior International	8

Table 2. Summary of coaches: pseudonyms, years of experience and highest level.

Each of the five major categories that arose from the data will be presented with the themes included. The categories are as follows: "Factors Necessary for Success"; "Coaching and Technical Aspects"; "Personal Benefits"; "Problematic Issues"; and "Social Aspects". Also included in this report is a section entitled "Empowerment through the Interview Experience", which describes the views of the participants on being involved in this research.

Factors Necessary for Success

Several elements were essential to the success of an ice dance couple including "communication", "common goals", "supportive parents", "supportive friends", and "success in ice dancing".

Communication

Communication was mentioned at various times throughout the interviews conducted. It was identified as an essential component to a positive relationship between members of an ice dancing couple by 100% of the dancers.

Communication is paramount to the success of an ice dancing couple. Rosie, one of the coaches interviewed for this study, explained that "Communication is the biggest thing for a conducive working relationship [between an ice dance couple]". Caroline, a 17 year-old Novice, commented on the components of a positive relationship between partners, "...there

would definitely have to be communication in a team...communication is the key...". Colin, a 22 year-old Senior, emphasized that communication is not just one-way: "You have to be open. You have to be willing to listen to what the other person has to say because sometimes your opinion is good, but the two opinions together could be great".

The goal of communication also has to be kept in mind, as Evan, a 17 year-old Novice, commented: "...you have to co-operate and communicate with other people, and you have to be understanding". Brian, a 20 year-old Junior, concurred: "...the two of you working together, getting along, open ideas, communication...you have got to be open to each other and give and take". "I think you have to communicate with each other as people in order to co-operate and so that there's respect", explained Nicole, a 17 year-old Senior competitor.

Furthermore, without effective communication, partnerships would be very difficult. Elizabeth, a 19 year-old Senior, characterized such a relationship as "...negative if it were business-like and formal...with no communication between partners". Describing a past partnership with such a problem, Caroline revealed that "...it was frustrating...and very hard for me to skate with someone that never talked to me". She added "We would skate together because we had to, but at the end of the session we would just skate in opposite direction[s]". Ultimately, this problem with communication caused the end of the partnership.

Corresponding to this expressed need for communication, 100% of the ice dancers in this study felt that they did in fact communicate very effectively with their partners. Colin stated "We have a pretty open relationship. We can talk openly about skating, as well as off ice stuff". "We sit down and talk together, about our skating, and also about the rest of our

lives...", agreed Krista, a 22 year-old Senior from the pilot research prior to this study. In fact, when discussing skating with a partner as opposed to skating alone, Brian affirmed his decision: "It's better than skating alone...you can talk together and work your problems out together". Glynnis, a 12 year-old Novice, added that "when you freeskate you are out there all alone, but with dance, you have someone to talk to and help you through it". Brent, a 19 year-old Senior, also concurred: "Working with a partner is more of a challenge, but it's also more rewarding because you can share the ups and downs with someone else by talking it out. You don't just take everything on yourself".

While all of the couples were observed in discussion at some point on the ice, the junior and senior couples definitely communicated more with each other. The novice teams did not discuss as much as the older and more experienced teams. Furthermore, the nature of the discussions between partners seemed to be less serious with the novice teams and more serious with the senior teams. Nicole and Brent had some very serious discussions during a few of the training sessions. These two dancers appeared to be very frustrated and unhappy, although when problems arose they did not hesitate to discuss them.

Common Goals

Another essential component of a positive relationship for ice dance couples was sharing common goals, as expressed by 100% of the participants. Competing at the Olympics was a common goal that emerged from the interviews of 10 out of 12 participants (83.33%), whereas the remaining two skaters (16.67%) hoped to compete at the highest National level.

Having mutual goals with their partners was imperative for the skaters in this study. Evan relied on his past experience to explain this issue: "[one of his two previous partners] didn't take skating seriously and I did...it was frustrating. When you go to a competition and your partner has different expectations than you do, it's very hard to go forward..." "Understanding what we both want and agreement about what we both want..." were necessary ingredients for a positive partnership to Bob, a 21 year-old Junior from the pilot research. Caroline also commented on the importance of sharing common goals: "Both partners need to share equal goals....want the same things...". "We're both very focused, and we set our goals together. The fact that she's as committed as I am to get there really helps...I had other partners before who weren't that serious...", explained John, an 18 year-old Junior competitor. Stephanie, a 14 year-old Junior, ended a previous partnership because "...he wasn't working that hard and he wasn't interested in skating the same way I was...he never really made an effort to get ahead...our goals were very different". Brent defined a successful partnership with the following: "...having a good working relationship means both having a common goal, both being individually hard working and wanting the same thing".

One common goal shared by most of the skaters was to compete at the Olympics, as is evident in Stephanie's statement: "I would like to go to the Olympics and do well". Evan's ultimate goal was "...to compete at the Olympics...it's my dream". Caroline also wanted to go to the Olympics, and acknowledged this shared goal: "I would really like one day to make it to the Olympics...I guess that's everyone's big dream and goal..". Although Nicole was originally from England, she expressed her wish to "...represent Canada...[at] the Olympics...".

Supportive Parents

This theme was also expressed by 100% of the ice dancers interviewed in this study, with a particularly strong focus on having a supportive mother. Supportive parents often resulted in more pressure felt by the skaters.

Supportive parents were fundamental to the success and enjoyment of the skaters in this study. While Brian stated that "...my mom and dad are the most supportive of my skating...", he commented on the importance of this to him: "...if they weren't there I wouldn't be able to [skate]". Glynnis also commented on her parents' support: "...[they] are so supportive of my skating...and always behind me". According to Brent, "My mother is the most supportive of my skating. She organizes my schedule and finances most of the skating. I need her to help me organize things because I would never do it myself". Elizabeth agreed, "My mom is the most supportive of me. Both of my parents are supportive because they have both given up a lot for me to skate...". Furthermore, Elizabeth explained "...my mom told me that if she didn't let me come here to Canada and if I didn't make it as a skater, she would feel it was her fault because she didn't give me a chance...".

John had experienced a frequent change of partners for four years and discussed how instrumental his parents were in his continuing skating: "...I went through a time when I didn't know if I wanted to quit or not and [my parents] were very supportive in whatever I wanted to do...". Stephanie commented that her mother "...got[sic] me into skating so she's always making sure I'm happy...she's really supportive ...", which Stephanie appreciated, by adding "...I wouldn't be here right now if it wasn't for her".

Nicole was the only participant who commented on a more supportive father: "My dad is the most supportive of my skating...he's really the silent proud father. He ...got[sic] me to the sport psychologist...and also to the nutritionist...".

Supportive parents led to some added pressures for a few of the participants. Scott, a 15 year-old Novice, demonstrated this by commenting: "I try harder for them because I know they want me to do well". While Glynnis "...can't really tell them that [she] doesn't want to skate all the time...[because she doesn't] want to disappoint them", she commented on her parents' sacrifices for her skating: "They work so hard to pay for my skating". Stephanie also noted sacrifices made by her mother: "She puts a lot of time into it, sacrificing a lot like money and she puts some kind of pressure [on me] because she wants results from what she's paying...". Caroline also responded to the pressure inherent in supportive parents: "...I feel that if I skate well, it's my way of paying them back".

Supportive Friends

While all of the ice dancers in this study (100%) stated they shared and valued supportive friendships, four of the participants (33.33%) expressed a wish to spend more time with their friends outside of skating.

Supportive friendships were very important to all of the participants in this study. Caroline's friends are "...always encouraging me...". "I'm sure that [my friends] appreciate what I'm doing with my life..." remarked Brent. Elizabeth valued her friends' understanding : "They understand my schedule and that I can't spend lots of time with them". Stephanie appreciated the encouragement of her friends: "...they're very happy for me and sometimes come to cheer me on at competitions". While Colin stated that "...Most of

my friends are pretty understanding...", he was also quick to add "...but I make an effort when I don't have to work or skate".

With such busy schedules, a few of the skaters desired to spend more time with their friends. This often led to a conflict for the skater, as is evident in Evan's statement: "...Sometimes I wish I could miss skating to go out with my friends, but I can't...My coaches said if I want to do well that I have to skate all the sessions...". Glynnis also had conflicting thoughts about spending more time with her friends: "Sometimes when I want to do something with my friends, I feel bad that I want to miss skating because my parents work so hard to pay for it...".

Success in Ice Dancing

All participants in this study (100%) continued dancing because they succeeded. The interpretation, expression and creativity involved in ice dancing was what five of the twelve participants (41.67%) enjoyed about their sport.

Success was very motivating to the skaters, as is evident in Evan's statement: "We started doing well at interclub competitions and decided to keep with it". Scott agreed: "I do well in competition and that motivates me". John favoured the fact that "...I am still doing well at it...I don't like to lose at other sports either, but with dancing I've done very well...". Nicole "...started to appreciate dancing when we won Pre-Novice. I liked freeski but I liked winning better". Indeed, head coach Rosie confessed "...when [our couples] win that says it all...[we] have achieved success...". Colin, who had a career-ending knee injury for hockey, admitted that he "...loved being the centre of attention...with ice dancing".

Ice dancing provided the skaters in this study with a creative activity. Caroline liked "...to try new things...be different than freeskaters", whereas Stephanie favoured "...the lines that have to be perfect...it's an art". Dianne enjoyed "...acting, portraying myself to the music...". Nicole loved "...to watch ice dancing...and now I like the way it feels when you're absolutely in sync[sic] with your partner...It's beautiful to watch". Elizabeth "...loves the fact that it's creative...more interesting than freeskating". Susan, a 17 year-old Junior from the pilot study, loved "...the look of dance, it looks so beautiful...like the ballet...", whereas Bob, a 21 year-old Junior also from the pilot study, maintained that "...you have a lot more freedom with what you're able to do and create [when compared to freeskating]". He also commented that he's "...always been interested in the artistic aspect of ice dance...". Referring to ice dancing, Tom a 23 year-old Senior from the pilot study replied, "I really enjoy performing... and the fact that [ice dance] is an art form as opposed to a sport form....It's an expression, like painting..."

Coaching and Technical Aspects

Grouped under this technical category were several themes: "relationship with coaches"; "supplemental training"; "process of forming partnerships"; and "political nature of judging".

Relationship with Coaches

All participants (100%) discussed having a positive relationship with their coaches. Seven out of 12 participants (58.33%) commented on the enjoyment their coaches experienced coaching the sport and the ensuing relaxed training environment, while five of the 12 participants (41.67%) found their coaches to be very motivating. Furthermore, four of the 12 participants (33.33%) valued the equality of their relationships with their

coaches. One participant divulged that the commitment of his coach seemed to recede at times.

The majority of participants preferred a relaxed training environment and coaches who enjoyed the sport. Referring to her training environment and her coaches, Dianne commented: "They know when to push us more and we need that sometimes, but they're really fun". "I like that they're relaxed and they enjoy themselves. We can fool around and still have fun", professed Evan. Nicole agreed: "...[my coach] likes to have a good time. He's relaxed most of the time". Scott also commented on his coach's enjoyment, but stressed the importance of this to him: "[My coach] really makes dancing fun. I like that about him". Colin valued his coaches' ability to emphasize enjoyment: "They are a lot of fun...even in bad or stressful times they make skating fun...". Furthermore, the coaches in the study felt that they did provide a relaxed and supportive environment. From a coaching perspective, Alex illustrated the training environment he feels he maintains: "...I teach in a relaxed manner and I'm very friendly with my students. I don't have an old-fashioned 'teacher-pupil' relationship with my students...".

While observing training sessions, it was noted that the head coaches at both training centres foster a relaxed and fun atmosphere for their skaters. Alex and Rosie, head coaches at one centre, perform the warm up exercises with their dancers, while Max, the head coach of the other training centre, was often seen laughing with his skaters.

Several of the participants found their coaches to be a source of motivation. Brian stated: "[My coaches] keep me going and keep me wanting to do better and better...". Commenting on how she gets through training despite sometimes being tired, Glynnis credited her coaches' encouragement: "They really motivate me to keep going". Caroline praised

her coach's positive demeanor and his commitment to continued growth: "I like his attitude toward everything. He likes to push his students...and...he's always thinking of new things to do, and ways to improve...".

Several of the older participants (aged 17 to 22) benefited from a mature and equal relationship with their coaches. While commenting on such a relationship with his coach, Brent clarified what this meant for him: "The best thing ... is our relationship. We're close to being equal and he doesn't feel the need to separate himself from us as a coach figure". John compared his relationship with his coach as a friendship: "[My coach] keeps things loose...some parents think it should be more regimented but...he's a friend most of the time and if things get out of hand he'll put his foot down...but I think the whole atmosphere is great...very mature...". Colin felt validated by his relationship with his coaches, and offered the following explanation: "...I can also put my input in...they're not the boss". Nicole found it easy to respect her coach and considered herself an equal because of similar skating experiences she had in common with her coach: "He's easy to relate to because he's been there...he's competed, and he knows what we're going through...because he went through it too...".

Only one participant revealed his frustration at the fluctuating commitment of his coach. With the responsibility of coaching several couples at a time, ice dancing coaches often divert their attention to particular couples when crucial competitions are near. Such was the case when Brent was interviewed, as he explained: "[My coach] doesn't pay enough attention to what is going on in mine and my partner's skating. He pays more attention to other couples...it's been that way for a little while but it may stop now [because the international placement competition is over now]...". Brent went on to share his reaction to this change in attention: "I felt a little bit

more alone because we didn't have someone helping us, but it didn't really affect how we skated. It might have affected how we felt about being there with everyone, but it didn't affect how we skated". It was apparent through observation that the Senior teams at each training centre did spend less time with their coaches and more time working on their own.

Supplemental Training

All of the participants (100%) claimed to have enlisted the help of people other than their head coach. All 12 participants (100%) had secondary or assistant coaches and also trainers, whereas 10 of the 12 participants (83.33%) worked with a choreographer. Only one participant (8.33%) consulted a sport psychologist and also a nutritionist. Also, 10 out of the 12 participants (83.33%) traveled to other cities and/or countries for training.

All of the skaters and coaches were aware of the necessity for supplemental training. One coach, Alex, compared the additional training of today's skaters with that of his own career several years ago: "Twelve to fourteen years ago when I was involved in ice dancing, I initially didn't do any off-ice training. I didn't do any sport psychology. I didn't do any ballet...By the time you're involved in Pre-Novice dancing [today] you've already discovered off-ice training, ballet, sport psychology, etc...".

Not only were the skaters in this study involved in additional training, but also every participant felt that the assistant coaches and choreographers provided a different point of view from those of their head coaches. John offered his feelings about the benefits he received from assistant coaches: "It's great to work with [the assistant coaches and choreographer] because they provide another opinion...which I always think is a good idea...".

Stephanie agreed with this assessment: "I like getting a different point of view".

All of the skaters credited their trainers as being instrumental to their skating success. Stephanie observed a difference in her conditioning: "I find the trainer really helps my skating. It makes skating my programs a little bit easier every time". Colin recognized the discipline involved in off-ice training, but also defended the hard work by commenting, "[the trainer] is always on our case but, we know that he's there for our own benefit...". Dianne recognized a change in her strength: "I like working with [our trainer] and he's really worked on improving our muscle strength and our coordination". Brian also felt that working with a trainer improved his strength: "We have a trainer to keep us in top shape...it's made us a lot stronger...".

Several of the skaters traveled to another city to work with another training centre. The skaters who did so found the experience very rewarding, as Brent illustrated with the following comment: "It's useful working with these other people. We go to Toronto to [another coach] for compulsories but I don't care where we are. We do it because he is very intelligent...and ...it's nice to skate at [this training centre] because there are other Senior competitors there training". In fact, Stephanie was very motivated after traveling to another training centre: "I quite like [going to Toronto] actually because we get to see other people skate and it's a different environment and it makes you work harder ...".

Some of the skaters traveled to another country to gain a different perspective in their training. Colin justified the three or four trips to Germany every year as giving him an appreciation for the European style of ice dancing: "We travel to Germany a few times throughout the year, but we

don't usually work with other coaches there. It really gives us a glimpse into what the Europeans are doing".

Process of Forming Partnerships

All of the participants (100%) declared that their coaches were involved in setting up their current partnerships, while eight of the participants (66.67%) discussed matching size as a crucial requirement. Five of the twelve participants (41.67%) either left behind one partner to start up with another partner, or waited on a particular partnership splitting up. Four of the six female participants (66.67%), but none of the male participants divulged their lack of power in the process of forming a partnership.

Coaches were the dominant force in establishing ice dance partnerships. As Scott explained, "...My coach paired me up with [my partner]. Evan agreed, "[My coaches] set me up with [my partner] ...because they thought we would look good together...". "[My coaches] came to me looking for a partner for [him]...it was all them...", added Glynnis. Brian compared his coaches to agents setting up a deal: "We worked it through the coaches. I had been through tryouts...with a bunch of different girls and then we got down to one..."

Through their knowledge and experience, coaches knew what they were looking for in an ice dance couple. Size was the most important aspect when matching up teams, as Dianne explained, "We looked good together and our height matched well". Brian concurred, "We were both really tall and the line was perfect...", as did Stephanie, "The match was good on the ice, physically...". Colin stated his coaches' preference for a complete physical match-up: "...I think it was an overall thing though, colouring, size, style...". In addition to having similar height, Caroline's coaches were aware of the style of skating: "[my partner] is a very powerful skater and he's

really short so they needed someone who was a good height for him but who was very powerful..."

Several participants left one partner to start up with another, as Brent explained: "She was skating with someone else and [my coach and my mother] asked if she would try out with me and she said yes...". Colin discussed his mixed feelings over the start of his current partnership: "My partner was injured so we couldn't skate at Divisionals. I knew [my current partner] from before and then they asked if I was interested in trying out and I said yeah. I felt bad that my partner was injured but it all worked out after all". Nicole also divulged her distress over a similar situation: "I left one partner behind to skate with [my current partner]. I had an opportunity but there was a lot of hurt caused by my decision. It was a very rough time in my life".

Several of the participants discussed the different circumstances for females and males in the process of forming partnerships. According to Max, one of the coaches in this study, "...There are so few males in ice dancing that the try out sessions often end up with one guy and hundreds of girls...". Indeed, Alex, another coach interviewed in this study commented that "...because of the number of boys in the sport...it's so few that the boys do have more power, certainly in the beginning...when trying to set things up...it's sort of a cattle call way that we end up trying boys out with girls...". Elizabeth communicated her fears and doubts about the try out process: "...I was a little scared that he didn't want to skate with me because usually guys get their choice and girls have very little say about it...there's just so many girls trying out with one guy...". Brent explained the male perspective: "They sent offerings to me and I got to say yes or no, which is the easiest way to do it".

Political Nature of Judging

This theme of politics affecting the judging of ice dancing was referred to by six of the 12 ice dancers (50%). Brent believed that ice dancing "... is often judged unfairly. It can be very frustrating to be judged politically instead of what happens at the time. Someone who had been to an international competition will be...placed higher than those that haven't". Brian also felt that the judging is "...unfair...it's so political and obvious". Evan disliked the judging also: "You know that you skated your best and another team made obvious mistakes and they finish ahead of you...it's very frustrating". Krista, a 22 year-old Senior from the pilot study, commented on the judging of ice dancing: "I know it's not really good to talk about it, but sometimes the judging is political...sometimes [the result] depends on what club you represent or how well you placed last year...". "There's a lot of politics involved in skating too because sometimes it's very judgmental...a lot of opinion creeps in...", explained Bob, a 21 year-old Junior also from the pilot study. Alex, a head coach at one training centre, emphasized the fact that dancers "...have to skate for themselves because the judging isn't always explainable".

A few of the skaters talked about the judges' preference for dance teams from Quebec. Nicole hated "...the politics and the judging. Different regions of the country get favoured...the Quebec teams get more recognition...and more marks for doing a lot of presentation but the technical skills are not great". John also commented on Quebec teams: "...the thing that's always bothered me...I've always been involved at the Nationals and Quebec always starts with the upper hand...it's political...".

Also from the pilot study, 23 year-old Senior competitor Tom was very vocal about the political nature of ice dance judging, which is demonstrated in the following quotations taken from his interview transcription. "You can compare [judging] to the Canadian government...there's a hierarchy that's not necessarily based on a skill or knowledge but on whose butt you're kissing...". He maintained that "There's countless stories of people who have felt the effect of [politics in judging]...". When asked who perpetuates these "politics", Tom replied,

...on the surface it's the judges, but behind them it's the people, really two or three people, on the board of directors of the Association [Canadian Figure Skating Association] who have the power....The judges are pawns....The decisions are made in the board room and the directors encourage or ... motivate the judges in the direction [the directors] want to head...

He also commented that "...if a certain judge comes in that wants to be honest and truthful, they are often discouraged if not eliminated from the judging panels...".

Personal Benefits

Through their experiences in ice dancing, the participants achieved such personal benefits as "advantages of partnerships" and "developing maturity through skating involvement".

Advantages of Partnerships

All participants (100%) indicated a preference for the stability of a partnership over skating alone. The majority of participants expressed characteristics about their current partners that helped establish and maintain this stability.

Skating with a partner gave the participants reassurance, especially during performances at a competition. Caroline illustrated her preference for skating with a partner: "I used to get really nervous when I went out for a competition in free skate...but for dance I am always calm...because there's someone out there with me...[it's] sort of like a team effort". Scott agreed: "It's easier [to work with a partner] because there's someone out there with you".

Nicole stressed the social impact of working with a partner: "I would rather work with someone than just myself...it's not as lonely...". "I think it's great working with a partner. You get to have fun together and succeed together", observed Brian. Elizabeth emphasized the difficulties of working with a partner, but validated the stability she has experienced: "...when there's two of you, sometimes it's frustrating, but I like it because he's so different from me. He's calm and I'm hyper so he calms me down a lot. We balance each other". John divulged his insecurity of being the centre of attention while competing alone: "I like the partner thing better [than freeskate alone], because when you're out on the ice by yourself ...I never really liked that feeling [of] all the attention on me".

Several of the skaters discussed their partners' involvement in forming the stability they feel. Stephanie acknowledge her partner's efforts: "...he always finds something to laugh about when I'm feeling in a bad mood....he's going to make [sic] me in a good mood". Dianne affirmed her partner's help in developing their bond: "He's really supportive. It makes it easier to go out and compete...and not worry a lot about making a mistake and how he will react...we are out there together". "She's understanding and she's always there", added Colin.

Developing Maturity Through Skating Involvement

All 12 participants (100%) believed that they were more mature having been involved in skating. Several skaters referred to this theme directly, while others discussed being more independent or disciplined. Learning how to deal with people was expressed by six of the 12 participants (50%).

A change in maturity was mentioned by every participant. Indeed, the coach Max felt as though these skaters make a big sacrifice of their childhood: "The biggest sacrifice is that they have to be involved in a marriage at a young age and they have to learn to negotiate and to give and take...when they might not be ready to do that". Through her involvement in skating, Elizabeth "...had to grow up very fast. I had to be independent". Brian agreed: "It's helped me mature". Dianne realized how much she had matured by comparing herself to her friends at school: "[Ice dancing] is really disciplined. I notice that I am a lot more grown up than my friends at school. Skating makes you more mature, more disciplined".

Related to discipline, a few of the skaters discussed learning restraint and how to deal with pressures. "It taught me a lot about pressure...it teaches you how to deal with pressure...", remarked John when speaking about the effects skating had on his life. Furthermore, Colin believed that skating made him stronger and more able to deal with frustration: "It had taught me self-control because if you're at a competition you can't show your emotions, especially if you lose".

Characteristics of maturity such as co-operation and teamwork emerged through the discussions. When asked how skating had made an impact on his life, Colin freely admitted: "It's definitely changed my ways of thinking. It has calmed me down and made me more accepting of other people's ideas". Brian felt that he developed the ability to work with other

people: "It's really taught me a lot about life and how to work together with a team or a partner". Indeed, Evan found that skating has taught him the importance of respecting others: "Skating has taught me a lot about people, both partners and coaches, You have to respect your coaches...It has taught me how to co-operate, how to get along..."

Problematic Issues

Several issues were raised by the participants including, "financial pressures"; "sacrifices"; "academic issues"; "competitive relationships at the arena"; "personality differences"; and "demands of living away from home".

Financial Pressures

Parents contributed in some way to 100% of the participants' financial costs of skating. This also led to added pressure on the skaters.

Commenting on the funding of his skating, Evan replied, "My parents pay for everything". Brian presented a similar view: "My Mom and Dad pay for it, but I'm trying to help out with partnering and we get a bursary...[that] helps a little bit". "My Mom and Dad pay for basically everything...", concurred Nicole, but "...when I have shows...it goes to help pay for my skating, but it's very little compared to how much it costs". While Colin contributed financially to his own skating by working part-time for the last three years, he acknowledged that "before that it was all paid for by my parents".

Elizabeth had a unique problem from all the other participants in that she could not earn any money because she carried British citizenship and had no working visa. She explained her frustration with the situation: "My mom and dad both have jobs back home, so that I can skate in Canada. I want to be able to help out, but I can't...it's not fair".

This support by parents led to some increased pressures for the participants. Evan disclosed that "...my mom went back to work so I could keep skating. It's great that they're willing to do that, but sometimes it puts pressure on me to do really well. I try hard not to think about that when I'm competing".

Sacrifices

Every one of the 12 participants (100%) expressed making sacrifices for their skating involvement, such as not spending time with friends, giving up or cutting down on another activity, or not being able to take some time off from skating. Six of the 12 participants (50%) sometimes had regrets over these sacrifices.

Several skaters in this study expressed regret over not being able to spend more time with friends outside of skating. Dianne was disappointed at New Year's Eve when "...a bunch of my friends went to Montreal for a week and I couldn't go...". Glynnis also commented on not attending special events at school and parties: "Sometimes after school, there would be a party, but I would have to skate...I wish I could have gone to just one of those parties...". "It's really hard sometimes...and I find myself thinking I wish I could go to that party tonight. I'd like to see some of the people at the party because I haven't seen them...since school got out, but I have to get sleep and pack for some competition", said Nicole.

Other sacrifices included giving up other activities and not being able to try other activities because of skating involvement. Evan gave up another sport: "I quit hockey because of skating. I didn't have time for both and my parents couldn't afford both...and I had to pick one sport". "I used to play the flute but I had to stop it because of skating", said Susan a 17 year-old Junior competitor from the pilot study, "...and I've never been able to go skiing

because it's right in the middle of competitive season...". Brian felt he would like a break from skating every now and then: "There are times when you get tired and you wish you had some holidays from skating, but right now you can't...". Elizabeth preferred to think she could always catch up on other interests later in life: "Sometimes I wish things were different...wishing I had time to draw, and visit friends...but there will be time for the things I want to do later, after I'm finished skating".

Academic Issues

Of the 12 participants in this study, 11 (91.67%) attended school. Ten of the 11 skaters (90.91%) who went to school had a special schedule arranged to accommodate their training and competitions. Seven of the 11 participants who went to school (63.64%) had experienced problems with teachers about their skating, and subsequently two participants (18.18%) attended a designated athlete school program.

With the demands of an intense training schedule, most skaters that attend school must arrange a flexible class schedule, which usually means not taking on a full course load. Coach Rosie admitted that "School is a major pressure on these kids". John, who attends school for half of the year only, explained his schedule: "I go to school half days...well first semester I miss a lot so I only take two courses...". According to Evan, who was "...sort of between grades...", he found that he could do "...4 or 5 courses a year instead of a full load". Subsequently these skaters that attended school part time were aware that they will not be able to graduate in the normal course of time, as is evident in another comment by Evan: "It'll probably take me an extra year or two to finish high school". To concentrate on her dancing, Elizabeth has put school aside for now: "This year I am taking a year off from school". Glynnis, who was in Grade 7 and was unable to arrange a

custom schedule, had some unique problems: "I do a full course load. I can't arrange a schedule like the skaters in high school...Sometimes this means I miss a lot of school...I get very tired because I have...school, plus dancing and free skating. I don't get enough sleep because of my skating and my homework". Understandably, Glynnis admitted that she was "...very worried about how I am going to do this year".

Several of the participants have experienced problems with teachers at school, due to their demanding training and competitive commitments. Caroline worked hard to keep up on the missed work, but understood the problem with her teacher: "...at school the teachers don't really appreciate [me] missing their classes for sports outside of school...it's added stress for me...". Referring to conflicts with his teachers at school, Evan commented: "I've had some problems with some of my teachers because I miss so much school. I try to keep up but it's hard, and I can't always take the classes I want to take because they conflict with my skating".

As a result of competitions, some skaters have had to complete school requirements ahead of time, as is evident in Nicole's statement: "I've had to write exams before the rest of the class because I was going away to a competition. I don't always have enough time to prepare, but I try my best". Stephanie was given an ultimatum from one of her teachers: "My teacher said I had to get the work done...my parents tried to explain my situation to him, but he said I had to get the work done or else I would fail". After dealing with such problems for several years, both Brent and Elizabeth attended special schools with a designated elite athlete program. Elizabeth found the special school environment more forgiving and "I don't get hassled by teachers for missing class when I have to...".

Competitive Relationships in the Arena

Ten of the 12 participants (83.33%) experienced competitiveness in their respective training centres. Three of these ten skaters (30%) found that the competitiveness at the training centre made them skate better, whereas the majority of these respondents (7 out of 10 or 70%) expressed problems dealing with the competitiveness.

Competitiveness among training mates was a common theme at both of the training centres involved in this study. While Caroline commented on this "...competitiveness attitude...", she also found it to be motivating and comforting at a competition: "I think it helps, because it's nice to know that when you're out on the ice at a big competition, it's your friends that you are competing against...". Colin believed that the "...competitiveness in my club is just jealousy...because we're all shooting to be the number one team in terms of how much time the coaches spend with each team...I think it helps keep us all on our toes".

Several of the skaters expressed problems caused by the competitiveness between teammates. Nicole explained the dichotomy of having friends at the arena: "It's frustrating for me that we can get along off the ice so well but on the ice it's so competitive". Evan commented on the difficulty to remain friendly: "It gets hard to stay friends sometimes, because of the competitions against each other...", and Glynnis echoed this finding: "It's very hard to have good friends at the rink when you're competing against each other". Stephanie could "...usually set [the competitiveness] aside, but...[one of my friends] used to skate here and she was not the most thoughtful person when it came to competitions, so I used to talk to her a lot...but when we were competing against each other she hides herself away...". Dianne also told of a lost friendship over competitiveness: "We

were best friends, and they used to [finish ahead] of me and my old partner, but now I have [a new partner] and now we're beating them and she was bitter...so that's why we aren't best friends anymore".

Competitiveness among the couples was demonstrated while observing the training sessions. The senior teams kept to themselves continually. These teams also showed more frustration toward the other teams on the ice. During one session, Colin screamed at two younger couples to "...move now". Some friendliness was apparent at the rinks. However, this friendly attitude was only shown between teams of a different competitive level. For instance, a junior team often helped out a novice team, but hardly spoke to the other junior teams.

Personality Differences

Five of the 12 participants (41.67%) expressed views about personality differences in dance partnerships. The majority of these views indicated that differences in personality resulted in difficult relationships and vice versa.

Dianne, a 17 year-old Junior, asserted that she and her partner have a good relationship because "...we are so similar...our personalities are similar". Brian agreed with this assessment when discussing his partnership: "We're very similar on the ice and also off the ice. We like the same kinds of things and this helps too".

Personality differences have caused many partnerships to end. Brian concluded that personality differences were the reason for ending a previous partnership: "I changed partners because of complications...personality differences. Our personalities and skating together just didn't work...we were just too different". Colin also ended a previous partnership "...she and I had a personality conflict...we didn't click...". Brent also concluded that "...it would be difficult if the partners had two different personalities". In fact, he

added that he discovered this through a prior partnership that didn't work: "We became incompatible, personality wise".

Demands of Living Away From Home

Six of the 12 participants (50%) lived away from home and their families. Three of the six participants (50%) living away from home had experienced difficulty adjusting to their new environment. Living away from home required much more responsibility concerning cooking and cleaning for all six participants concerned.

Half of the skaters in this study moved away from home for their skating. Most of these skaters boarded with another family, but Brent "...used to drive in with my mother until I was 14 and then I had my own apartment here full time when I was 15". Referring to the major adjustments she had to make upon moving from Montreal to southern Ontario, Stephanie recalled: "I was only 13 when I left home to move...I had to adjust to a new school system and learning English...and I got homesick...". For Elizabeth, at the age of 13, moving from England and boarding with her coaches in order to skate in Canada was very difficult at first: "I think I grew up very fast. [My coaches] were very nice people, and I love them, but I needed babying from my mom and they were very busy...".

Living away from home at such a young age requires many adjustments and can be difficult. Nicole at age 15 "...was forced to mature over the last two years. I used to be really outgoing but moving from home changed all that...I got really shy and it was hard for me to make new friends...". Nicole also got very homesick because "...being away from [her] family was very depressing...because we're a close family". Furthermore, Nicole found it very difficult to cook for herself: "I couldn't stand that I had to make my own meals...that's when I started gaining weight. Also I could

walk down the street and buy something that I couldn't at home...a chocolate bar, and so I did and I started gaining weight".

Social Aspects

Many of the themes discussed above are based on relationships which have a social component. However, the themes in this category, "traditional gender roles" and "romantic expectations of couples", directly represent the social environment of these athletes.

Traditional Gender Roles

The theme of traditional male and female roles was overwhelmingly demonstrated by all of the skaters in this study (100%). The males were very protective of their partners, and also possessed more power in the relationship, in terms of control. The females tended to blame themselves for arguments that did occur. The females were responsible for getting their partners to contribute to the partnership, and also for smoothing over difficulties. In just one partnership, the female had more power over the male in a certain situation.

Although the females were experienced in partnerships, there was a definite acknowledgment of the male's dominant role in decision making. When discussing how they make decisions about their skating, Glynnis admitted her partner's control of the situation: "He usually decides what we are going to work on. I just agree. He knows more than I do because he's had a partner before". From the observations, Evan always picked what they were going to work on and always started their music.

Scott declared his leverage over his partner: "Usually I just say what we're going to do...I pick something and she goes along with it. It works for us because she doesn't like deciding. I don't bother asking her". Nicole confessed her lack of confidence with her partner: "We try to make our

decisions together but I feel that he knows more than I do because he's been around longer than I have. He's more confident that way so I trust him, even if I don't agree with him, he probably knows what he's doing so I just go along with it". Nicole's partner, Brent, conceded his superiority with the following comment: "I feel that I have more power over her in decision making and the thought process because...well...she trusts my judgment and I have more experience. It suits me just fine because it speeds things along a lot faster and she generally doesn't mind giving in to my knowledge. I think she appreciates it". Elizabeth also relinquished her voice during decision making with her partner: "It seems to be him who tells me what we're doing. He usually says what he thinks about our goals for the year and I just go along".

During the observation sessions, the males in both Senior teams continually told their partners how to skate. Brent once physically placed Nicole where he thought she should be. Colin was heard telling Elizabeth to "push, push".

The male as protector of the female also emerged. While Dianne stated that she and her partner "...talk about our skating...what to work on, setting goals...", she also confessed that "...he's really protective off the ice. Sometimes it's very frustrating because I can take care of myself". Nicole also complained that her partner was "...very protective all the time...he wants to know what I'm doing every minute". Indeed, when the interview with Nicole was interrupted by someone trying to break into the room late at night as was described in Chapter Three, the intruder turned out to be her partner who "...wanted to know what was taking so long...and whether she was still in there or not...".

The female skaters tended to blame themselves for quarrels that happened with their male counterparts. While defending their relationship, Elizabeth offered an excuse for the infrequent troubles between her and her partner: "We don't really get into arguments, but sometimes I think I need to back off". Nicole also implied that the power she felt her partner may have over her was dependent on her emotions: "Sometimes when I am grumpy I think he has more power in our relationship but I know it's just because I am in a bad mood".

Another traditional female responsibility that emerged from the data was having to compensate for a silent male. Caroline explained her experience with the following comment:

I guess ever since we've[sic] started skating together, I've taken control because he won't. I always ask him what he wants to do but he won't talk. It's very frustrating. He has a tremendous fear of getting into trouble, so if we are having a conflict with anyone I have to speak out. I say it, I get the backlash from it...it's always been like that.

Furthermore, when conflicts arose between partnerships, the female was responsible for getting the partnership back on track again. Caroline explained that the pressures from coaches and parents taught her to carry out this responsibility "...of having to smooth it over..." by stating "...I remember getting that message very early and that was what I had to do if I wanted to skate, but sometimes it was very frustrating...". Dianne was also told to "...be the bigger person...go to him and...make things right...". One night during a particularly unproductive session for Brent and Nicole, they were observed in discussion for over 40 minutes off the ice. They skated alone for about 15 minutes, when the head coach, Max, skated over to talk to Nicole. Nicole

then skated over to Brent, and after a brief discussion they started skating together again.

One couple expressed the view that the female had more power over the male. Both of the partners in this couple agreed. Stephanie showed perceptive insight into this unique situation when she explained that

...maybe when I go back home I have more power than he does...because I can't decide what I am going to do...go back or stay home...and maybe it puts more pressure on him and I think it makes him feel that I have more power than him....

Her partner, John, offered the same impression yet his emotions are also displayed in his comments:

...she has more power right now...she goes through these exercises every now and then she threatens to go home if something doesn't happen and she's done that many times. At first it was sort of beg them to come back...be all nice...but it's sort of gotten to the point where if I get frustrated I tell them right out 'make up your mind...are you coming back or what?'. It's just happened so many times that we've gotten sick of it here...

Romantic Expectations of Couples

Ice dancing couples are supposed to portray romance, as presented by all 12 participants (100%), and all explained that the opposite is most often true off the ice.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Nowosad (1981) maintained that "Skating convention implies that when a man and a woman perform together they demonstrate the existence of a relationship" (p. 32). Also according to Nowosad (1981) the "...communication [between skating couples] may evoke

a romance..." (p. 32). Both the skaters and coaches in this study agreed. Coach Rosie believed that "...from the outside we are supposed to project a romance and a very typical old fashioned man-woman relationship...I think ice dancing is still very old-fashioned and that's where the man leads and the woman follows". Coach Max agreed: "...I think that old fashioned romance is what we want to put out there and what [the audience and judges] want to feel when they're watching...". Evan explained: "It's definitely thought to be dating, romantic", and Glynnis clarified, "I think when you are skating at a competition you're supposed to look like you like your partner, sort of like a couple...It's like acting...". Brian concurred, " ...a romantic component is definitely looked at by the judges...".

An ice dance couple can be compared to a marriage of sort. As a coach, Alex suggested that

[The skaters] have to be involved in a marriage, basically, at a very young age. At an age...when most boys and girls don't even like to be together with each other...[dancing] forces them to spend time with a person of the opposite gender and perhaps that marriage can be very trying.

Although most of the participants agreed that the expectations for couples are romantic, they also explained that reality is very different. Brent compared the expectations of the audience and the judges with this statement: "I suppose it's like having a wife, more than anything", however he was quick to add, "[Ice dancers] are supposed to be actors...". "A lot of people think that you're in love with your partner - I would agree with that but it's not always like that in reality...", remarked Colin. Scott "...picked ... up...the romantic aspect from watching the sport...", but was quick to add that, "I would never go out with my partner, but I have to pretend to be in love with

her...". "People do think we're a couple, and ask me if he's my boyfriend...Romance is what they expect...and the judges want to see that too", offered Elizabeth echoing many of the participants in this study.

Empowerment Through the Interview Experience

As stated earlier in Chapter Two, Bain (1989) indicated that an important goal of qualitative research is "...to empower those being researched..." (p. 22), and suggested that the sharing process between the researcher and participant not only reinforces the interpretation, but also may serve to empower participants to act for change. Several of the participants in the current research commented on the positive experience of being involved in the study. Evan offered his opinion: "The interview was good actually. It made me realize the things I believe in like partnerships, coaches and my skating". Nicole explained: "[the interview] really made me think about why I am skating and about my life, but it was a good thing". Colin "...liked talking with [the researcher] about my own experiences". Brian also expressed his appreciation for the interview: "I thought the [interview] experience was pretty good because it gave me a chance to tell somebody how it feels...it feels good to tell somebody who knows about what we do...".

Summary

This chapter represents the analysis of the interview data. Complete transcriptions were made from the interviews with 12 ice dancers and three coaches, supplemented by eight pilot interviews and the researcher's observations.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

Conclusions and Discussion

Conclusions and discussion are presented with respect to the five major categories and 19 themes that emerged from the data. Also included are conclusions based on "Empowerment through the Interview Experience".

While most of the discussion is based on the viewpoints of the participants, the researcher has also added her own perspective based on personal experience, and has made reference to related literature.

Factors Necessary for Success

The factors that lead to success in ice dancing are communication, common goals, supportive parents, supportive friends, and achieving success at competitions.

Communication

Communication is paramount to the success of an ice dance couple. Communication is much more instrumental to the success of an ice dance couple than to other skaters, including free skate pairs. Ice dancers do in fact communicate well with their partners. Without communication, ice dancers encounter difficult relationships, and also appear to be "robotic" when competing. Proper care must be taken to ensure that ice dancers know how to communicate effectively with their partners. Perhaps relationship counseling or communication seminars would benefit skaters who are just starting ice dance and ice dancers who are encountering communication problems with their partner.

Common Goals

Ice dancers realize the importance of shared goals. This goes hand in hand with communication. An ice dance couple cannot have common goals without effective communication. Without common goals, ice dancers stagnate. When one partner is striving for the national championships and the other partner is striving only for the provincial championships, problems result. Each partner has to want the same goal. Otherwise one partner will always be more serious about the training than the other. Determining the road to success requires a destination. One team cannot arrive at two different destinations. A successful ice dance couple is one that knows where it's going and how to get there. Setting common goals may require meetings with coaches and parents.

Supportive Parents and Friends

The parents of ice dancers are overwhelmingly understanding and encouraging, as are the friends of these athletes. As the training of ice dancers becomes more and more intense, understanding parents and friends can help ease the stress of these athletes. Coaches should maintain an open relationship with the parents of ice dancers to explain the requirements of training and success. Also, ice dancers should maintain friends outside skating who can provide a break from the arena. Sometimes ice dancers need to get away from the rink and discuss anything but skating. Preserving friendships with people who do not skate could also benefit skaters once their athletic careers end.

Success in Ice Dancing

Nothing breeds success like success. Ice dancers continue to hone their skills because they are successful at competitions. Not everyone can win. While ice dancing is now enjoying an increase in the number of couples

competing in Canada, the competition is getting more advanced. With success becoming less likely, it will be interesting to see how many ice dancers competing today stay with it.

Coaching and Technical Aspects

The coaching and technical aspects that benefit ice dancers are sharing an equal and respectful relationship with their coaches, supplemental training, and the involvement of their coaches in the process of forming partnerships. The political nature of judging is frustrating for ice dancers.

Relationship with Coaches

Coaches should maintain a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere for training ice dancers. Respect should be shared among ice dancers and their coaches. Although the coaches and skaters in this study felt they trained in an enjoyable environment, many skating coaches remain tough on their skaters. As mentioned above, success is getting less and less probable with more ice dance couples competing. Above all else, ice dancing must be fun for the participants.

Supplemental Training

While training for ice dancing involved on-ice sessions, it also required off-ice sessions such as, conditioning, calisthenics, ballet, jazz, ballroom dancing, nutritional counseling and sessions with a sport psychologist. Calling ice dancing a sport has been a long standing controversy because of its theatrical nature and subjective judging. However, ice dancing is definitely a sport with rigorous training, and its participants are definitely athletes.

Ice dancers welcome the chance to train with other coaches and skaters to sustain their competitive edge. These trips to other centres not only augment regular training by offering another perspective, but they also

provide the skaters with a break from the mundane. However, these excursions can be expensive. The most cost-effective manner of gaining new perspectives on training may be to travel to another centre nearby, instead of traveling to other countries two to three times a year. Some skaters prefer to train in another centre for part of the year and then return to their head coach for the competitive season. This may also be economical.

Process of Forming Partnerships

Coaches are the agents for forming ice dancing partnerships. The ratio of females to males is skewed: there are numerous females to one male interested in skating together. This leaves the males with a greater amount of power over the females in the decision making process. When a mass try out session is planned for convenience, the scene can be described as a "cattle call" of girls. One way of preventing this could be to have only the coach and females attend a preliminary session in order to narrow the list to a few girls thought to be appropriate for the male in question.

The Politics of Judging

The political nature of the judging for the sport leads to frustration for these athletes. According to Setzer and Wayne (1991), who collected and analyzed data for all figure skating events in the Olympic Winter Games from 1968 until 1988, "Judges were found to give significantly higher scores to participants from their own countries" (p.189). The International Skating Union has made efforts to standardize the criteria for judging ice dancing, however, "...statistical evidence suggests that political loyalties have played a role in judges' voting preferences" (Setzer & Wayne, 1991, p.194).

Another judging controversy reigned over the 1998 Olympic Winter Games Ice Dance competition. The International Skating Union was "...warned prior to the Games that a group of dance judges was conspiring to

rig the Olympic results..." (Deacon, 1998, p.40), which would result with the third-ranked Canadian dance team of Shae-Lynn Bourne and Victor Kraatz "...receiving fifth-place marks for their first compulsory dance so that they could not rise higher than fourth even with a strong free skate. That is exactly what happened" (Deacon, 1998, p. 41). According to Deacon (1998), the International Olympic Committee is considering the elimination of ice dancing from future Olympic competition.

The training of ice dance judges needs to be improved. My own experience as an ice dancer and also as a judge has led to frustration over the lack of knowledge and training these judges receive. Ice dance involves several key criteria such as timing, rhythm, edges, lean, unison and expression. While these criteria may not be as overt to the audience as jumps and spins are in a freeskating program, ice dance criteria exist nonetheless, and should be regarded by the judges. Simply executing the correct steps to the correct timing of the music is a foundation of ice dancing, but does not represent good ice dancing. Good ice dancing transcends steps and timing, and involves deep edges, control, and lean. Distinct expression of the character of the dance can be achieved by carriage, knee bends, arm movements and also the character of the steps. The unison of an ice dance couple should look like two skaters dancing as one. A judge who is knowledgeable concerning these criteria will carry out judging ice dance more easily and effectively. Above all else, ice dance judges should be accountable for their assignments.

The current controversy over the judging of ice dance could lead to its exclusion from future Olympic competitions. This would be unfortunate for both its participants and its fans. Moreover, the expulsion of the sport does not need to happen. Instead of punishing the athletes, the International

Skating Union needs to answer the concerns of the International Olympic Committee by developing more knowledgeable judges through advanced training, and also holding these judges accountable.

Personal Benefits

The participants in this study reaped personal benefits from their involvement such as, advantages of partnerships and developing maturity.

Advantages of Partnerships

Ice dancers gain the advantage of being a member of a partnership, a type of team. They find this reassuring and more enjoyable than single skating. Indeed, ice dancing began as a social endeavor (Nowosad, 1980a). The fact that competitive ice dancing is fun because it involves more than one person is not surprising given its background and context. Furthermore, ice dancing allows skaters who experience extreme nervousness competing alone to still in fact perform. Perhaps these athletes would have quit competitive skating if not for ice dancing.

Developing Maturity through Involvement in Skating

It would seem that skating fosters maturity through the social interaction required. Indeed, the participants learned how to deal with both people and pressure through their involvement in ice dancing. This is beneficial for life outside of skating as well. Throughout life, one is constantly dealing with other people. The maturity and co-operative skills ice dancers have developed will assist them in any situation they encounter in life.

Problematic Issues

The issues that ice dancers have to deal with are the following: financial pressures, sacrifices, academic issues, competitive relationships at

the arena, personality differences and the demands of living away from home.

Financial Pressures

Ice dancing is a very expensive sport. Skaters are now allowed to earn fees for exhibitions that help pay for their skating, however, the parents still pay for most of the bills incurred. With the explosive increase in the popularity of figure skating over the last few years came sponsors. This has led to more money available for skaters. Perhaps a significant decrease in the burden of parents will be seen in the future due to this infusion of sponsorship dollars.

Sacrifices

Many ice dancers have given up another sport or activity to train. With the demanding training schedule for ice dancing, ice dancers cannot commit to any other activity seriously. Ice dance holds the last priority for arenas because compared to hockey and freeskating, ice dancing has the least amount of participants. This means that ice dance sessions are reserved for whatever ice time is left over after hockey and free skating; usually before dawn and late at night. With up to eight hours a day spent training on and off the ice for their sport, ice dancers have little time left over to be involved in other activities. If ice dance sessions could be scheduled later in the morning or afternoon, or on weekends, this would give the skaters time to fulfill other endeavors.

Academic Issues

Most ice dancers are forced to arrange flexible school schedules to accommodate their skating. Ice dancers miss a lot of school for training and also for competitions. This leads to problems with missing school work and irritated teachers. As a result, ice dancers are forced to complete

examinations and projects either before or after their classmates in order to keep up with the rest of their class at school. A flexible school schedule can alleviate this, however, it often requires attending school for a longer period such as an extra year or two years. Perhaps, ice dancers could attend special schools for elite athletes with sympathetic teachers and staff. I attended such a high school where I was awarded physical education credits for the ice dance training I completed. This school eased the academic burdens endured at previous schools, and helped me achieve admission into university on a timely basis.

Competitive Relationships at the Arena

Competitiveness runs rampant at the training sites. As a consequence, ice dancers find it difficult to maintain friendships among their competitors. Friendships at the arena do exist, but often they are between ice dancers at differing competitive levels. There is no risk in a friendship between a Junior skater and a Novice skater, at least for the time being. If the Junior skater remains at the Junior level while the Novice skater graduates to Junior, then problems may result. Training in a different country could alleviate this problem for skaters who do not compete internationally. Many skaters today do just that; train in a different country from the one they represent in competition. However, I feel the reasons behind this are better training facilities and coaches.

Personality Differences

Personality differences wreak havoc on partnerships, and have been the demise of many ice dance couples. Some couples with personality differences learn to deal with them. However, for those who do not learn themselves, professional counseling or seminars could benefit such ice dance

couples. Perhaps, examination of personalities should be a requisite when forming a partnership in order to alleviate future problems.

Demands of Living Away from Home

Many ice dancers must move to a large centre to train. This leads to new demands on these skaters, who sometimes leave home as early as twelve years old. Ice dancers leave home to train because they feel their present coach and facility is lacking. There are few qualified ice dance coaches in Canada. More coaches need to be educated on the components of a successful dance team, and how to effectively train ice dancers. This will allow more ice dancers to train in their home town, no matter where it is. Twelve year-old skaters should not be living away from home: they are but children, and will encounter difficult adjustments.

Social Aspects

The social aspects that ice dancers face in their sport are few but extremely important. Ice dancing complies to traditional gender roles, while advocating romantic expectations of its couples.

Traditional Gender Roles

Individuals are socialized into gender roles, "...those socially created behaviors assigned differentially to women and men" (Lipman-Blumen, 1984, p.1). Traditional gender roles are adhered to in ice dancing. Furthermore, related literature indicates that these gender roles are the norm. According to Lorber (1994) "Everyday gendered interactions build gender into...organizations and institutions, which in turn reinforce gender expectations of individuals" (p. 32). Since ice dancing involves males and females working together as a couple, the portrayal of traditional gender roles should not be remarkable. Indeed, Eagly (1994) suggested that "...behavior

will be constrained by its social context and, in particular, by men's more dominant social position" (Eagly, 1994, p. 518).

According to Lipman-Blumen (1984), traditional male roles involve protecting females, leadership, stoicism, anger and aggressiveness. Indeed, these traits are "...the building blocks of masculinity" (Lipman-Blumen, 1984, p. 66). Males in ice dancing are no different: they play the role of protector over the females. This conforms with tradition, as explained by Lipman-Blumen (1984): "Boys are socialized to be...stronger...to protect...weaker females" (p. 61). Furthermore, "...domination over...women is an important goal..." (Lipman-Blumen, 1984, p.54).

Females are socialized to be dependent, nurturing and emotional (Eagly, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Female ice dancers accepted their dependency on the protection of their male partners. In fact, they appreciated it.

Traditionally, females are supposed to be nurturing. Lipman-Blumen (1984) stated that "Soothing the anger of others, playing the peacemaker role...are important components of the female stereotype" (p. 64). This holds true for female ice dancers, who are expected to smooth things over with their male partners when arguments ensue.

Females are expected to emotionally support the relationships they have with men (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). This is accomplished by taking the blame for difficulties in the relationship, and also by broaching communication (Eagly, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Female ice dancers feel that they are instigators by causing arguments with their partners. Male ice dancers do not assign accountability. Likewise, female ice dancers take responsibility for the relationship with their partners and, in doing so, act as catalysts for communication to compensate for silent male partners.

Involvement in ice dancing socializes its participants into traditional gender roles. The coaches and other people involved in the training of these athletes act as agents of this process. These agents merely impose the values that they were taught through their own involvement in ice dancing. Societal expectations are changing due to the rise of feminism. However, ice dance is built on the premise of an old-fashioned relationship in which the man leads and the woman follows. As long as this emphasis exists, along with the power differential skewed to male ice dancers because there are so few of them, ice dancing and its participants will continue to comply with traditional gender roles.

Romantic Expectations

The judges and audience anticipate romantic portrayals by ice dance couples. Usually there are no romantic ties off the ice between partners. However, the working relationship is described as a marriage of sorts. Many of the Russian ice dancers are married to each other, however, this is not common practice for North American ice dancers. Russian dancers have dominated the Olympic ice dancing competition since its induction in 1976. The fact that the Russian dancers are married could be one reason for their success. Perhaps the intimacy they share is more convincing for the judges and audience than that of ice dancers who are not married to each other. One successful Russian ice dance couple, Maia Usova and Alexander Zhulin, were once married but continued to skate together professionally after their divorce, and were very successful. However, they have now split up to form new partnerships respectively with Evgeny Platov and Pasha Grischuk, the reigning Olympic ice dance champions. The success of these two new couples remains to be seen.

Empowerment through the Interview Experience

Ice dancers take pleasure in sharing their knowledge and experiences. This research caused the ice dancers to reflect on and justify their commitment to their sport. Therefore, the qualitative research goal of empowering the participants has been achieved.

Summary

This section offered conclusions and discussion based on the analysis of the data. While this study described the world of elite ice dancers in Canada, it also added to a limited body of research on elite athletes.

Recommendations

Following the analysis and a reflection of this research experience, the researcher has several suggestions for future research. These suggestions involve the methods of data collection, as well as the interview setting and process.

Methods of Data Collection

Observation was used as a method of data collection in this research, with the purpose of supplementing the information obtained in the interviews. However, longer periods of observation should be included in future research in order to fully understand these participants. Perhaps spending an entire skating season with the skaters and attending competitions would produce greater insight into their competitive experience. In fact, holding a membership position with participants such as, being a member of the coaching or support staff or on-ice participation as a skater may open up greater access to the skaters and coaches.

Interview Setting

Although the settings for the interviews maximized privacy, some minor interruptions occurred. Conducting interviews in one's own office or renting space for such an activity would ensure no interruption in the process. Due to time constraints dictated by the skating schedules, most of the interviews in this study were conducted between training sessions. Conceivably, the skaters would be more relaxed and not bound by a schedule if the interviews were carried out on a weekend or a day off from skating. This should be taken into account when planning future research.

Interview Process

The process of interviewing can be both exhausting and repetitive. Therefore, a maximum of one interview per day should be conducted, with a two to three day break between interviews, in order to prevent fatigue and boredom on the part of the researcher, as well as permit time for full transcriptions of the interview to be completed. The interviews in this study were too close together to warrant enough time for the researcher to fully transcribe each interview during the data collection. The time required for transcribing and analyzing the interviews was underestimated and the researcher was forced to complete preliminary transcriptions. These preliminary transcriptions were necessary for the initial analysis that the researcher used for member checks to establish internal validity.

The researcher attempted to take field notes during the interviews, but found that this was not conducive to establishing the necessary sharing relationship with the participants. A longer term study would allow the researcher to fully develop a trustworthy relationship and get to know the skaters better, thus alleviating the need for recording non-verbal gestures.

Topics for Research

The current research produced several emergent themes that warrant further investigation. The subjective and sometimes political characteristics of ice dance judging is a current controversy. This would be an ideal topic for further research. Parents of elite athletes play an important role in their children's success. Investigation of these roles and also the impact their children's involvement in sport has had on them would be beneficial. Scholastic problems were numerous for the skaters in this study. An in-depth study of the repercussions for skaters who forfeit school full time to further themselves in sport would yield important guidance for athletes, coaches and parents alike.

Summary

Recommendations for future research were made based on the analysis and reflection of this experience.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Hello. How are you today? I'm Deanna Poirier and I am a graduate student in Physical Education at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. As a partial requirement for a Master of Science degree I must complete a thesis. As such, I am conducting research with ice dancers which is why I have asked you here. I plan to interview several ice dancers on various aspects of their life. The study will provide an in-depth, qualitative description of what it's like to be an elite ice dancer and an elite competitor.

I am a former competitive ice dancer and competed both nationally and internationally. I am also a judge and recently passed my Gold Dance Judge exams. I want to assure you that I understand the technical aspects of ice dancing so feel free to use the associated jargon.

For clarification and accuracy I would like to tape record this interview. This will prevent me from misquoting you. I guarantee your privacy in that no-one aside from myself will hear the tape. However, the interview will be typed out verbatim in order to aid my analysis. I will use a fictitious name in the transcription of this interview in order to maintain your confidentiality. Do you mind if I tape record this interview?

I will be asking you several questions on a range of topics regarding your life as an ice dancer. At any time if you have a question for me or you do not want to answer a question, feel free to let me know. I do not want you to feel forced into discussing any topic that you are not comfortable with. It is your right not to respond to any questions that you do not want to. However, I appreciate your time and cooperation and I hope that you will feel comfortable talking to me. For ethical purposes, I must ask you if you agree that you are willing to be interviewed?

I will begin the interview with a few questions on your skating background and we will carry on from there. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

What is your current age?

And at what age did you start figure skating?

So, you have been skating for ___ years?

How many years have you been ice dancing?

What level are you currently competing at in ice dancing? For example, Novice, Junior, Senior.

And how long have you been competing at this level?

What is the highest level at which you have competed in ice dancing? For example, Sectional, Divisional, National, International or other.

I will now ask you some questions on your training schedule.

I would like you to start off by describing to me a typical day in your life.

So you spend ___ hours on the ice per day and ___ hours training off the ice per day?

And do you have any days off?

Now I would like you to describe your yearly schedule.

So you skate for ___ months out of the year?

I would like to discuss your life outside of skating.

What are your present living arrangements?

If away from home...

How long have you lived away from home?

How do you feel about living away from home?

Where do you come from originally?

What adjustments did you have to make on moving to Toronto?

Do you have any household responsibilities? i.e. grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry.

Are you currently a student?

If yes...

How much time do you spend at school?

Do you attend a special school?

Do you have any conflicts between your skating and school?

Are you currently employed?

If yes...

What type of job is it?

How many hours a week do you work?

How do you balance your job and your skating?

How are you financially supported? For example, provincial or national funding or a corporate sponsor. I do not want specific amounts. I am just interested in how you finance your skating, because as you know it is a very expensive sport to be involved in.

Do you have time for anything else? For example, social and recreational activities and hobbies.

If none...

Do you want things to be different?

If yes...

Explore why.

What about time? Do you have time to develop and maintain friendships outside of skating?

Are most of your friends skaters or non-skaters?

If most skaters...

Why?

How do you feel about this?

If most non-skaters...

Why?

How do they feel about your skating?

How do you feel about this?

YOUNG: Are you in a serious relationship with anyone?

OLDER: Is there a significant other in you life?

If yes...

Is this person also a skater?

How does this person feel about your skating?

How do you feel about this?

Of all the people in your life, who do you feel is the most supportive of your skating?

if not parents...

How do your parents feel about your skating?

How do you feel about this?

We have discussed your personal relationships outside of skating. I would now like to discuss some relationships within skating. For example, your coaches, partner, and other technical and support staff involved in your training.

Who influences your life in ice dancing?

How many coaches do you have?

If more than one...

What are the responsibilities of each of these coaches?

What do you like most about your (head) coach?

What do you like least about your coach?

Are there any other people involved in your training? For example, a nutritionist; a sport psychologist; a choreographer; a fitness trainer; a 'buddy judge'.

If yes...

Do you feel that these people help your skating?

Do you enjoy working with these people?

Ice dancing pairs males and females together which is a rare occasion in sport. I now want to discuss partners and the relationships involved.

How many skating partners have you had?

If more than current...

How long did you skate with each one?

Why did you change partners?

You spend a lot of time working with a partner.

How do you feel about working with a partner, generally?

Did you have a say or was someone else a matchmaker?

Why do you think you were matched up with your current partner?

How do you feel about working with a partner, generally?

Hypothetically speaking, what do you think is an ideal partner?

Tell me about your relationship with your current partner.

What do you like most about your current partner?

And what do you like least about your current partner?

Can you compare this relationship with other relationships in your life?

How do the two of you make decisions about your skating?

How do you feel about this?

Do you feel that one of you has a greater amount of power over the other?

If yes...

How is this managed?

We have discussed your personal experiences with partners. I would now like you to draw from your experience and answer a few questions on partnerships in general.

What, in your opinion, creates a positive relationship for ice dancing pairs?

Conversely, what do you think makes for a difficult relationship between dance pairs?

What are the expectations for relationships between ice dancing partners? For example do they portray romantic relationships?

What are these relationships like in reality?

I am now going to focus on your satisfaction of ice dancing.

To begin with I would like to know how you became interested in ice dancing?

What do you like most about ice dancing?

What do you like least about ice dancing?

I will now turn the focus to the future.

What is the ultimate goal in your skating career?

What do you plan to do after your amateur career?

If professional career expected...

What do you plan to do after your professional career?

I have a few more questions that I would like to wrap up the interview with.

What impact has skating had on your life?

What would you do differently if given the chance?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that I haven't asked you about?

I would like to ask you some questions about the interview itself.

Did the questions seem pertinent to your experience as an ice dancer?

Were there any questions that you felt were redundant or ineffective?

How did you feel about this interview being tape recorded?

How would you describe the interview experience, as a whole?

I would like to thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences and feelings with me. You have provided me with valuable information for my research and it is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions feel free to contact me. I wish you the best of luck with your skating.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- age
- how long skating
- how long ice dancing
- what competitive level
- experience
- history of skating

SCHEDULING

- commitment (time) to skating
- days on/ days off
- any breaks? - seasonal
- school/job - amount of time
- activities (if any)
- responsibilities (if any)

LIFESTYLE

- living arrangements
- financial circumstances
- student/job conflicts
- other activities
- sacrifices (losses due to involvement)
- friends
- family
- sources of stress (potential and real) and effects

SUPPORT SYSTEM

- relationship with coaches
- relationship with other support staff
- who helps train
- how many others are involved in the training

PARTNERS

- experience with partners
- relationships involved with partners
- relationship with current partner
- positive elements of partnerships
- negative elements of partnerships
- conducive (ideal) relationship between partners

SATISFACTION OF ICE DANCING

- why involved
- why started
- why still involved
- positives of being involved
- negatives of being involved

FUTURE

- what they hope to attain from their involvement
- plans for a career
- how they see their involvement/talent

IMPACT

- how involvement changed/changes their life
- regrets (what do differently, if could)

EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE

- feelings and reactions to questions
- feelings and reactions to being tape recorded
- feelings and reactions to interview experience as a whole

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COACHES

Hello. How are you today? I'm Deanna Poirier and I am a graduate student in Physical Education at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. As a partial requirement for a Master of Science degree I must complete a thesis. As such, I am conducting research with ice dancers and their coaches, which is why I have asked you here. The study will provide an in-depth, qualitative description of what it's like to be an elite ice dancer and an elite competitor.

I am a former competitive ice dancer and competed both nationally and internationally. I am also a judge and recently passed my Gold Dance Judge exams. I want to assure you that I understand the technical aspects of ice dancing so feel free to use the associated jargon.

For clarification and accuracy I would like to tape record this interview. This will prevent me from misquoting you. I guarantee your privacy in that no-one aside from myself will hear the tape. However, the interview will be typed out verbatim in order to aid my analysis. I will use a fictitious name in the transcription of this interview in order to maintain your confidentiality. Do you mind if I tape record this interview?

I will be asking you several questions regarding ice dancing and your part in coaching it. At any time if you have a question for me or you do not want to answer a question, feel free to let me know. I do not want you to feel forced into discussing any topic that you are not comfortable with. It is your right not to respond to any questions that you do not want to. However, I appreciate your time and cooperation and I hope that you will feel comfortable talking to me. For ethical purposes, I must ask you if you agree that you are willing to be interviewed?

I will begin the interview with a few basic questions on your coaching background and we will carry on from there. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

How long have you been coaching competitive ice dancing?

What is your job, as a coach of elite ice dance couples?

How did you become interested in coaching ice dancing?

How many pairs are you currently working with?

What do you like most about your job?

What do you like least about your job?

How do ice dance pairs form?

What makes a good dance team?

What detracts from the success of a dance team?

What do you look for in a dance team?

What, in your opinion, creates a conducive working relationship for elite ice dance couples?

Conversely, what do you think would make for a difficult relationship between an ice dancing couple?

What do you think is the best thing about being an ice dancer?

What are some of the sacrifices involved in being an elite ice dancer?

What are the pressures and stresses involved in being a member of a ice dance pair?

If so, what are they?

How do you help your pairs to combat the effects of such stresses and/or pressures?

How do you see the future of ice dancing in Canada progressing?

I would like to thank you for your time and for sharing your thoughts with me. You have provided me with valuable information for my research, and it is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions feel free to contact me. I wish you the best of luck with your coaching.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW 1K

What is your current age?

seventeen

O.K. and when did you start figure skating?

I started recreationally when I was three.

Oh so you've been skating for a lot of years, fourteen?

Yeah.

Really, so how many years have you been ice dancing?

since I came here, so about five years.

Wow and you're currently competing at the Novice level, is that correct?

Right.

O.K. and how long have you been at that level?

this is our second year.

Great! and what's the highest level you've competed at in your ice dancing?

Canadians.

Oh! that's great! I'm going to ask you some questions concerning your training schedule. I'd like you to start off by describing to me a typical day in your life.

A typical day? (laughter)

Yeah just-

for the summer?

Sure.

I usually get up around 7:30 in the morning, I go to school from 8:30 to 11:15 and then I get to the rink by 12:10 and skate freeskate until 1:45 and then I do ballet at 2:00 until 3:30, go home for dinner and then skate from quarter to six until 9:30

And then you get to go home? (laughter from both)

Yeah, I go home after that.

So you spend a lot of hours on the ice, how many hours a day are you on the ice?

about five

and about three or four hours off the ice?

Yeah, yeah

Wow and do you get any days off?

um not a lot, weekends

So you get weekends off?

Yeah

Um what about the yearly schedule? Right now it's summer, but does it change much for you?

No, not a lot, I'm usually skating a lot

So do you get any months off or is it really twelve months a year?

No, we skate twelve months a year

I would also like to discuss your life outside of skating. What are your present living arrangements?

I'm with my parents

And you all live around the *** area?

In Waterloo, yeah

Do you originally come from here?

I've lived all over the world

Oh really?!

I was born in Ottawa, and I grew up in Comox, B.C., and in Lahr, Germany,

Wow!

and then we moved back to Ottawa for a year, and then we were in Trenton Ontario for three years, then we were in Ottawa for a month and then we moved here

Would you say that you moved here for your skating?

My dad moved here as a career change and we were also in the armed forces so he wanted - I was just going into grade 7 and he wanted me to be at the same high school for all of high school instead of changing - he wanted a permanent move.

You mentioned that you go to school, so I am assuming that you are a student?

Yeah

In high school?

Yeah

And you're still going to school right now?

Yeah

Do you go all year?

I'm doing a make up course

Do you spend a lot of time at school?

Yeah a fair bit

Now it's just one course you're doing

Yeah

But come the regular school year, is that a full course load or do you go to school half days?

Yeah, I take six courses a year

And do you go to a special type of school because of your skating?

No

And do conflicts ever arise, say do you have trouble at school with teachers because you must miss some time?

Yeah, at school the teachers don't really appreciate you missing their classes for sports outside of the school structure so, most of my teachers are fairly understanding about it but there are some who give me a hard time

Obviously that is a bit stressful then?

A little, yeah

and how do you try to manage that?

I just try to keep up more with that course

Yeah, and try to make an extra effort?

Yeah, at least some extra time with that.

I don't recall you mentioning any work that you do, you're not employed or have a job, do you?

No, no.

That sort of brings me to the next question. How are you financially supported? I know that this can be a sensitive area, so I don't want any amounts, but certainly figure skating is such an expensive sport...

Uh huh

...and most of the people in it are quite young and I'm just interested to know how you manage that...

My parents pay for it.

You don't get any grants or...?

Um we get a small amount back...traveling expenses for Divisionals and Canadians and things like that.

But you'd say its primarily your parents?

Yeah.

Do you have time for anything else in your life? Social or recreational things, or hobbies?

...as much as possible.. and do things with my friends and I have a lot of hobbies and things that I like to do too, so I'm usually busy all the time

And you like it that way?

Yeah.

You wouldn't want it to be any different?

If I'm sitting around I get bored instantly.

O.K. and is there other things that you wish you could do but that you don't have time for?

Um...

Or are you pretty busy and there's nothing you would like to try...?

If I wasn't in skating, I would probably be in another sport.

We've been talking about time, and I am wondering - you mentioned friends, so that's good - do you have time to develop and maintain friendships outside of skating?

It's really hard up to this year. This year is the first year I've really established a good set of friends at school and away from the rink.

And how do these friends feel about your skating?

They're very supportive.

That's good. Or is it good for you, I mean I think it would be good for you ... but?

Yeah, they're always encouraging me and things like that.

That's great. And do you have friends that are in skating?

Um...

Do you have close friends in skating?

At the rink, we're all fairly close friends.

And are they supportive of - I mean I guess they're supportive of skating because they're in it and they understand it - but, does that cause conflicts with competitors ...?

It's a very competitive attitude.

So does that affect the friendship, or does the friendship affect the competitiveness?

I think it helps, 'cause it's nice to know that when you're out on the ice at a big competition, it's your friends that you are competing against...

So, you like that feeling?

Yeah.

Are you in a serious relationship with anyone?

I'm dating, I'm seeing someone.

And is this person - How does this person feel about your skating?

He's supportive.

He supports your career?

Yeah

And there's no conflict of time, because certainly you're busy...

Yeah.

And I would think you don't have a heck of a lot of time to see this person...

Yeah.

And they're very understanding.

Yeah.

And they encourage you.

Yeah, we see each other when we can and he has a job too, so...

And that makes you feel good?

Yeah.

Of all the people in your life, who would you say is the most supportive of your skating?

I guess I would say I have a group of support - my parents for one, and my trainer is supportive - I see someone off the ice for training

And you mentioned that your parents are very supportive...?

Uh huh

...And how they finance your skating, and it comes to mind how supportive your parents are.

I think it's really good, It really helps me, it encourages me to do better and to skate as best I can because they're putting a lot of effort in my skating, and I feel that if I skate well, it's my way of paying them back.

That's good. We've discussed some of your personal life outside of skating, but I'd like also to discuss some of the things that happen within skating. For example, coaches, or partners and you mentioned support staff around you. Who influences your life in ice dancing particularly?

My coach and my partner.

And how many coaches do you have, for on-ice training?

I guess sort of three for dance, and one for free skate.

And of the ice dancing coaches, is there one that is perhaps more of a head coach?

Mr. xxx

And what would you say you like most about xxx?

I like his attitude toward everything. He likes to push his students. He's always thinking of new things to do, and ways to improve, more things that can be improved.

And yet when you say he likes to push his students, I get the impression that you mean that in a good way?

Yes.

Not a pushy, very demanding person but demanding enough to make it challenging?

Yeah.

And what would you say you liked least about him?

Obviously he changes. He'll go from a positive to a very negative to a very positive...

In the course of maybe one session... or is this over a length of time?

Over a length of time.

You mentioned that you have a trainer and a couple of other coaches. What are some of the other people that are involved in your training? Do you have a psychologist, or a choreographer?

Yeah, we work with xxx and xxx. They do most of our choreography, and coaches compulsories too - I just consider them coaches. For free skate, my coach's wife does my choreography.

It sounds like you keep up with your free skate, and do you compete at that as well?

Uh - no.

And has that ever caused conflicts between your demands - I mean you have your ice dancing and your free skating and they're very different, and you obviously spend time doing both, and does one ever cut into the other?

I think my dance probably cuts more into my free skate. When I get injured, it's usually the free skate that I can't do, but I still try to do as much dance as I can.

I guess because you're competing at it...

Yeah.

Would you then say that you take dance a little more seriously?

I take it a lot more seriously than my free skate.

And do your free skate coaches ever get bothered by that or do they understand the situation?

He usually understands but, he does think that I should be a competitor in free skate.

Oh really?

I told him that no, my - I want to put more effort into dance.

It's what you enjoy?

Yeah.

And does he ever push the issue?

No, he'll mention it every once in a while, joking, but he doesn't push it. He understands where I stand.

So, it doesn't get to where it bothers you?

No.

That's good. Do you like working with these other people? The choreographers, and you mentioned that obviously you enjoy working with your trainer because she is a very big part of what you do. You like working with all these other people?

Yes.

And you feel like they help your skating?

Yes.

As you well know, ice dancing puts together males and females, and that's really an odd combination for high level sport - you don't see it many places - and I'd like to discuss some of those relationships because I think they're very unique. First of all how many skating partners have you had?

Just xxx.

And how were you matched up?

It was a long process (laughter). Mr. xxx just came up to me and my parents and said that xxx was looking for a partner - a dance partner - and was wondering whether I would like to skate with him and I said sure I'll give it a try and we've been dancing ever since!

So, that was initiated was by the coach who thought you two would be good together, but then you were asked your opinion and you were able to make that decision...

uh huh

It wasn't just you should get together - it was more like would you like to?

Yeah.

You feel like you had a say in it?

oh yeah.

And what do you - why do you think the two of you were matched up?

well xxx is a very very powerful skater, and he's really short too, so they needed someone who was a good height for him but who was very powerful and I'm two years older than him, so they thought maybe an older partner would be able to keep up with his power.

And do you think you have?

yeah (laughter) He's grown about a foot since we've been dancing together, but that's good too.

How do you feel about working with a partner, just in general?

I like it. It's - I used to get really nervous when I went out for a competition, mainly for free skate - I was a nervous wreck when I stepped out onto the ice but for dance I was always calm and collected because there's someone out there with me - it was sort of like a team effort.

And you like working that interaction?

Yeah I like people.

Hypothetically speaking, what would you say would be an ideal partner?

An ideal partner for me I think would be someone maybe...maybe a lot better than me... someone that can push me to be a better skater...someone that really has an aggressive attitude to the competitions and things like that.

Tell me about your current relationship with your current partner, xxx. Tell me how you think your relationship works.

It's really good, we've been together so long you know. We were put together and neither of us had another partner before and at first it - for the first two years xxx never said a word to me, he's really shy and we didn't speak at all, we never had a conversation. He didn't speak to Mr. xxx either. I was sort of the spokesperson for the team. We would skate together but at the end of the session we would just skate in the opposite direction...

How long did this last?

About two years.

Really?

Yeah.

It's been five years since you started.

uh huh

And did anything happen to change this - was there a starting point or...?

I'm a very aggressive person and I got - I found it hard for me to skate with someone that never talks to me. We would go into a dance and he'd just assume that I knew what one.

Oh really?

Yeah, he'd just grab my hand and we'd go into the dance and I'd just okay, stop.

Politely...

Yeah, stop and one night I got really frustrated - I guess I wasn't in a great mood either- and I just stopped in the middle of the rink and said "I'm not skating with you until you tell me what dance we're going to do" and he just said "Come on (whispered) so I guess he wanted to get going and I said "nope, not until you tell me what dance we're going to do" so finally he said - he told me and we did it and so then he ...

Did it revert back?

No.

That was the moment - that was it.

yeah that moment and now well I'm an only child and xxx is probably the closest thing I have to a brother, we talk all the time now.

So it worked?

yeah. it worked (laughter)

That was a long time though, two years is a long time.

yeah.

You were skating with someone who was hardly saying two words to you, that must have felt sort of strange.

it did. it was awkward but...

But you didn't know what it was supposed to be like?

Yeah, I didn't know what it was supposed to be like, so to me it was normal.

But you had to act upon what you felt like?

Yeah.

It felt like it was wrong and didn't sit well with you. What do you like most about xxx?

He's really patient with me. He's a really understanding a very quiet person - I go through moods - its incredible and we've never been in a major fight for the five years we've skated together. If we do get into a fight its ended before the session.

That's good.

And we usually get off friends still and ...

That's great.

So we've never really had any conflicts.

And what would you say you like the least about xxx?

He's- for me sometimes maybe a little too quiet. At competitions, I have a very aggressive attitude to where I want to be and like for goal setting and things like that ...

uh huh

If I set a goal, he always sets his just a little bit lower. And he'll go 'xxx you don't want to be disappointed - humongous goals and he goes "you know you always end up disappointed and when I set my goals it always gives me something to reach for and he plays it safer.

But I get the impression that you talk about it.

Yeah we talk about it.

So in terms of when you make decisions about your skating, be it a very small decision like what dance are we going to do, or what competitions should we do or where do you want to be this year you discuss all of that together?

uh huh

And do you discuss that with anyone else?

Sometimes with Mr. xxx. But its usually just the two of us. But we end up with different ideas.

But you feel like you have a say in it?

Yeah.

You really come up with things yourself?

Uh huh

And you feel like xx does too?

uh huh.

You mentioned that he's the closest thing to a brother you have, if you had to compare your relationship with xxx to something else in your life, is that what you would say?

Probably.

Do you feel that at any time, one of you has a greater amount of power over the other?

In decision making or in physical power?

Any aspect, anything that comes to mind

I guess ever since we've started skating together I've taken control of the team and its sort of bad to say but its usually my decision that sticks (laughter)

Its not really bad to say - I wouldn't say that - I'm not trying to judge you at all, I just want to get at what you feel but I guess that sort of makes sense, because you mentioned that you were the spokesperson and I guess when you had to go into a role like that right away that would tend to carry over even after xxx started talking - I guess you were used to that role by then...

Yeah.

So you see that as being a little bit more power?

uh huh. He has a tremendous fear of getting in trouble with anyone. So, if we think something's going wrong with something and we're having a conflict with someone, it's for me to say. I say it, I get the backlash from it and then we deal with it as a team.

When this power imbalance, I'll call it that for lack of a better word, comes up because I certainly don't think it's there all the time - it's not 100% of the time always controlling the partnership but, how do you manage it? How do you overcome that?

I try to have a fresh beginning. He does not like to put his input into things. It usually where our fights end up. We'll be talking about something and I'll have my idea and he won't give me his opinion...

You argue because you want his opinion?

Yeah.

So I fight ends up because he's later come back and said how come we don't do it this way and you'd say well why didn't you mention this an hour ago when I asked you. Does that ever happen, does he ever come back...

No.

Never?

No.

He seems to have no input, but he seems to be quite happy having no input?

Yeah, or if its a simple thing, I'll ask him for his input, and he'll either give it to me or say no it's fine.

But you really have to do the asking?

Yeah, I do have to push him.

Do you feel - you told me you feel like a spokesperson for this partnership, but do you feel that you so responsible for it in some way, more so than xxx? Responsible for making it work?

a little more, yeah

And do you just learn this through your experience or did someone ever sit you down and have a talk and say I see that xxx is this way and you're going to have to be the one that takes the bull by the horns and ...?

Well my parents really saying you're two years older than him, you should be a little more patient and a little more intelligent with your decisions.

And when you hear this from your parents or from someone else, how did it make you feel?

um...

did you think great that's what I want to do or gee I kind of wish I didn't have to do that all the time?

yeah, yeah, I'm always hoping that sometime xxx will come around and say get to be normal (laughter)

Because I remember the partner I had before xx was very - it was a very volatile relationship to say the least and I always had to be the one to make it work, to skate over and say let's forget about it, let's go on...

Yeah.

It was never him, and I really got sick of doing that but it's to the point where I had coaches sit me down and say look we realize he is this way and if you want it to work, you're going to have to make it work. He's not going to make an effort and I remember getting that message very early and that was what I had to do if I wanted to skate, but sometimes it is very frustrating.

Yeah.

We discussed your own experiences with a partner, and I'd like you to draw from that and answer a few questions on partnerships in general. What in your opinion creates a positive relationship for an ice dancing couple?

I think a positive relationship is based on basically if the two partners get along as people, on and off the ice. Whether they share equal goals and things like that, whether they want the same things or ...

So, how would you say that comes about? What can two people do to get that?

It would definitely have to be communication in a team...and...

So I guess you would say that really was the key?

Yeah, definitely communication.

On the other hand, what would you think would make for a very difficult relationship for an ice dancing couple?

I don't know. xxx and I's communication hasn't really led to problems but I've seen other teams...

And what do you think causes them to have problems?

I think that age difference can be a really big thing for dance teams...

Because of the maturity level or...?

Yeah, the maturity level and ability and just conflicting personalities.

And yet, perhaps a great deal of communication couldn't overcome these personality differences? These couples you see that have personality differences, are they trying to work it out with communication, is that possible?

I have seen teams just sit down and say I don't like what's going on - I don't like your attitude towards me and things like that, and I've seen it work.

So, communication really can help?

yeah.

And yet it seems like you're saying although communication is very important, it's also important that your personalities are compatible?

Yeah.

What do you think are the expectations for the relationship between ice dance couples?

A couple is what you're trying to portray...

uh huh.

And when your out on the ice...

And how did you come to this conclusion?

Just watching it out on the ice, and hearing Mr. xxx and ...

From coaches?

From coaches and choreographers and things like that.

O.K. From judges and parents too?

Yeah.

And how do you feel about that?

Um...

Is it difficult at times, or do you think well this is part of my sport so I do it?

I just see it as part of the sport.

But do you ever find it difficult?

Sometimes, I guess if you have a fight because it's hard when whatever you're doing you're just romantic.

But you've learned that although you could be fighting with this person, you've learned that you really have to make it look like you're a romantic couple?

You have to look like you're enjoying skating with this person.

And what in reality do you think these relationships are really like?

In reality...?

Well obviously you're not dating xxx?

laughter

Well you told me he's like your brother, so you're obviously not dating him, so in reality what do you think they're like?

For us, it's a very close friendship, so it's not hard to do. Other teams I know just hate each other, and I've seen them pull it off on the ice.

Really?

Yeah, I've seen brother and sister teams do it.

Now, do you try to think about that, skating with your brother or you see teams that can do it, do you think it would be difficult to do that?

I would think it would be very difficult.

And yet, it wouldn't be a good thing to try to skate and portray a hateful relationship?

No.

You don't think anyone would go for that, theatrically or otherwise?

No. well, it would depend on the program that's being done.

But, for the most part in compulsory dances and the original dance, it still has to be that romantic couple?

Yeah.

I'm now going to focus on your satisfaction of your ice dancing. To begin with I would like to know how you became interested in the sport?

I always liked dancing when I was little, I liked it when I did the smaller dances, preliminary and things like that and then when Mr. xxx asked if I wanted to skate with xxx I was really interested. I used to watch it on tv and think wow if I could ever do that and ...

So, you didn't state your interest and start looking for a partner, it just happened that an opportunity arose and you jumped at it ...

Yeah.

Because you wanted to do it. So, from that what would you say you liked most about it?

the fact that its with a partner and that its a team and ...

You mentioned that you liked having someone there and ...

yeah.

And that's different.

I'm a people person and I have to be around people all the time. When I'm at home, and you're talking on the phone or sitting in a room with someone, I like that.

And what would you say you liked least about ice dancing?

When sometimes when you and your partner aren't at the same level, you're trying things...

Do you mean talent wise, technical or mental level?

Yeah, a technical level, and mental level because I was twelve when we started and he was ten and so...

You were young, so you've kind of grown up together?

yeah,

I would now like to turn the focus of this interview to the future. What do you feel are the ultimate goals in your skating career?

I would really like one day to make it to the Olympics.. I guess that's everyone's big dream and goal... I'd like to make it to World competition and hopefully be on the Senior National team.

O.K. What do you plan to do after your amateur career is over?

I'm planning on being a trainer, a personal trainer and a coach.

And you'll be still involved in the sport, ice dancing?

Most definitely.

I just have a couple more questions I would like to ask you. What impact do you think that skating has had on your life?

a very large impact, it's been my priority, putting skating first, then school,

When you say all along ...

Ever since I was competitive dancing.

How long ago was that?

Probably three or four years ago.

So it happened quite soon after you started ice dancing?

Yeah.

It's really changed your life?

It has. Its taken away a lot of free time and I've had to sacrifice a lot of things to skate.

I think most skaters do and a lot of people don't quite understand that about our sport, they see it on tv once every couple of years and it looks really easy to them and they think we must skate a couple of hours a week, but I don't know if they really understand the sacrifices involved. There are a lot.

yeah.

Do you feel like you've had a lot?

Yeah, I wanted to be - well I was on the cheerleading squad, I tried out for the gymnastics team , the soccer team and I had a couple of injuries in gymnastics and skating and my parents said you're going to have to make a choice, either you want to be in high school gymnastics stream or skating and of course, it was an easy decision for me.

It was or wasn't, I don't understand?

I didn't like having to make it - I really love gymnastics. I was put into skating because of gymnastics.

Do you miss gymnastics sometimes?

Yeah. I miss it. I had to quit cheerleading. I was in co-ed cheerleading and I had a partner who was a lot older than me, he was nineteen...

At the time you were how old?

I was fourteen, fifteen. And I was missing a lot of cheerleading practice at seven to nine in the morning, because we skated from six to nine in the morning and sometimes I would get off the ice early to get to cheerleading but, plus I would miss a couple of competitions and a lot of the practices...

Would you have done anything differently if you had the chance to?

I probably would have gotten into a competitive stream at a younger age. I think I started late, and ...

You're still young!

But if I had started maybe getting into the competitive stream in free skating, maybe if I had had a different coach, and a different club, I may have been a competitive free skater, too.

But you wouldn't have chosen a different sport other than skating or..?

No.

You're quite happy you've chosen skating?

Yeah.

It has its ups and downs at times but you wouldn't be without it?

Yeah.

Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that I haven't asked?

No.

I would like to ask you a couple of questions about the interview itself. Did the questions seem pertinent to your experience as an ice dancer?

Yes.

And were there any questions that you felt were redundant or ineffective?

No, I think they were very effective.

How did you feel about the interview being tape recorded?

I am generally nervous about...

I thought you were nervous, but at times you would loosen up...But can you forget that the tape recorder is on?

oh yeah

That's good. Did it take a while to forget that it was there?

Not really.

How would you describe this interview experience as a whole?

I liked it.

It wasn't too stressful?

No (laughter)

I hope it wasn't too stressful around recording devices.

It was fine.

I would like to thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences and feelings with me. You have provided me with valuable information for my research and it is greatly appreciated. If you have any further questions feel free to contact me. I wish you the best of luck with your skating.

Thank you.