

**INVESTIGATING COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A WOMEN'S
MASTERS SPORT TEAM**

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Abstract

Coach-athlete (C-A) dyadic relationships are said to be interdependent in nature, and dependent upon mutual closeness, commitment, and complementarity (Jowett, 2007). Masters coaches (MC), or coaches of Masters athletes (MAs; 35+ years-old), are considered contributors to adult sportspersons' experiences through relational and social connections (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017). There has yet to be a study however, that explicitly attempts to understand the interdependent relationships that exist within a Masters team, nor about the specific experiences of women in coached Masters sport. This purposes of this thesis was thus twofold: to explore what C-A relationships were like within a Masters team sport, in terms of interdependence that existed within C-A dyads, amongst athletes, and throughout the team as a whole, and further, to illustrate the lived experiences of a MC and her team of MA women. The women's team included 20 Masters synchronized skaters (MSks; ages 18-55), eleven of whom, plus the MC were interviewed multiple times throughout their season. Data collection was complemented by participant observation and immersion into the team environment. Data were analyzed with interpretative phenomenological analysis (Article 1), as well as thematic analysis (Article 2). Article 1 in this thesis examined the former purpose, and introduced the *Masters Team Sport Model of Interdependence* which conceptualizes interdependence in a Masters team. Article 2 investigated the latter purpose, and created meaningful narrative depictions of the participants' experiences. Together, the results suggest that interdependence within a Masters team exists as more than a collection of dyads, and instead functions as a mutually influential network of relationships. Further, the results point to the importance of a MC's involvement in the team, and efforts to building relationship with and amongst MAs to ultimately create a climate of empowerment within the team, resulting in positive relational outcomes and sport experiences.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	3
Coaching Masters Athletes	3
Prevalence, value, and benefits of coaches in Masters sports	3
How Masters coaches interact with Masters athletes.....	4
Masters team sports	6
Nuances of coaching female Masters athletes.....	7
Conceptual Framework.....	8
Interdependence theory	8
Interdependence theory and the coach-athlete relationship	9
Jowett's 3+1C's model.....	10
Additional perspectives on interdependence in coaching	12
Expanding on women and closeness in C-A relationships.....	12
The broader social context of C-A dyads	14
Research Questions	16
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	17
Participants	18
The coach	18
The athletes	19
Data Collection	20
Semi-structured interviews	21
Interviews with the coach	21
Interviews with the athletes	22
Observation	23
Data Analysis	23
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	24
Narratives	25
Rigour	26
Chapter 4: Presentation of Articles	28
Article 1: It takes more than two to tango: Mutuality of interdependence between members of a coached Masters sport team	29
Abstract	31
Introduction	32
Coach-Athlete Relationships and Interdependence	33
Synchronized Skating	35
The Present Study	35
Methods.....	36

Participants	36
Data Collection	37
Interviews	37
Participant Observation	38
Data Analysis	39
Multidimensional Approach	39
Development of Themes	39
Rigour.....	41
Critical Friends.....	41
Experiential and Interpretative Reflexivity	41
Member Checks	42
Results	43
Outcomes of Team Interdependence	43
Coach-Athlete Dyad Plane	45
Closeness	45
Commitment.....	46
Complementarity	48
Athlete(s)-Athlete(s) Plane.....	49
Peer Advising	49
Roles	50
Coach-Group Plane	52
Super-group	52
Sub-groups.....	54
Vertices: The Dynamics between Planes	56
C-A \leftrightarrow C-Group	56
C-A \leftrightarrow Athlete(s)-Athlete(s).....	57
Athlete(s)-Athlete(s) \leftrightarrow C-Group.....	58
Mutuality: The Core of a Shared Sport Experience	59
Discussion	61
Conceptual implications	61
Practical implications	63
Limitations and Future Research	65
Conclusion	66
References	67

Article 2: Glitter and guts: Narrative portrayal of the lived experiences of women in a coached Masters sport team	75
Abstract.....	77
Introduction	78
A Need to Know More about Women in Masters Sport.....	80
A Need to Know More about Masters Team Sports	81
Purpose	82
Methods	82
Participants and Sport Context	83
Data Collection	84
Participant observation	84

Interviews	84
Data Analysis	85
Thematic analysis.....	85
Narratives	86
Critical friends	87
Results	87
Ep. 1: Masters Team: A Tale of Social Motivation	88
Ep. 2: Women’s Empowerment: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice	93
Ep. 3: Phenomena Surrounding Women’s Adult Sport: All in the Family....	98
Discussion	103
The Team	104
The Women.....	106
Phenomena Surrounding Adult Women in Sport	109
Involvement of the Masters Coach	112
Conclusion	113
References	115
Chapter 5: General Discussion	124
Convergence of Articles 1 and 2	124
Conceptual Implications of the Findings	126
Methodological Merits and Implications	129
A multidimensional approach to IPA	130
Generating meaning through narratives	131
Prolonged engagement and observation	132
Practical Implications of the Findings	133
Conclusion	136
References	138
Statement of Contributions	147
Appendices	148
Appendix A: Coach and Athlete Screening Sheet	148
Appendix B: Timeline of Data Collection	150
Appendix C: Masters Coach Interview Guide 1	151
Appendix D: Masters Coach Interview Guide 2	152
Appendix E: Masters Coach Interview Guide 3	153
Appendix F: Masters Athletes Interview Guide 1	154
Appendix G: Masters Athletes Interview Guide 2	155
Appendix H: Author’s Personal Experience Review	156
Appendix I: Operational Definitions for Article 1.....	157
Appendix J: Ethics Approval Certificate	159

Chapter 1: Introduction

Masters athletes (MAs) are adults aged 35 and above who are registered in sport, and regularly practice to improve their performance, often for the purposes of competing (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015a). Recent research has demonstrated nuanced psychosocial coaching approaches pertaining to MAs such that their coaches (i.e., Masters coaches; MCs) need to know how to strategically give instruction and feedback, how to be sociable, and how to share power with them (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2018; Rathwell, Callary, & Young, 2015). The majority of research on the coached context of adult sport has examined MAs' and MCs' perceptions and experiences within individual sports (e.g., swimming, paddling), but research into coach-athlete (C-A) relationships within the team context (e.g., soccer, ringette) is sparse. Moreover, studies relating to female MAs, and the coaching of adult women in Masters sport are minimal.

The objectives of this thesis were 1) to examine how, and for what, a coach and female athletes depend upon one another in a Masters team, and 2) to explore the nature of C-A relationships, and the roles of the MC within a female Masters team sport. The theoretical framework that guided the proposed study was interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which frames our understanding of interactions between people. More specifically, this thesis was guided by the 3+1Cs model of C-A relationships which is housed within interdependence theory, and which examines aspects of C-A closeness, commitment, complementarity, and co-orientation (e.g., Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett & Carpenter, 2015). While the 3+1Cs model has been a keystone conceptualization for contextualizing the components of dyadic C-A relationships, there is some obscurity as to what the operational outcomes of these relationships *are*, and how similar dyads manifest themselves within a team

sport setting. In addition to these novel facets of inquiry, this investigation adopted a more expansive exploration of the 3+1Cs model by integrating perspectives from complementary literature on relational expertise with regards to women in sport (LaVoi, 2007a, 2007b; 2016) and by expanding the C-A dyad to account for the team setting as part of the broader social context (Poczwadowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006). Further, this thesis addressed the uncertainty of whether relational coaching skills are applied in a traditional coaching sense within a Masters team, or if there are interpersonal and relational novelties specific to a Masters team sport setting. Emerging literature on MCs has indicated that relational skills (i.e., skills for effectively connecting with people and positively affecting others' well-being) may be critical when coaching MAs (Callary et al., 2017), thus, the interdependence framework was relevant for this study. It has been estimated that female MAs comprise nearly one half of the Masters cohort (Callary & Young, 2016), and coached Masters team sports are underrepresented empirically. Therefore, the research objectives were valuable as they put a spotlight on a population of understudied sport participants, and how their interdependent relationships with their coach might influence their experiences.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Coaching Masters Athletes

Prevalence, value, and benefits of coaches in Masters sports. Many MAs have reported having a coach alongside them throughout their development. For example, 44% of national level MAs competing in track and field (Medic, Starkes, Young, Weir, & Giajnorio, 2005) and as many as 72% of international level Masters swimmers said they had a coach (Young & Medic, 2011). The presence of a coach likely enhances MAs' sport experience in several domains. Psychological well-being and sport persistence can occur as a result of higher self-determination in MAs that have a coach, as reported by national-level runners (Medic, Young, Starkes, & Weir, 2012). A coach has been noted as motivational for MAs (Medic, 2010), someone who validates adult sportspersons' investment of personal time and effort (Callary et al., 2017), and an agent who may significantly enrich a quality adult sport experience (Young & Callary, 2018). The value of having a coach can also be linked to a multitude of benefits, including the social connections that MAs are able to make with group members, the confidence they gain from learning new skills, and the challenges that come with practice and competition (Ferrari, Bloom, Gilbert, & Caron, 2016).

Emphasis has also been placed on the benefits of having a coach and how a coach encourages many of the aforementioned outcomes of Masters sport. MAs have attributed their initial attraction, enrollment, and continued involvement in Masters sport to a more structured, fun, dynamic, and social program (Stevenson, 2002) that a coached environment has to offer. Particularly, MAs reportedly value a coach's communication, organization, and teaching skills (Ferrari et al., 2016) as well as a coach who has accumulated professional knowledge, is relatable and reliable, and can provide varying types of feedback (Callary et al., 2015a). MAs described

how a structured framework, provided by the coach, caused them to work harder and for longer as it was easier to adhere to a consistent workout plan (Callary et al., 2015a). Further, the MAs described how they thought coaches had a significant influence on their performance, self-efficacy, and interest. One MA described how, after a coach had been appointed to the club, there were noticeably higher retention rates within the program relative to previous years (Callary et al., 2015a). A well-organized program is thus likely to increase commitment rates of MAs (Callary et al., 2015a; Ferrari et al., 2016; Young & Medic, 2011).

MCs have described scenarios in which they thought their specific coaching behaviours were beneficial for the overall engagement of their MAs. Some MCs recruit older adults directly by encouraging them to join the program (Stevenson, 2002). MacLellan and colleagues (2017) described the perspectives of one MC who illustrated individualizing her approach to coaching according to the fitness and skill level of the MAs. Consistently, this MC coached her athletes by keeping in mind their need for autonomy, allowing them to have a say in the structure of the program, providing rationale for activities and instructions, and understanding each MA's respective goals. The coach also perceived herself to be a motivator for MAs, and encouraged their continual fitness and athletic improvement (MacLellan et al., 2017). The presence of MCs further encourages continued participation from MAs by creating involvement opportunities related to improving health, enjoying oneself, and achieving competitive goals (Callary et al., 2015a), plus fostering engagement in the learning process (Young, Callary, & Niedre, 2014).

How Masters coaches interact with Masters athletes. The benefits of having a MC extend beyond that of recruitment and program/practice structure. Interactions that take place between a MC and her/his MAs can seemingly help to improve MAs' overall sport experience, as well as athletic performance. Further, the way in which a MC interacts with his or her MAs in

training plays an important role in the quality of C-A relationships. In Callary and colleagues' (2015a) study, MAs spoke to the importance of a coach having people skills and acknowledging that each athlete prefers to be spoken to, or directed in a certain way. Some preferred direct or blunt feedback, whereas others preferred to be spoken to one-on-one in a more nurtured, positive tone. Literature also underlines that MCs need to be aware of the varying ranges of experience and sport related knowledge within a group, and be able to communicate with their MAs accordingly. For example, when MCs overuse sport-specific terminology, MAs may disregard or misunderstand the instruction (Stevenson, 2002). Callary et al. (2017) suggested that MCs need to tailor interactions to accommodate MAs' desire to understand the rationale for activities, which is aided by mutual and collaborative dialogue between MAs and MCs.

MAs have described experiences in which having a coach present at competition made the experience better. Having a coach present during competition was said to positively impact the mentality of MAs because the coach provided a sense of comfort by being a familiar face (Ferrari et al., 2016). MAs appreciated having a coach nearby to answer performance-related questions, or to explain the rules and regulations of the event (Callary et al., 2015a). In an investigation of MAs' pre-performance anxiety and coping strategies in relation to competitive stressors, MAs reported social support as a top coping mechanisms (Hoar, Evans, & Link, 2012). Thus, having a coach available during competitive preparation might provide further opportunities for MCs to positively contribute to MAs' success.

Given that MAs and MCs may be of approximate age and in the same social circles, some MAs have stated that they valued competing alongside their coach, because it allowed them to focus on their technique or the task at hand (Ferrari et al., 2016), or because it was motivational and helped to reassure the coach's credibility (Callary et al., 2015a). Some MAs

even considered their coach to be a friend, which positively affected their overall well-being (Ferrari et al., 2016). Both strategy-related and personal interactions of MCs are seemingly contributory to MAs' overall experience, whereby the coach provides an open domain for questions, is personable, provides feedback, establishes mutual understanding, and fosters a collaborative environment.

Masters team sports. A team is a group of individuals whose collective goal is to work together effectively by communicating, resolving conflict, and optimizing efforts in pursuit of common goals (Gillham, Dorsch, Walker, & Taylor, 2018). Team sports occur at Masters events worldwide. For example, at the World Masters Games approximately 10 of the 28 sporting events were team sports (International Masters Games Association, 2017). The existence of Masters teams have been acknowledged in the literature (Young et al., 2014; Sheehy & Hodge, 2015), but no studies have explicitly studied C-A relationships within a Masters team, nor within an all-women context.

Given that Masters teams are comprised of multiple individuals, MCs may be faced with unique demands to maintain relations with each athlete as well as to assure the cohesiveness of the collective group. Indeed, emotional climate and cohesion have been identified specifically as *team* variables (Poczwadowski et al., 2006), which might suggest that there are distinct group-related experiences associated with being part of a larger social context. In a Masters context, the resulting happiness and productivity of cohesion could assist in satisfying both competitive and social needs of MAs. Masters team sports have been looked at minimally in the literature (e.g. concerning MAs' autonomous motivation; Sheehy & Hodge, 2015), but there is neither research that has focused on relational coaching in a Masters team-sport, nor an all-women MA team.

Nuances of coaching female Masters athletes. It has been roughly estimated that women make up roughly 35-45% of the Masters cohort (Callary & Young, 2016). However, little is known about the nature of relationships that are developed between female MAs and their respective MCs, or how coaches might better relate to this specific cohort of athletes to improve their overall sport experience. In a study that compared the motivation and achievement goal orientations in male and female MAs with and without coaches, Medic and colleagues (2012) found that female MAs with a coach reported greater intrinsic motivation *to accomplish* and *to know* than those without a coach (a finding that was not found for males). This finding suggests that there may exist a positive relationship between training with a coach and having self-determined motives, specifically amongst C-A relationships within female Masters sport. Medic and colleagues stated that it is possible that self-determined female MAs are more likely to seek competitive sport environments within which a coach is involved. Yet, female MAs have identified more barriers than male MAs including trouble finding a coach, and a lack of equipment, opportunities, facilities, and support relative to their clubs (Toepell, Guilmette, & Brooks, 2004). Therefore, there was an identifiable need to explore the experiences of women in a Masters team to understand how they feel supported in their pursuits, and the conditions related to all-women coached team context that associate with enhanced sport experiences.

Following a long period of time where sport was not considered appropriate for women or older adults, literature has now begun to identify distinctions between female and male older athletes (Dionigi, 2016), and women in particular make up slightly less than half the Masters sport participants (Callary & Young, 2016). Leisure and sport activities are considered useful in one's overall wellbeing by providing a healthy balanced life (Patelia, Stone, El-Bakri, Adli, & Baker, 2018), and so in order to augment and retain women Masters participants, there is a need

to better understand and document the psychological nuances that coaches may need to consider when facilitating a group of mature women. For example, women often bear the brunt of child care and house work in addition to having other outside obligations such as their jobs, and in many cases do not have the same opportunities for leisure as men (Barrell, Chamberlain, Evans, Holt, & Mackean, 1989); Callary and Young (2016) noted that coaches who find effective strategies to accommodate women's responsibilities outside of sport may be more likely to encourage them to participate in adult sport. Thus, it may be important for coaches to relate to, and gain an understanding of, the broader context of each woman athlete's life and priorities. According to seminal work on women's psychological makeup and values (Miller, 1986), in comparison to men, women reportedly lose sight of their strengths more easily, yet they have a greater ability to tolerate feelings of vulnerability or weakness. With this in mind, for example, MCs may need the skills to recognize expressions of uncertainty and respond constructively by encouraging perseverance. Altogether, coaching a group of female MAs could require gender-specific strategies for maintaining effective C-A relationships through channels of information sharing, motivational support, communication, and relatability. Knowledge about the female MA sport experience might assist these athletes with opportunities to pursue their sport-related goals at the intensity of their choosing, and help document the conditions that encourage a positive C-A relationship and sport experience.

Conceptual Framework

Interdependence theory. Interdependence theory describes what is happening in dyadic relationships that causes members to experience good versus poor outcomes, and notes that interactions between two people can take various forms, and have positive and negative consequences (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Interactions can therefore affect how two individuals

influence one another's preferences, choices, and decisions (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). A two-person relationship requires full commitment from both individuals; if either party leaves the dyad, then the dyad will cease to exist (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This scenario is not quite as clear in a group context, where the betterment of a designated team might depend upon the mutual commitment and cooperation of all its members. With this in mind, the current study will examine how a MC creates interdependent relationships with her female MAs that resonate with each athlete on an individual level, yet still asserts the importance of a team collective. It is unclear whether there are variations in the nature of the interdependent dyads amongst a female Masters team, nor whether the dyads are influential in to the group, collectively.

Interdependence in the coach-athlete relationship. Jowett and colleagues have examined notions of psychological interdependence specifically as they relate to C-A relations in sport (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Jowett, Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012; Jowett & Lavalley, 2007; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Jowett, Paull, & Pensgaard, 2005). Jowett (2007) described a C-A relationship as interdependent if a coach and an athlete “experience high levels of trust and respect; wish to remain attached and committed to each other in the future; and behave in a responsive, friendly, and easygoing manner” (p. 17). This can be further described as the extent to which two people are mutually, rather than separately, dependent on one another for generating enjoyable outcomes (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). In terms of the C-A relationship, mutual dependence is developed as give and take patterns of sport-related interactions. To conceptualize this idea of C-A relationships, Jowett developed a model that encompasses the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components that comprise C-A interdependence, as well as how these three components interact to produce effective sport relationships.

Jowett's 3+1Cs model. Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) developed a sport specific C-A relationship model from interdependence theory and suggested that closeness, commitment, complementarity and co-orientation describe coaches' and athletes' feelings, thoughts and behaviours, respectively. The present justification behind selecting Jowett's 3+1Cs Model to assess C-A relationships in the context of Masters team sports weighs heavily on its consideration of multiple psycho-social factors as well as the centrality of relational themes in the model (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Jowett & Lavallée, 2007; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). Jowett and Meek (2000) originally discussed how the starting point of conceptualizing the C-A dyad was based upon Kelley et al.'s (1983) definition of interpersonal relationships whereby the affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of their relationship are mutually interconnected.

Conceptually, the 3+1Cs model identified the major components of a dyad's relations including *closeness*, *commitment*, and *complementarity*, as well as portraying the components' associations, or *co-orientation* (Jowett & Carpenter, 2015; Jowett & Lavallee, 2007; Jowett & Meek, 2000). *Closeness* pertains to feelings of trust, respect, and appreciation between the coach and athlete, as well as the extent to which they like each other. *Commitment* reflects the intent of the coach and athlete to remain in the relationship and to continue being a part of the relationship (or in the context of the proposed study, the team). *Complementarity* is the coach and athlete's demonstrations of corresponding, cooperative behaviours such as being mutually friendly, relaxed or open to providing and accepting feedback. These 3Cs reflect the degree to which coaches and athletes are interdependent. A fourth component, *co-orientation*, pertains to the coach and athlete's corresponding behaviours of affiliation, interconnected perceptions, and is derived from the interdependence of the members' *closeness*, *commitment*, and *complementarity*. And so, while Jowett and colleagues describe interdependence as a dyad's mutual interactions of

the 3Cs, I was specifically interested in the psychological interdependence that might exist between a MC and her team of MAs—particularly, how an MC and her MAs might engage via the 3Cs, in a way that satisfied their psychological needs. The question then was how, and for what, might the MAs depend on their MC, and conversely, how might the MC depend on MAs in order to gain outcomes/benefits from a shared sport experience.

The model had only been partially considered in team sport settings (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Jowett & Felton, 2014). Although Jowett and Lavallée (2007) predominantly discussed interdependence theory in the context of dyadic relationships, C-A dyads have also been suggested as the glue that holds teams together (Jowett & Felton, 2014). In team sport settings, a MC needs to interact with both the group as a whole as well as each MA individually. Secondly, the model had not been considered with C-A relationships involving female MAs. Thus, putting a lens on the 3+1Cs model as it related to Masters teams was critical in order to interrogate whether the MC's role within the women's team was dyadic, as espoused by the 3+1Cs model, or whether it looked different. Further, I explored whether the relationships that manifested within the team were connected to the overall outcomes of the participants' experiences. Testing this model within the proposed study hoped to reveal the applicability of the 3+1Cs model, and to see what was unique about Masters team sports, and coaching adult women that might demand some conceptual modification. This inquiry was important, especially in light of the finding that effective adult-coaching practices often respect a degree of age-related specialization when compared to coaching youth or young adult populations (MacLellan, et al., 2018), in order to enhance quality adult sport outcomes.

There was promise in using the concepts of the 3+1Cs model because its focus on relational skills matched emerging themes from research on Masters coaching, particularly in

terms of andragogical principles (Callary, Currie, & Young, under review). MAs have shown a preference for MCs who possess relational skills, and MCs have claimed that such skills facilitate their craft. *Closeness*, *commitment*, and *complementarity* seem to correspond well with thematic concepts identified by Callary and colleagues (2015a; 2017; 2018) as approaches that MAs want from coaches. For instance, *closeness* relates to Callary et al.'s (2017) theme *personal attributes*, which takes into account the way a MC's personality or approach should convey professionalism and justify the athlete's time and effort. *Commitment* corresponds well with MAs' interests in staying affiliated with MCs with formal training who can facilitate their individual development and skill learning (Callary et al., 2015a), and *complementarity* coincided well with *instruction*, which described MAs' preferred types of coach feedback and strategies (Callary et al., 2017).

Additional perspectives on interdependence in coaching. The psychological dependence of team members and their coach is of specific interest for the proposed study. Despite the connections with the 3+1Cs model and the existing research on coached Masters sport, several limitations regarding the 3+1Cs were considered, particularly with regards to the specific C-A relationships between female MAs, and MCs in team sports. For instance, within the model there is seemingly an assumption that interdependence is limited to dyadic C-A relationships, and does not account for any interdependent relationships that occur amongst the remainder of a team's constituents. Therefore, particular literature was consulted to help expand upon, or add depth to what had already been developed in terms of both the gender context and team aspect of sport.

Expanding on women and closeness in C-A relationships. Since this thesis was interested in investigating female MAs in a team sport, I chose to delve further into

understanding women in sport (LaVoi, 2016). LaVoi (2007b) puts specific emphasis on the closeness component of the C-A relationship as it applies to women in sport. LaVoi's psychosocial understanding of women was based on the seminal work of Miller (1986), who described how women wanted their activities to lead to an increased emotional connection with others, and that women have a much greater sense of the pleasure of close connection with physical, emotional, and mental growth. In the context of sport, women's increased expectation of emotional connections with others could potentially contribute to a cohesive team environment. Miller stated that women have a greater recognition than men "of the essential cooperative nature of human existence" (p. 41), and so the physical, emotional, and mental connections between women were believed to support each female MA's competitive striving, goal-oriented behaviours, and social affiliations with MCs and teammates.

With particular consideration to women's experience, LaVoi (2007b) contended that there is value in a coach who is responsive, engaging, empowering, authentic, and open to outside influence. Such a coach is central to fostering athletes' intrinsic motivation and positive outcomes from their sport experience. In a study examining collegiate athletes' perceptions of their relationships with coaches, 19 dimensions of closeness (e.g. communication, honesty, approachability, etc.) were identified (LaVoi, 2007b). The study showed that females reported being significantly closer to their coaches than their male counterparts. These findings reinforced the idea that unique interactions between MCs and female MAs needed closer examination.

While the 3+1Cs model described closeness as an affective component, LaVoi (2007b) suggested that closeness was a more complex and multi-faceted relational concept, contending there were affective, cognitive, and behavioural components. She asserted that closeness and interdependence could be studied in terms of four qualities— *authenticity, engagement,*

empowerment, and one's ability to deal with difference and conflict— that potentially increased levels of satisfaction and growth in C-A relationships (LaVoi, 2004 as cited in Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). LaVoi (2007b) postulated that a deeper understanding of closeness could link the coach and athlete to a broader set of sport outcomes including performance, human flourishing, and need satisfaction, as well as assist in framing the C-A relationship in a relational context that is a necessary feature of psychological development.

Miller (1986) described how individual development originates by means of connection, and therefore relational connections may be fundamental to coaching female MAs. Yet, even with the essence of togetherness that is very likely to be apparent in women's team sport settings, coaches should be aware that women are often consistently attempting to create new concepts of individuality for themselves (Miller, 1986) and that sport may be a way for them to restructure a sense of identity in their lives. Relational expertise is characterized in sport by effective communication as well as the management of potential friction/conflict between coach and athlete (LaVoi, 2007a). Communication was deemed by LaVoi (2007b) to be one of the most important coach attributes according to female athletes, and was presented as a precursor, behavioural process, *and* outcome of closeness. Relational expertise for coaches can be expressed through an ability to create good connections, affect the well-beings of others, and strengthen another individual through a “power-with” attitude (LaVoi, 2007b; Miller & Stiver, 1997). Therefore, in considering the nature of the coached context in the all-women team context, it is possible that MCs and MAs may establish relational expertise by creating an environment within which power is shared, opinions are valued, and trust and respect are built.

The broader social context of C-A dyads. In this section, there is consideration of the broader social contexts of C-A dyads, specifically in terms of the context of the group (i.e.,

team), institutional, and cultural norms and values that might have an influence on these respective relationships (Poczwardowski et al., 2006). This has not been addressed within the 3+1Cs model per se, although LaVoi (2007b) found that individual sport athletes cited significantly more closeness dimensions than team sport athletes. Little explanation was given as to why this might be, but I postulated that it could be due to the increased amount of time and individualized attention that coaches and athletes of individual sports have to offer one another, compared to in teams, where coaches must disperse their time and energy to numerous athletes.

Considering the current aim of exploring C-A dynamics within a team environment, I turned to work that had investigated closeness of C-A relationships with respect to group-oriented behaviours. Poczwardowski and colleagues (2006) proposed that varying units can be used when analyzing C-A relationships, including a) behaviour (e.g., giving feedback, inquiring about an athlete), b) individual (e.g., personality traits, perception, motives), c) inter-individual (e.g., compatibility in C-A dyads), and d) *group* or *team* (e.g. type of leadership, interpersonal roles). A general research gap was identified, whereby research should consider the broad social contexts that influence respective C-A dyads. They stated that a highly influential “web of relations with significant others” (p. 129) might influence these dyads; teammates as ‘significant others’ were speculated to have an impact on each other’s relationships with the coach.

Poczwardowski et al. (2006) shed light on how formal and non-formal roles of coaches and athletes influenced the dynamics of C-A dyads. For example, the less authority a coach assumed, the more interaction, activity and care were expressed in the relationship. Callary et al. (2015a; 2017; 2018) noted that Masters sport tends to be an environment that places the MC and MAs on an equal plane. Thus, Poczwardowski’s work was insightful in terms of how MAs and MCs might prospectively create effective relations by sharing of power, because it underscored

how each of the C-A relationships in an all-women team could be affected by the surrounding team members.

Further, MacLellan, Callary, and Young (2019) discussed age-related MC expectations that were to be considered when coaching MAs. Specifically, they described how a coach's expectations of MAs, in comparison to youth, followed broader social age-related norms with respect to the MAs' skills, and physical and behavioural abilities. They found that the MC in their study was younger than the MAs participants, and may have held unconscious ageist assumptions about MAs. So, in relation to Poczwardowski and colleagues' (2006) assertion that cultural norms and values might influence C-A dyads, age-specific considerations may play a role in how a MC interacts with her MAs, within the broader social context of a women's team.

In sum, considering these additional perspectives was worthy as they addressed the emergence of distinct nuances in how the C-A relationship might exist between a MC and MAs in a team sport. These perspectives offered expansions to a conceptual framework that assisted in framing what C-A relationships looked like within the context of a female Masters team sport.

Research Questions

The present thesis investigated psychological interdependence between a MC and women of a Masters sport team. The objectives of the study were two-fold: 1) to explore the nature of C-A relationships within a female Masters team sport setting as they related to the MC, the MAs, and the team as a whole, and 2) to examine the lived experiences of a coach and her female athletes within a Masters team sport. The questions guiding this research were: "What are C-A relationships like within a female Masters team sport setting as they relate to the MC, the MAs, and the team collectively?" and, "What is the MC's involvement in the MAs' sport experiences, and what are the coach's roles in the context of a coached all-women adult team?"

Chapter 3: Methodology

The epistemological grounding of this study was enforced by social constructionism. The interactive nature of constructionism and the ideology that the meaning of objects and concepts is not discovered but rather *constructed* (Crotty, 1998) is commensurate with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which was the underlying methodology of this study. IPA allows people to discuss their personal lived experiences within a shared climate, and draws from phenomenology in that it examines how experience is recorded in consciousness. However, where phenomenology looks to problematize the “everydayness” (Allen-Collinson, 2016), or objective nature (Husserl, 2002) of a phenomenon, IPA seeks instead to understand a phenomenon iteratively, by gaining an understanding of a whole as it stems from an analysis of its parts. Further, it looks at the parts *in light* of the whole (Smith, 2016). In the present study, I therefore sought to understand a team, by understanding the experiences of each member.

IPA was therefore a suitable methodology because it allowed me to not only understand the phenomenon, but also how each individual experienced the phenomenon respectively. The meaning associated with C-A relationships in the female MA setting was constructed from the MC’s and MAs’ experiences, and analyzed and interpreted according to the researcher’s biographical background and knowledge of extant literature (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015b; Smith, 2016). This approach was consistent with current practices in Masters research, in which researchers explored how Masters constructed their realities in the phenomenon of adult sport experiences (Callary et al., 2015b; Ferrari et al., 2016). Implementing a social constructionist epistemology enabled exploration of C-A relationships by understanding the interdependency of the coach and athletes embedded within context, culture, experience, and understanding of female sport, aging, teams, and coaching.

Additionally, a feminist approach to knowledge building is grounded in the importance of investigating women's experience (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser, 2004). Cooky (2016) argued that research examining notions of gender must take into account power, hierarchy and/or oppression, and so at each phase of this study, I was aware that the women might have faced repression in regards to their sport pursuits, and thus their specific experiences and perceptions would contribute to knowledge construction for this cohort.

Participants

This section outlines the criteria that were used to purposively find, and gain informed consent from, participants. Screening and recruitment efforts were dedicated to finding a team inclusive of a coach and athletes that facilitated rich data collection. A screening sheet was used to properly identify whether the participants fit the criteria (see Appendix A). A screening sheet was designed to allow us to understand the context of a team, and were first sent to coaches of various sports teams before selecting an appropriate team for the study. As one team filled the majority of these criteria, I was exposed to a naturalistic team environment that also enveloped significant, dyadic relationships. I selected one female Masters coach and her entire team of approximately 10-20 female MAs to collect data pertaining to as many C-A relationships as was feasible until saturation. This provided opportunities to construct an understanding of both the coach's and athletes' perspectives.

The coach. There were four important criteria that I included in selecting the coach. Firstly, I needed to find a coach that worked with a women's Masters team. Secondly, I wanted the coach to be female as well. With all-female C-A dyads, I was able to comprehend the nuances of female Masters sport. Thirdly, I needed to ensure that the coach was recognized as "coach". Informally, I recognized that there existed adult sport leagues that are not coached or

that have “player-coaches” (e.g., players on the team who provide tips, drills, and feedback to others, or who take leadership on organizational issues for the team). While player-coaches are certainly a viable research topic, I studied a more traditional C-A relationship because of the paucity of research on female, team masters sports. Finally, I selected a MC with 10 years of coaching experience specifically with adults. A MC with a more years of experience was likely to understand C-A relationships in greater depth, and was likely to provide ample examples of lived experiences for broader interpretation. Finally, there was also a team criterion in the selection of the coach: the team needed to acknowledge that they were coached by only *one* coach. This setting also served to find synergies that existed between C-A relationships throughout the team, without influence from additional coaches.

The athletes. After finding a suitable coach, I needed to check that the athletes would also be suitable for the study. I needed a group of women approximately 35 years of age or older that comprised one sport team (e.g. rugby, soccer, synchronized skating, ultimate frisbee, etc.), and were formally registered to compete in a league, or sport program specifically advertised to adults. The suitable group required integration and organization between the MC and MAs to support training and competition. For instance, structural and planning elements were necessary components to consider when recruiting the team; the suitable team was to be involved in a performance that relied on collective members to prepare together and to collectively compete together. Most, if not, all team members needed to be present in order for practices to properly function, and some level of relational collaboration was crucial to team functioning and cohesion. There was a degree of competitiveness that was expected to affirm the commitment of the MAs to their team and MC. The commitments included attending regular practices, and games/competitions throughout both pre-season and regular season. One measure of this was to

screen for pre-season tryouts, which were likely useful in reaffirming that those who were chosen for the team had been selected on the grounds that they were serious about involvement in competitive sport. On the first day of training, each MA was asked to complete a screening sheet with demographic information pertinent to themselves and their past skating experiences. I anticipated that among the women who agreed to be interviewed, there would be a variety of years of experience participating in their respective sport. By virtue of this, I screened for teams that had spent several seasons with the MC, as well as for newer additions to the team, to provide some contextual diversity of the MAs' experience with both the sport, the team, and the MC.

The team that was selected was an adult synchronized skating team that included 20 skaters aged 18-55 (mean of 39), and one female coach (32 years old). They practiced once weekly for three hours over the expanse of the season which ran from September-March. There was a high expectation for commitment, as each skater was given a permanent place within their program, and they competed at a number of regional and provincial competitions.

Data Collection

Once I received the completed consent forms and screening sheets from the MC and MAs, I contacted participants individually to set up the first of three one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the MC, the first of two interviews with each of the MAs ($n = 11$), as well as times when and where I could observe and take field notes. I started data collection with the team at the beginning of the season, so that I could compare respective C-A relationships from a timepoint early in the season, to a timepoint later in the season once new MAs had had the chance to develop relationships with the MC, and to see whether existing relationships had changed. Appendix B shows the timeline for interview procedures. I conducted interviews when convenient for participants either before observed training sessions, or at a time and place of

their choosing. Field notes were collected during practices and competitions, which informed latter interviews and allowed me to follow up with the MC and MAs on topics that had emerged from past interviews or observational field notes.

Semi-structured interviews. Participants were prompted with clear, open-ended questions that allowed the interviewee (MC or MA) to provide in-depth information, stories, and experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) that related to their current C-A relationship. The interview served as more of a conversation, where I probed the interviewee to describe specific circumstances that pertained to the nature of the C-A relationship within the context of their team. I acted as an active listener by showing curiosity, attentiveness, and requesting further elaborations (Smith & Sparkes, 2016) so that rich, contextual data could be collected.

Questions for the semi-structured interviews (Appendix C-G) were framed in such a way that each participant could provide stories and examples that were pertinent specifically to their own C-A experiences. While the questions were guided by interdependence theory, there was additional probing related specifically to the specific concepts of the interdependence models discussed earlier. For example, Jowett and colleagues (Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Jowett & Lavallee, 2007; Jowett & Carpenter, 2015), LaVoi (2007b) and Poczwardowski et al. (2006) all agreed that closeness was paramount in C-A relationships, and Callary et al. (2017) also addressed MCs' intent to foster closeness in their sport environment; therefore, there was a series of questions that specifically probed participants to discuss their own experiences of closeness with the MC and their teammates, in their team setting.

Interviews with the coach. During the first MC interview early in the season (see Appendix C), open-ended questions were asked that encouraged thorough descriptions of the experiences that the MC had had with her MAs. The flow of the guide followed topic-specific

questions beginning with demographic information pertaining to her coaching experience or formal coach training (Qs 1-4), and then moved into questions that drew out concepts from interdependence theory (Qs 5-10), questions concerned with team contexts (Qs 11-17), questions relevant to a female sport environment (Qs 18-20), and finally questions that encouraged a discussion of aging (Qs 21-22). For example, a question pertaining to team contexts was, “Do you feel as though your individual relationships with your MAs affects the team as a whole? Why or why not? Can you give specific examples?” Questions like these encouraged the MC to share stories of her relational experiences with MAs.

The second MC interview took place four months into the season, during the middle of the data collection period, after the 11 MAs were interviewed for the first time, and multiple field observations had been undergone. Questions for this interview (Appendix D) were developed based on observational field notes from the preliminary 10 weeks of training, and were based upon analysis of initial MC responses in the first interview and responses in the intervening interviews with MAs in order to seek any follow up information or clarification. My immersion into their weekly practice setting via participant observation was intended to enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of data analysis and interpretation of the interview data (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Finally, the third MC interview took place following the second round of MA interviews, at the end of the season. This final interview guide (Appendix E) was based on developed interpretations from observations, as well as the responses from MAs after they had been involved in both of their respective interviews.

Interviews with the athletes. During the one-on-one MA interviews (see Appendix F), I asked open-ended questions that allowed MAs to reflect on their experiences being on a female Masters team, as well as the relationships they had developed with their MC. Similar to the first

MC interview guide, the question topics flowed from participant information (Qs 1-3), to questions that drew out concepts from interdependence theory (Qs 4-10), the team context (Qs 11-14), the female sport environment (Qs 15-16), and aging (Qs 17-18). A question pertaining to the female sport environment was, “Is it important to you that the coach is a woman?” The second set of interviews (Appendix G) took place later in the season, and was guided by interpretations made throughout observations, and from earlier interviews with the MC.

Observation. Participants were observed in their training setting, at competition, and social events over the course of the data collection period. These observations were not necessarily collected for the purpose of additional data, but instead helped to contextualize the data from interviews, and provided a great opportunity to add depth to my interpretation of the participants’ experiences. I assumed the role of a moderate participant observer (Spradley, 1980) whereby I was present at training sessions and competition events. I recorded my observations by taking field notes of what I saw and heard throughout the training. I observed how the MC interacted with her MAs, how she used her body language to communicate, and paid attention to how the MAs respond to her methods. Field notes were then used to inform prompts for any subsequent MA interviews, as well as to inform the questions for the second and third MC interviews. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) suggested that going beyond explicit knowledge and attempting to gain tacit knowledge is the best practice to truly understand the activities, rituals, and events of a group’s culture and life routines. Therefore, observing the operative functioning of C-A relationships provided important contextual information to the interview data.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Analysis of the data was done in two ways: a) according to the iterative principles of IPA (Smith, 2016), and b)

according to thematic analysis and written up as narratives. I used NVivo 12 for organization and coding. IPA is both linear and iterative; therefore, analysis for article 1 began after the first individual MC interview and continued throughout the process of interviewing MAs, throughout observation, and up until the final coach interview. For article 2, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allowed broad themes to emerge from the data, which acted as the pillars for narrative representations of the results.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. IPA allows for in-depth analyses of individuals' experiences (Smith, 2016) and served as an effective method of analysis after gathering detailed descriptions of female MAs' experiences with their MC, and the MC's experiences with her MAs. Several distinct characteristics (Smith, 2004) made the methodology preferential for this study. First, IPA is uniquely concerned with understanding the case by analyzing each individual's subjective experience in detail. Analysis continues as the researcher moves from case to case (or in the present study, from MC to each MA), while "only cautiously making claims for the group as a whole" (Smith, 2016, p. 330). This was especially relevant for my study, in that the nature of interrelations between an MC and an MA seemed to have implications on the interdependence among team members. Therefore, the idiographic (i.e., moving from case to case) nature of IPA promoted understandings of the subjective experiences of the MC, and of each of the MAs involved in a C-A relationship, which allowed me to interpret how each case (i.e. each C-A dyad or relationship) affected the group as a whole (Smith, 2016). Next, analyses were primarily inductive, which allowed for unforeseen themes to arise, but was accompanied by a second deductive pass (Smith, 2004). The MC and the MAs discussed novel concepts of C-A relationships but also as linked to interdependence theory. With that, the present study identified a new model of interdependence in team sports (see article 1) that help to

understand the nuances of female Masters C-A relationships. Overall, IPA provided an opportunity to represent the divergence of team members' subjective experiences, and how these experiences overlapped (Smith, 2004; 2016).

The uniqueness of IPA is that it allows the researcher making interpretations about the data to consider how her biases influence the analysis of the participants' experiences, rather than trying to detach herself from their experiences (Callary et al., 2015b; Smith, 2016). With respect to this, a bracketing exercise was completed to explore my experiences as a woman, athlete, and coach (see Appendix H for author reflection). The fact that I am a woman with experience as an athlete (from grassroots to varsity), as well as a coach (of youth), for female team-sports, had a significant impact on how I interpreted the data. While there is no single way to undergo IPA, Smith (2016) recommends a number of steps that guide the researcher fluidly through the analytical process of each transcript. Initially, I read a transcript thoroughly to ensure comprehension and familiarity, I then took notes in the margin to draw attention to any important content. Later, I used these notes to more profoundly examine the data and develop descriptive themes. Coherent, inductive clusters were formed, at which point a higher order theme was developed and named to encompass various subtheme clusters. This process was repeated for each transcript, and themes were generated across the set of participants (Smith, 2016).

Narratives. For article 2 of this thesis, narratives were written to illustrate the lived experiences of the MC, as well as the MAs. Thematic analysis was done primarily to code data and organize themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once prominent higher order themes were identified from codes, each top order theme was featured as the main focus of a single narrative. The aim of creating narratives was to depict common experiences and themes revealed from the data (Clayton, 2010; Rathwell et al., 2015; Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2015), and they were

useful in exemplifying the collective experiences of individuals in a shared setting (Creswell, 2013). The narratives that were produced supported the rich, in-depth findings that stemmed from my interpretation of the women's experiences in sport. In writing narratives, I sought to meaningfully represent information from the data, and to demonstrate the experiences of the MC and MAs with intentions to evoke emotion from readers (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2015).

Rigour. Significant effort was put into assuring rigorous qualitative methods of collecting and analysing data over the course of the study. Primarily, a bracketing interview was conducted so that I could become aware of my existing assumptions and understandings (Rolls & Relf, 2006), and so that I could understand how these assumptions played on the construction of my interview questions before engaging with participants, as well as to understand how they influenced my interpretations of the data. The bracketing interview was led by my co-supervisors, and explored the topics of study by following questions from the interview guide.

I took further steps to ensure rigorous data collection. The transition from the initial interview with the MC, to the MA interviews, field notes of observations, and so on, is described as an effective means of establishing triangulation among diverse participants and the researcher to establish coinciding themes or topics (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As well, the transcripts were shared with the respective participants to undergo member checking (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Member checking involved asking participants to assess their transcripts, and to evaluate whether they adequately represented the depiction of their experiences. Participants could suggest changes or provide feedback to the researcher if they felt it would improve the representation of their C-A relationship experiences (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Member checking perpetuates the iterative nature of IPA by engaging in “a process of iterative consent” (Palmer, 2016, p. 473) with participants, thus assuring the experiences were depicted as intended.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Articles

To address the study's research questions, two journal articles are presented, entitled:

It takes more than two to tango: Mutuality of interdependence between members of a coached Masters sport team and *Glitter and guts: Narrative portrayal of the lived experiences of women in a coached Masters sport team.*

Article 1

It takes more than two to tango: Mutuality of interdependence between members of a coached Masters sport team

It takes more than two to tango: Mutuality of interdependence between members of a coached

Masters sport team

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Abstract

Coached Masters sport is an under-examined but increasingly popular topic of study in the field of sport psychology. Thus far, research has focused on understanding the unique approaches to coaching Masters athletes (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015a; 2017), primarily as they are applied to individual sport athletes. Interdependence within dyadic relationships in sport have been considered an important factor influencing the outcomes of coaches' and athletes' sport experiences; the 3+1Cs model specifically conceptualizes key aspects of interdependent coach-athlete relationships (Jowett, 2007). The purpose of this study was to explore specific coaching strategies within a Masters all-women team context, and how dyadic relationships built between the MC, and each member of a Masters team, have an influence on the experiences of the team's constituents. The selected team of women was a group of 20 competitive Masters synchronized skaters (MSks) aged 18-55, and their 30 year old MC. Qualitative methods, including multiple semi-structured interviews with 11 MSks and the MC over the course of a season, as well as in-person observations, examined the interdependent C-A dyadic relationships, as well as the relationships throughout the MSks, and the team as a whole. Following interpretative phenomenological analyses, the results showed that interdependence existed within the team beyond the scope of C-A dyads, and the *Masters Team Sport Model of Interdependence* (TSMI) was created to exhibit the complex web of influential interrelations that stemmed from mutuality among team members. In turn, these relationships made the outcomes of a quality sport experience achievable to participants, and the results of this study place importance on considering the TSMI when coaching Masters teams.

Key words: coaching, Masters athletes, interdependence

It takes more than two to tango: Mutuality of interdependence between members of a coached
Masters sport team

Masters sport, which comprises competitive sport for adults who are in a distinct category from youth or younger high-performance adults, is an increasingly popular phenomenon. Masters athletes (MAs), who are generally 35 years and older (although there are younger exceptions, depending on the sport) and who prepare via training in advance of competitions (Young, 2011), are becoming a popular cohort of study. Masters sport does not always involve a coach, but coached Masters sport is growing in popularity as MAs seek specific outcomes from sport that are facilitated by Masters coaches (MCs) such as competitive, fitness, and performance improvements, and notably, social connections that are identified as important for wellbeing to adult and aging populations (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; Stevenson, 2002). With this growing interest in coaching, research has turned to understanding the unique approaches to coaching Masters sport (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015a; 2017; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2019; Rathwell, Callary, & Young, 2015) as well as the implications of a MC engaging in, and thereby enhancing MAs' sport experiences (Medic, Young, Starkes, & Weir, 2012). MCs validate MAs' investment of personal time and effort (Callary et al., 2017) and are agents of learning that significantly enrich the quality of adult sport (Young & Callary, 2018). Having a coach initiates a number of benefits for MAs, including confidence gained from learning new skills, and learning to navigate challenges in practice and competition (Ferrari, Bloom, Gilbert, & Caron, 2016). Notably, this research has exclusively established a benevolent role for MCs in individual sports (e.g., swimming, athletics), with no research on team sports.

MAs have attributed their initial attraction, enrollment, and continued involvement in Masters sport to a more structured, fun, dynamic, and social program (Stevenson, 2002) that a

coached environment has to offer. The inimitable services that MCs can provide during training, and their skilful communication, organization, and teaching (Ferrari et al., 2016), are especially appreciated by MAs, particularly when coaches have accumulated professional knowledge, are relatable and reliable, and provide varying types of feedback (Callary et al., 2015a). Finally, MAs described how a coach-structured framework caused them to work harder and for longer as it was easier to adhere to a consistent workout plan, which in turn had a significant influence on their performance, self-efficacy, and continued interest (Callary et al., 2015a). Recently, Masters coaching literature has indicated that MCs with relational skills (i.e., skills to effectively connect with people and positively affect others' well-being) may benefit MAs in terms of overall development and experience (Callary et al., 2017; Callary, Currie, & Young, under review).

Coach-Athlete Relationships and Interdependence

Interdependent coach-athlete (C-A) relationships are pertinent to the performance and overall satisfaction of the athlete (Jowett, 2007; Jowett, Paull, & Pensgaard, 2005; Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Interdependence theory notes that interactions between people can take various forms and have positive and negative consequences, whereby greater interdependence is seen when relationships generate more benefits than costs to the people in the relationship (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Further, Jowett's 3+1Cs model of C-A relationships (2007) indicates that the mutual feelings, behaviours, and thoughts of the C-A dyad are paramount in deciphering the extent of interdependence (ID). *Closeness*, the affective component, pertains to feelings of trust, respect, and appreciation between the coach and athlete, as well as the extent to which they like each other. *Complementarity* pertains to the coach and athlete's demonstrations of reciprocal and corresponding behaviours such as being open to both providing and accepting feedback. *Commitment* reflects the cognitive intention of both the coach and athlete to remain in the

sporting relationship over the long term. C-A mutuality is an expression of the *co-orientation* of a coach and an athlete (i.e. the +1 C), which is associated with demonstrations that they are “on the same page” in terms of the 3 Cs with respect to one another. The 3+1Cs are considered to be dyadic in nature, and are mainly contextualized within varsity and elite individual sport C-A dyads (Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett & Carpenter, 2015). According to the model then, interdependence is manifested within dyadic C-A relationships, yet little consideration is granted to potential interdependent relationships that might occur amongst the remainder of a team’s constituents. Further, although the model speaks broadly about associations between ID and outcomes related to athlete performance and satisfaction, a less developed aspect of the model is the understanding of specific outcomes, in terms of valence (benefits and costs to coach and athlete) and the nature of the outcomes/benefits (e.g., performance, satisfaction). In the current study, we uniquely explored the outcomes that occur when a MC and MA demonstrate ID, and how broader intra-team relationships and ID might be connected to such outcomes.

Furthermore, the interdependence of a coach’s relationships with athletes in team sports have been only partly deliberated with respect to the 3+1Cs model (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Rhind, Jowett, & Yang, 2012) and never within the context of a single team. Poczwadowski, Barott, and Jowett (2006) identified emotional climate and cohesion specifically as *team* variables that influence dyadic ID, and suggested that there might be distinct group-related experiences and interactions associated with being part of a larger social context. Given that Masters teams are comprised of a multitude of diverse individuals in terms of respective prior sport experience, goals and motives, and overall lifestyles (e.g., Rathwell, et al., 2015; Young, Callary, & Rathwell, 2018), it is important to understand the unique interdependent demands that a MC faces to maintain relationships with each MA as well as to assure a cohesive group.

Synchronized Skating

To investigate ID amongst a MC and a team, we purposefully sought a team sport that subscribed to building interpersonal relationships as a means to optimize the potential to meet the goals and standards of the team. Synchronized skating (synchro) is a competitive, female-dominated on-ice sport that comprises a team of approximately 10-20 figure skaters who perform complex footwork in unison, to the rhythm of a choreographed, 3-minute program. Thus, its performance and efforts in preparation for competition engender interdependence. Coaches have traditionally had a designated role in preparing athletes and in choreography. Teams compete for a judging panel that assesses elements of speed, finesse, shape, unison, posture, creativity, and timing. It is a unique athletic activity that combines the artistry of movement, and the physical demands of intensive sport. Synchro is an internationally-recognized sport (e.g., it is an event at the World Masters Winter Games), but is also caters to a range of competitive skill/performance levels at national and regional levels. Synchro continues to generate interest particularly in Canadian adult categories. Synchro exists in junior categories, but adult synchro (or Masters synchro sanctioned divisions) allows for Masters synchro skaters (MSks) 18 and older, and has cohort-specific element requirements, skill restrictions, and evaluations.

The Present Study

Given that MCs are significant contributors to MAs' sport development and experiences, there is value in understanding how relational approaches to coaching support the outcomes of MSks' competitive sport participation. In light of the unique role that an MC may play in establishing and building relationships amongst a group of peers, it is warranted to better understand the complexity of C-A dyads and ID, which has yet to be investigated particularly in a Masters team sport context. Using the 3+1Cs model to preface our investigation of team sport

ID, the present study aimed to investigate what C-A relationships were like within a female Masters team to interpret how these relationships influenced the outcomes of the participants' sport experiences. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore the interdependent relationships within C-A dyads, amongst MAs, as well as throughout the team as a whole.

Methods

This instrumental case study (Grandy, 2010; Stake, 1995) was guided by interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 2016) to provide insight into the interdependent relationships that comprise a women's Masters synchro team from the perspectives of the MC and the MSks. Our IPA was predicated upon information derived from semi-structured interviews and was informed by participant observation (Spradley, 1980; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002) carried out by the principal investigator (PI). Ethical approval for all procedures was obtained from the host university Research Ethics Board. The MC and all of the MSks on the team provided consent regardless of whether or not they partook in one-on-one interviews.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to find a Masters team that competed in a sport that required collaboration and organization of its members, whose athletes were consistently present at training and competitions, and whose one sole coach had at least five years of experience coaching MAs. One MC and 20 MSks from the same team agreed to participate. The MC was a 32-year old nationally-certified figure skating coach with a PhD in sport sciences, and was well respected in the synchro community. She had national-level skating experience, had coached for 12 years, and had coached both youth and Masters skating (10 years) which equipped her to understand age-specific nuances that existed in the sport. As per the age criteria of the Masters division in synchronized skating, the observed team included 20 MSks with a mean age of 39,

who regularly attended a weekly practice with the MC (1.5 hours off-ice, 1.5 hours on-ice), from the start of September until the final Skate Championship at the end of March. Eleven MSks were interviewed who varied in age and prior years of synchro experience (Table 1). Those who agreed to be interviewed were selected based on interest and availability with purposeful recruitment to ensure a representation of diverse ages and prior experience.

Data Collection

Interviews. Eleven MSks and the MC were interviewed by the PI across the course of a 30-week season. The MC was interviewed at three time points (beginning, middle, end), and each MSk was interviewed on two occasions (first month of season, last month). All 25 interviews were transcribed verbatim, equating to 383 pages of double-spaced text.

Semi-structured interviews with the MC lasted 75-90 minutes. In the first, the MC was probed deductively about ID and relationships with MSks with questions like, “do your relationships with skaters influence how committed you are to the team?” and, “do you feel as though your relationships influence your methods/coaching style?” This built a foundation to understand the MC’s perspective of C-A relationships in a Masters team context. The second interview sought to expand on the first interview, intervening field note observations, and emerging themes. For example, the MC was asked, “how do you build relationships during training? Is it different than how you build relationships outside of skating?” The final interview served to follow up with the MC for clarification on information from previous interviews, distinct observations in field notes, for corroboration or contrast with perspectives derived from intermediary interviews with MSks, or on themes that had begun to emerge; for example, “how have your relationships changed from the start of the season with the new members of the team?”

MSk interviews lasted 30-60 minutes at the first time point, and 15-60 minutes at the second. The first interview inquired about relationships with the MC as well as with teammates. MSks were asked to, “describe the relationship you have with your coach” or, “... with teammates”. Field note observations informed the second interview, wherein the PI also asked for follow-up information on information from the first interviews. MSks were asked, “are there any team norms or expectations of skaters?” and “do the various different ages on the team contribute to your experience, its richness, or any challenges?” These questions aimed to understand the nature and implication of relationships amongst MSks on the team climate.

Participant observation. The PI observed 55 hours of training and social gatherings with the team, as well as two weekends of competition, which included travel, shared accommodations and social activities, pre-competition preparation, and the on-ice competitive performances. Training sessions consisted of on-ice and off-ice activities (e.g., warm ups, choreography, group discussions for event planning). Extensive hand-written field notes were kept and used to inform our interpretations of the participants’ lived Masters sport experiences. Observing the team in their natural sport environment contributed to the data collection process in that it enabled a concrete understanding of the sport and lingo, and tangibly illustrated what participants were discussing in interviews. It also helped build rapport with participants for interviews and provided the PI with a first-hand experience of what it might have been like to be a new member on the team. Fully engaging in the team’s activities, especially the long-distance travel, proved to be very rewarding in terms of constructing contextual knowledge. Accepting the team’s frequent invitations appeared to gratify participants and they were excited to share their experiences. As a result, she felt compelled to engage as an insider when given the chance, while making interpretations as an outsider, since her place on the team was as a researcher.

Data Analysis

IPA maintains an idiographic commitment, where each interview is transcribed and analyzed as a case in its own right (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015b; Smith, 2016). After each interview notes were made in the margin to highlight important text, record early interpretations, and to begin formulating clusters of themes. Clusters included an expanded consideration of previously discussed structures of ID, including the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2007), as well as new, inductive interpretations of ID. Data were then organized and coded using NVivo12.

Multidimensional approach. The protocol for IPA is typically linear, yet iterative; while subsequent interviews were transcribed and analyzed, data were continually revisited, and our impressions continued to develop as successive data were analyzed. Our linear iterations existed in two dimensions (see Appendix B). A case-by-case analysis is conceived as progressing along a horizontal plane, and so we had two parallel horizontal planes: one that illustrated the cumulative iterations from the three MC interviews, and one that illustrated the sequential iterations from successive MSk interviews. Yet, not only did we seek convergence and divergence from case to case *horizontally* (e.g., from one MSk to the next), but in order to account for the relationships between each respective MSk and the MC, there needed to also be a *vertical* analysis across the two planes to consider if/how the data depicted the C-A dyads. We found this multidimensional approach to be an effective way of understanding the ID of Masters C-A dyads, but also allowed us to create interpretations about ID among MSks.

Development of themes. During the first round of interviews with all participants, the transcripts were initially deductively analyzed with the dyadic (C-A) 3+1Cs in mind. A second inductive pass by the PI allowed emerging concepts to be recognized. Next, the second and third researchers (critical friends) read the transcripts, providing their comments and further notations.

In keeping with past research that performed IPA over two time-points (e.g., McDonough, Sabiston, & Ullrich-French, 2011), we elected to thoroughly analyze, revisit, and code the data from participants' first interviews before continuing to code the second set. Thus, theme development occurred throughout the first round of interviews. Specifically, the first MC interview (MC1) was transcribed, notated and analyzed followed by transcription, notation and analysis of each of the MSks' transcripts. MC2 served as a checkpoint to revisit the data collected thus far and to reflect upon vertical and horizontal congruence (i.e., alignment of what the MC and MSks were describing). It was apparent at this midpoint that the horizontal analysis was prominent in developing recurrent, *inductive* concepts (early subthemes) pointing to ID *beyond strictly dyadic relations* as defined in the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2007). Relationships between and amongst teammates, as well as the collective group unity, were being described in strongly interdependent and relational terms. Thus, at the midpoint an equilateral triangular model of ID was sketched to highlight each significant source of ID within the team, which we refer to as *The Masters Team Sport Model of Interdependence* (TSMI; see Figure 1).

The second round of interviews focused on refining the TSMI and corroborating our interpretations with participants at a later point in their season. The same vertical and horizontal analyses were completed throughout the second set of MSk interviews, up until the completion of MC3. This allowed for a clear interpretation of how the participants' experiences were consistent with, and/or changed relative to the data from earlier in the season. Analyses of latter interviews supported the development of the TSMI and pointed to deeper influences that each of the three planes of the model had on one another, as well as the outcomes of these influential relationships for the MC and MSks. Based on these analyses, first and second-order themes were developed, named and organized to represent the varying components of ID in the team.

Rigour

In line with IPA, we adopted a relativist epistemology that accepts multiple realities (Smith & McGannon, 2017) and allowed us to apply criteria in a manner that were contextually situated and flexible (Burke, 2016; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). We further selected appropriate techniques for rigour that complemented the study methodology and design (Burke, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smith & McGannon, 2017). We practiced prolonged engagement and persistent observation (as discussed in data collection), peer debriefing with critical friends, reflection to acknowledge researcher *and* participant biases on the topic, and member checking.

Critical friends. As a means of peer debriefing at each phase of analysis, the PI's supervisors assumed the roles of critical friends by thoroughly analyzing the transcripts to add their notations. Engaging with critical friends encouraged reflexivity by challenging one another's construction of knowledge, and added depth, contributing ideas that the PI might not have considered (Smith & McGannon, 2017). After the transcription and analysis of each MC interview, as well as each MSk interview at time point one, both supervisors took turns adding their own queries. Their comments provided additional insights into the deductive 3+1Cs and new inductive concepts, and provided basis for the three members to regularly meet to deliberate upon each other's comments and interpretations. This process further assisted in refining the interview guides for MC2 and for the second round of MSk interviews, and challenged the PI throughout the detailing of the TSMI. The critical friends provided different perspectives, which broadened the interpretative nature and value of the study design (Callary et al., 2015b).

Experiential and interpretative reflexivity. An initial interview was done with the PI by one of her supervisors to identify assumptions and biases from her previous experiences. Although the PI had no prior conceptions/experiences of synchro, her most significant sport

experiences were foremost team-based, which she credited for meeting the most important people in her life. Upon completing five years of women's university soccer, she contemplated what that meant for her future sport identity and how she might meaningfully contribute to communities through sport, and develop sport in new ways. Her experience coaching youth soccer further indicated her passion for sport existed beyond her own participation. Upon consulting her supervisors, who are dedicated researchers in Masters sport and coaching, she further appreciated sport beyond the competitive realm that she had lived in, and its importance over a lifetime. These components were the driving forces behind understanding the relationships and ID that existed in a women's Masters team amongst the MC and MSks, that ultimately configured a shared sport experience.

We also acknowledge that our MC participant had substantial academic experience and knowledge in the field of sport psychology. It is not exceptional to find a highly educated MC, in both sport and academic domains (e.g., Callary et al., 2017) and many MCs hold graduate level degrees in relevant domains of sport science/coaching. Primarily, her PhD studies were in the youth sport context. Thus, rather than dismiss or set aside how her experiences might influence her responses, the PI led a brief intake interview that prepared us to better understand where the MC positioned herself within the field of sport psychology, how that might bear on her knowledge of coaching, and further, to interpret her responses with reference to her life's context. We believed that a reflexive discussion focused on the MC allowed us to make more in-depth interpretations of the MCs depictions, and to be as transparent as possible within our naturalistic study design.

Member checks. After typing each interview transcript, participants were forwarded complete copies via email and informed they could freely review the document to request any

changes, to add/remove content, or to discuss any material with the PI. Two MSks provided notes on their transcripts, one made minor edits to grammar and terminology, and the other simply wanted to express that she felt sensitive to some of the material she shared and requested certain sections not be used to avoid offending anyone who was discussed adversely.

Results

The outcomes of ID relied on team members working together to build mutuality, meaning that all relationships within the team worked in unison to ultimately generate the desired team outcomes. Six first order themes were developed and were broken down into second- and third-order themes, respectively (Table 2). The higher-order themes represent 1) the *outcomes* of an interdependent team, 2-4) each plane of the TSMI (*C-A dyad*, *Athlete(s)-Athlete(s)*, and *Coach-Group* relationships) 5) the *vertices* of the TSMI, and 6) the inlying *mutuality* of all team members (see Appendix I for operational definitions). Quotes from the MC and/or the MSks represent each theme, who have been assigned pseudonyms to protect identities.

Outcomes of Team Interdependence

The outcomes that the participants perceived that they gained from being part of the team set the stage for *why* they were invested in an interdependent team. Many participants described the products (e.g., benefits, results, costs) derived from a shared MA team experience. In the first month of the season, the MSks and MC outlined their anticipations and desired sport experiences such as forming relationships, working as a team, improving skills, getting a workout, and having fun. Maddy, the MC, stated “I’m striving for them to get a workout in, that they have positive interpersonal relationships with the people they’re there with, and that they improve. Those are really my only goals. Anything above that, bonus.” Julia, described the same values, anticipating her first year in Masters sport:

I'm really big on *team*. So, we're all working together and there's the least amount of conflict. And not just the team members are working together, but we're working with the coach and she is working with us, not just 'I'm telling you what to do'. At the same time, not the team telling her what to do the whole time. I'm big on having fun as a team and as an individual. It's not just about skating. Sometimes, someone's having a bad day and we just all make her day better by working together. I also like fitness, I like something that kicks my butt that I have to really work hard at.

Later in the season, MSks were asked if the outcomes of their season matched their initial inclinations. Almost unanimously, they discussed outcomes of one competition weekend as the highlight of their season, but the reasons *why* varied from the team performance scores, to the collective feeling of unity they had. Ellen illustrated:

The two skates at Regionals were awesome. I personally had little boo-boos here and there, but the feeling that we got getting off the ice collectively... yeah, it was nice to have that feeling. It was this team, and we had two [skaters] new to synchro, and lots of new people [on the team]. It's kinda hard to get a team to gel together, but we walked off the ice and it was like, you know when you "drop the mic?" That was the moment.

Maddy corroborated such sentiments about Regionals. She discussed how the scored results of the team's skates validated the group's season-long effort and cohesion:

A highlight was definitely the two skates at Regionals. Because, I want them to skate well. The goal for all the practices was team cohesion, so Regionals was really great because everyone got along really well, we had a lot of fun as a team, and the two skates matched what they've been practicing, and then the scores matched what we expected.

Everyone left Regionals feeling like we did really well, we're a good team, and we had fun. And that's all I want: we reached our potential.

Anneka described how she felt the team's focus and collective "team spirit" were more about building unity than performing to win, and were a reward for their interdependent efforts:

Definitely the team spirit, the cohesion, it makes all the difference. [The spirit was] just very respectful, fun. I think what people wanted to do this year was not so much fitness, for example, it wasn't so much a performance year. I don't want to say we didn't care about our performance because I think we did, but it was more to 'let's be together and have fun'. All the ingredients were there just to have a positive, fun, experience!

Anneka touched on a potential 'cost' of being on a highly interdependent adult team. She alluded to pressures of having to conform to group goals for team spirit and cohesion, juxtaposed with discussion of the different types of rewards that could stem from competition.

Coach-Athlete Dyad Plane

Participants described essential one-on-one relationships, involving the MC and a MSk. These dyadic relations ensued due to affective, behavioural, and cognitive aspects of their interactions respectively representing facets of closeness, complementarity, and commitment.

Closeness. The affective component of the dyad embodied varying degrees of emotional attachment, representing either a functional sport-focused relationship, or a companionship that extended beyond the sporting context. Some MSks were content that their C-A relationship was focused within the sport context and did not require an affective attachment, which we refer to as *conventional*. Danni perceived the MC's role strictly within the boundaries of their sport:

[Maddy] drives the team. I think it's very important that she is the leader of the group. If not, no one will be motivated. I guess that's my own opinion, but she motivates us right?

Her goal is to make sure we do the best we can do, so we have a good program and we're proud of what we achieve... she's a very social person and I'm not that social really.

Conventional relationships proved to be effective for the MC and the sport-focused MAs, as the coach was able to meet their athletic needs by maintaining reliable C-A relationships with less emphasis on socio-emotional attachment. For others, *friendship* with the MC was an important asset to their sport experience. MSks like Sylvie described their relationship with Maddy as a big part of their life, even outside of the rink.

I consider her to be among my better friends. We do things outside of skating, we train for the half marathon together, we socialize together... We got into what we would call Maddy-Mondays! She would come over after skating, have dinner, throw laundry in, and we'd chat, it was awesome! She was thinking I was doing this huge favour for her, but it was also a huge favour for me.

Maddy spoke similarly about her MSks individually, describing the emotional attachment of having "some of these women as my actual best friends". She described having Sylvie around during one of life's milestone moments, "My boyfriend and I just bought a house and we had Sylvie over for dinner and that was like our first night cooking [in our new home]!" In turn, Maddy's caring relationships not only positively influenced the MSk's experiences in and out of the rink, but her own as well.

Commitment. The cognitive component of dyadic relations was described by the MC's and various MSks' reciprocal intentions to commit to their sporting relationship over the course of a single season, and/or for future seasons. Maddy and various MSks relied upon one another for *short term* commitment, by being present at weekly practices. Julia shared how Maddy's passion and energy was crucial in keeping her committed, "If a coach doesn't really feel

committed to us, it's hard for us to be committed to them, to showing up, and being consistent. Maddy's very passionate about skating and she really likes to [emphasize] how cool skating can be." Even when life's responsibilities were weighing on Clare's commitment at the start of the season, Maddy inspired her to stay fully invested in their relationship:

I told Maddy, 'I don't think I should skate this year, can I just be a spare? I'm going to be on the road every other week.' She's, like, 'I want you as a full timer. I'm sure you could do it!'. Like, if your coach is an ass and you don't really care then, you're not committed.

Maddy's demonstration of her commitment to each of the MSks was evident in the way that she modelled her engagement, and encouraged them to skate.

The MC was accommodating in promoting *long term* commitment to individuals over many seasons. With respect to a veteran MSk who was considering exiting the team, she stated:

I don't know how much fun Ellen had this season. She always says 'oh I don't know if I'm coming back', but I am a little worried that she might not [next] year, so I'll be on her this summer. And next year, I'll do whatever she wants, like 'tell me who you want to skate next to next season and you can have it'.

In turn, Ellen felt that because her queries were heard and answered, she was more likely to stay committed to Maddy:

If I feel like if the coach knows what she's doing, and she's willing to listen to my feedback if something's not working, then I am more committed. But if the coach shuts me down and has this vision that, you know, I just can't execute *and* I can't say anything, then I'm not committed and I leave.

Maddy's receptive coaching style helped to reinforce various MA's commitment to their sporting relationship, and maintain their engagement over the course of many seasons.

Complementarity. The behavioural component was demonstrated by the MC's and a MSk's corresponding actions regarding feedback and other training strategies. The MSks valued individualized feedback from Maddy, which entailed specific *feedback preferences* or a style of delivery to which they responded best. For example, Aneka wanted constructive criticism to help her learn, but appreciated how Maddy acknowledged her when she performed well. During practice, she liked how "Maddy will take us one at a time for like four minutes and talk to us individually, 'okay, you need to do this, you need to do that, this is your strength, this is your weakness. So, work on that, keep going on this.' That's very helpful." Maddy showed complementarity in providing feedback the way MSks wanted; when Maddy described giving Steph feedback, she said Steph would, "not question it, not be offended, not try to justify it, but just be like, 'oh okay, got it'". In parallel, Steph said, "I don't mind being called out [in terms of feedback] because if I get called out on something that I didn't know I'm doing wrong, then I'm like 'oh, show me what it's supposed to be.' I don't want to keep doing it wrong."

Despite Maddy's effort to correspond with her individual MSks, the needs of the many did not always complement the needs of the few. Due to the MC's priority to meet the needs of the team as a whole in limited time, there could not always be total correspondence within the C-A dyads, manifesting as a *lack of complementarity*. For instance, while many MSks enjoyed frequent video feedback, Alex preferred it in moderation:

I think that her taking videos when we do [sections] is very effective because then you can go and watch them and remember them. But, when we're doing our warmup and she shows us how awful our barrel turns are, I hate that I know how bad they are. I think that everyone knows what they feel like, you know what I mean?

Although the video recordings provided by Maddy allowed many MSks to focus in on their own individual skating, Alex did not feel the need to review each of her attempts.

The MC's ability to negotiate with her MSks therefore had to be as dynamic as the sport itself. With that, the MC and MSks needed to adapt, and *negotiate constraints* in order to proceed with their training effectively. Maddy strategized ways to develop the team's program while also providing individualized attention. One way, was to offer the MSks an opportunity to attend summer skill sessions. In season however, Maddy described managing season-long plans, explaining, "The program comes first, and then I work on the individuals... First two months of the season, there isn't time [for individual coaching] when we're working on the program." The MC thus attended to the team program at the expense of individualized, dyadic attention. Danni understood Maddy's strategy to managing team constraints, "With 20 people, she has to focus on *overall* what the program looks like. It's hard to go into detail and give feedback to everyone [early in season]. Everyone's focus is to put the program together and then fine-tune." Danni and Maddy illustrated the limits that existed for dyadic relationships in team sports.

Athlete(s)-Athlete(s) Plane

It was evident that ID within the team existed as more than simply a collection of C-A dyads. The MSks demonstrated ID amongst themselves in the absence of the MC, which necessitated the development of a conceptual framing to discern athlete-to-athlete relationships, i.e. those that existed between two MSks, or within and amongst a group of MSks on a team.

Peer advising. Teammates exhibited ID through behaviours and discussions that promoted learning within the *sporting context*. Joan looked to peers to advise her on skill and technique refinement, "Anneka or AJ, they're really good skaters technically and they look good. If I see them do something, I probably want to do it the way they do it because I know their

technique is great and beautiful to watch”. Although Joan was a veteran MSk, she watched younger skaters and sought to replicate their style to improve her on-ice presentation. Erika, who was a newcomer to the team and to synchro, appreciated how the more experienced members provided advice with respect to skills and technique in the team’s routine:

Sylvie told me ‘your only responsibility is to grab the person you’re skating towards. The person behind you will catch you -- that’s not your problem!’ So, I can focus on reaching one person as opposed to two at a time. Sometimes Maddy can’t really coach [individuals] because there’s so much to deal with, but the little tips are nice from everybody else.

Many MSks described how their teammates shared valuable *lifestyle* lessons and personal development opportunities beyond skating. Julia explained:

I could ask any person on the team, “Should I do this, or that?” and they will not judge. Even if you don’t ask for advice, they’ll say ‘Maybe you should do this...’ But it doesn’t come across in a controlling way, they’re actually trying to help you.

Each of the MSks provided examples of how the range of ages among teammates added richness in perspectives to their team climate, where discussions of one another’s stage of life provided them with information that they may not have had access to otherwise. Clare talked about a teammate preparing her for a job interview, “I really felt like that’s probably the reason why I passed the interview.” A sentiment shared by many athletes was the parallel between important advisory relationships and performance/skating ability. They described the team as a “family” where in and out of skating, “literally and figuratively, we’re holding you up!”

Roles. MSks contributed to the training and social context, which justified various roles on the team. Some roles were understood according to the *extra responsibilities* that a few MSks

took upon themselves to handle, such as administrative duties. Clare articulated roles pertaining to interpersonal, financial, and travel management duties: “Steph’s the people, Judy’s the money, and Mae books the hotels, puts the schedule together. I think it makes everything easier because it’s not always the same person that has to be stressed with everything.” When it came to nominating people for roles, these few MSks were happy to volunteer their time, and the remaining MSks did not have to concern themselves with the finer details. Erika described the skater-regulated roles as crucial so that Maddy could use her time to develop the program, and provide skating-related feedback, “[the roles] are really key to make the team work because Maddy is only one person. She can’t keep track of the absences, the dresses and everything.”

The MSks, especially those like Joan who hustled weekly to make skating work with her demanding job, were appreciative: “It’s always like a ‘wow factor’ because I just have to show up, get ready, put the skates on and perform!” These skater-led tasks were not necessarily mirrored in other skating teams. Alex, an experienced MSk but first-year member on this team, was surprised by the degree of skater investment in roles on her new team. She acknowledged, like others, how these roles relieved many members of administrative concerns, freeing them to fully relax and enjoy their competitions.

Roles were further understood amongst MSks according to the *expectations* to which they held one another accountable, such as for their recurring presence at training and competitions. If there were conflicting priorities that interfered with a MSk’s ability to attend training, they expected an absent teammate to review the online material so she could be prepared for subsequent training sessions. If not, it interfered with the group’s ability to progress, as depicted by Joan who expressed how it can be trying at times to train to the team’s full potential when pieces of the team are missing, “I need to have that person to know what I’m doing. Not having

her there, I find that tough... that body that is supposed to be there is not there, so now I have to pretend [but] there's a hole." Holly and Sylvie described this succinctly as "respecting everybody else's time" and "not 'no-showing', not coming late all the time, or if you can't be there, letting everyone know in advance." MSks depended on one another to be present at practice and fill their positions in the program, to avoid leaving a literal gap that could interfere with their program development.

Coach-Group Plane

Participants often described relational aspects or ID between the MC and the team, implicating either the team unit as a whole (super-group) or particular subsets of athletes (sub-group). These group-based interactions pertained to the *sporting* context as well as *social* engagements beyond sport.

Super-group. Maddy interacted with the team as a whole, in capacities related to training, and pre-competition engagements. She provided group feedback regarding program or technical information and organization. Steph felt, "the more organized Maddy is, the smoother the practice goes." Because of their limited time on the ice, Maddy created 10-20 minute video commentaries regarding the group's performance from training or competition and disseminated it to the team to review off-ice. Danni was impressed, exclaiming "I can't believe she does that [creates those videos] every week, it's taking a lot of her time, and I appreciate it."

Maddy also allowed for some group discussion and gave the MSks a voice in designing and refining the program. Aneka expressed her contentment with having a voice:

Maddy gives us a lot of latitude to make some decisions, or just like 'okay you guys decide on the arms for this [part of the routine]. You guys, if you have an idea, go ahead.'

So she does give us some liberty to try to come up with stuff sometimes if she's stuck with another issue to deal with. Which is great.

Maddy therefore left some decisions to her MSks, which allowed them to feel involved in their program development, and optimized her time to pay attention to other needs.

Due to her sport expertise and experience, the MC was sometimes asked to join MSks on the ice to better understand their concerns/questions in a more physical manner. Steph recounted, "Last practice, someone just said, "Come skate in our line so you can feel what you're trying to get me to feel, or so you can feel how weird it feels for us." In turn, Maddy acknowledged this helped her become better prepared to step into a void in the team unit at competition, should a MSk be absent at the last minute.

The participants credited a social component shared by the MC and group for fulfilling their overall synchro experience. For example, Erika described Maddy's on-ice terminology, in that addressing the MSks as "friends" created a comfortable atmosphere that was "really welcoming and open to having new people [skaters]." Julia further explained how the social environment that the MC helped establish, one without hierarchy, added to the team climate:

If there wasn't really a friendship type relationship then it would kind of lose the whole fun part to the team. And it would also be very like, team—coach (*places one hand above the other*) instead of the coach being part of the team. So having her involved, I think, is a really important thing.

Maddy equally valued the relationships that she was able to collectively build with the women on the team, "If everyone left, I don't know... I'd have to really think about how I want to spend my time. I love skating but, take everyone out of it, would I still want to do as much of this?"

Probably not.” In essence, the MC depended on the social relationships to fulfil her experience, just as much as the MSks.

Sub-groups. On some occasions, the MC depended on interactions with subgroups or divisions of the team for *sport-specific* input, which were often delineated based on MSks’ ages, or expertise. Relations with certain age/experience sub-groups were helpful to Maddy in establishing her footing when she first started coaching. In particular, Maddy was mentored by a group of veteran MSks in her first year of coaching. Ellen noted that, “Maddy kept worrying about how we’d react [to her telling us what to do]... we were like ‘no, you’re the coach, tell us what you want. We’ll do what you want, that’s the deal.’” Another veteran, Joan, commented on how the MC learned over time, “Maddy always had to ask [us] permission almost. She did change that, she’s more assertive now, which she should be”. The give and take between the MC and the experienced members of the team created opportunities for the MC to learn coaching technique from MSks, while they reciprocally learned skating technique from her.

Differently, in order to develop and integrate new MSks on the team Maddy interacted with the group of MSks who were still learning about synchro in a particular fashion, particularly to accelerate the development of their primary skills. The MC described how this required more frequent coaching feedback, to which the MSks appeared to be receptive:

Erika and Danni are both brand new, and they are both fine being told exactly what to do. They are both very methodological with how they apply [my] feedback, they actually have the perfect personality for what I want a new skater to be. They don’t have egos, and I don’t know if this has to do with their education or what but I could be like ‘fix that please’ and they’d do it.

In this way, Maddy and the new MSks depended on each other uniquely. From Maddy's special attention, the new MSks got to learn the sport more efficiently, and because of their positive attitudes and receptivity, it took pressure off of Maddy to integrate them within the team.

Social subgroups that included the MC formed as a result of lifestyle factors related to culture, age, or occupation, or similar interests such as other sporting activities. Clare explained, "Everyone gets along regardless of whether you hang-out outside of skating or not. Some become closer by virtue of age, sometimes it's interest. A lot of them were doing dragon boat together so that was another opportunity to bond." Ellen agreed: "[Sub-groups] are usually around the ages. You have some that are able to transcend. Like Maddy is part of every group because she's just so curious by nature! It's one of the things we love about her."

MSks, like Danni, whose social priorities from sport were not as high, did not feel excluded by social subgroups, "Some people have been skating together for a long time, some do other sports and activities together. But I don't feel that these impact the rest of the team, or people feel excluded by that." Maddy understood some MSks' priorities did not always allot for external social activities, but to keep an inclusive environment, she kept the possibility open:

I think everyone knows that I'm available to anyone who wants to be. The ones who I'm not as close to [socially], it's purely out of like pragmatics because they don't dragon boat or they don't do the summer [skating]. If they don't do those extra things, then I'm not gonna spend as much time with them. But if they invite me to do things, then I'll do those things, or when I organize things, I invite everyone.

The MC did not therefore place importance on establishing social relationships with each skating subgroup, but instead she sought to understand her MSks' preferences for social engagement, and responded appropriately to their desires.

Vertices: The Dynamics between Planes

Interactions that occurred in relationships in one plane often influenced relational interactions occurring in an adjacent plane. These interactions, understood as traversing the vertices of the TSMI (Figure 2), demonstrated the dynamic flow of ID in an adult team sport.

C-A \leftrightarrow C-Group. ID in the team was evidenced by interactions within a C-A dyad that influenced interactions between the MC and the team. For instance, Maddy explained how input she received from a C-A dyad could inform her team decisions:

Judy had run into Julia at a rink somewhere last spring, and this is before Julia had committed to the team. So Judy said to me, ‘I really hope Julia joins the team, that girl really impressed me. Julia’s 17, she knew exactly who I was, engaged in a normal adult conversation with me, asked how my kids were, just like a normal, functioning adult’. I thought, okay perfect, that’s exactly what we need.

Judy’s discussion with Maddy regarding the potential new MSk confirmed the MC’s inclinations about adding Julia to the roster, which in turn impacted the composition of the team for that season. There were also bi-directional interactions that stemmed from the MC’s consideration of the group’s behaviours, which prompted a discussion within a C-A dyad, and was acted upon at the level of the group. Maddy recounted:

Last practice, I wanted to do the two run-throughs [of the program] but I saw [all kinds] of people were sick, I’ve got people off the ice. I’m making [the team] do lots of sections, and [I started wondering] if run-throughs were gonna add value. So then I asked Steph at the break, ‘how many are you feeling?’ And she’s like ‘maybe only one?’ and I’m like ‘okay, well I’m debating between zero and one’. And she says ‘oh, well in that case I don’t think we need a run-through tonight.’

Notably, the advice derived from this C-A interaction subsequently informed Maddy's coaching decision to omit run-throughs for the team as a whole. This dynamic, however, was determined by the MC's solicitation of information from particular, but not all, dyads. Maddy said she "took Steph's input on that. But there are a lot of people I wouldn't ask about those kinds of things, because they wouldn't be thinking about the whole team, they'd be thinking about themselves." The MC felt that some dyadic interactions were more likely than others to have impacts that benefited the team as a group.

C-A \leftrightarrow Athlete(s)-Athlete(s). This vertex described relational dynamics that conjoined C-A dyadic interactions with relational aspects among and between athletes in contexts where the MC was not present. This dynamic often depended on a MSk who served as a "go-between" the MC and the MSks. Julia described "a good system of communication between Maddy and the team because Steph is the team captain. She talks to people on the team, what they want, and then talks to Maddy and vice versa." Steph elaborated: "I've had complaints [about things the coach does], things that [skaters] bring up during practice. I mean we've [Maddy and I] had discussions about that."

In other instances, the MC used her dyadic interactions to encourage a MSk to mentor a new teammate. Clare reminisced about her first season on the team being mentored, and compared it to her current season where it was then her turn to teach and support:

I was placed beside this girl named Jen, first season, and she kind of just took me under her wing. It might have been Maddy that said 'hey, Jen you're in charge of Clare this season'. Because I have noticed now that I've been on the team long enough, sometimes Maddy will be like, 'hey, this is the new girl, I'm gonna put you in the room with her because you're friendly, you're approachable.'

Maddy confirmed Clare's inclination about strategic placement, and described how Clare was a good match up to help this season's new recruit, Erika:

When Erika joined, I told Clare, 'Erika's a project for you. Take her on. She's yours, make her fit in, make her have a good time, make her enjoy this team, make her your friend.' And Clare's like 'heck yeah.' I think Clare enjoyed having her buddy.

The influence of the MC's dyadic relationship with a MSk had a dynamic effect on interactions between two MSks in the athlete-athlete plane, which resulted in a new relationship.

Athlete(s)-Athlete(s) ← → Coach-Group. This vertex was described by interactions amongst athletes themselves that influenced interactions between the MC and the team. This was sometimes a result of the athletes refining strategies amongst themselves and transferring information from their respective athlete group to the coached team context. Steph described such an example after the MSks had been working on their own to resolve an element:

We'll do a quick check [with the skaters in our line]– 'hey, is this what we're supposed to be doing? Or is it this?' Because we can feel when everyone's not doing the same thing. If there's no consensus among the line [of skaters] on what we're supposed to be doing, then we'll bring it to Maddy.

The MSks had latitude to work things out amongst themselves, but they had Maddy to make the last call if in fact they needed to resolve an issue. This vertex was further illustrated by interactions that occurred between the MC and the group in the coached team context, whereby the MSks would subsequently carry information to interactions among themselves away from Maddy. For example, Maddy's approach within the coach-group plane created a comfortable climate between athletes, which infiltrated the nature of interactions in the athlete-athlete plane, even during tryouts when there was an element of intra-team competition. Sylvie explained:

I think how she coaches the team does influence all the relationships because she creates a vibe, it's almost like a brand. She accepts feedback and she creates a vibe where, it's okay to say things, but also that you treat people with respect. And people treated each other differently [during try-outs]—it's more, like let's do this together.

Sylvie's quote speaks to Maddy's important influence on how the MSks perceived, and by consequence treated, one another.

Mutuality: The Core of a Shared Sport Experience

When the interdependent relationships between, and amongst the MC and MSks were characterized by the same values and principles in terms of their feelings, behaviours, and thoughts towards their sport experiences, they represented mutuality of perceived ID. In the current context, mutuality was present when a coach's or athlete's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours were congruent with those of another team member (or members) regarding training, or their interpersonal relationships. To illustrate, Maddy explained how she strategically placed a veteran MSk on the team next to a first year MSk because of her conducive personality, "Ellen is next to Danni for the whole program because she has a type of personality that could help Danni learn." Ellen (the veteran) concurred:

Maddy said she put [Danni] next to me because she knew that I could put her where she needs to be. Maddy refers to me as a tank [laughing]. Although, as I get older I don't think I'm much of a tank. What she meant by that is, if you're out of place and you're next to me, I will push you, I will put you there!

Strategic program placement was understood as being mutually beneficial across the board by team members, and Sylvie confirmed the MC's methods of placement and explained its overall effect on the group:

Maddy does this, which no other coach I ever had took the time or mental energy to do: She not only places you according to where she needs the skill and also by height to make [the performance] look better, but she also makes an effort to put people she knows connect with each other, near each other. Or separates those that she knows maybe wouldn't like to skate next to each other. That had a big impact on the integration and creating that culture of one team and friendship.

When it came to the relationships between MSks, there was congruence in welcoming new teammates and working towards the team's socially cohesive outcomes. Eighteen-year old Julia, described how her transition into adult sport was facilitated by veteran MSks:

I kind of thought, oh it's weird I'm skating with a whole bunch of older people but actually I really like it. There's none of all those little high school drama things, it's like, what you see is what it is... It's very different [from youth skating] due to the fact that everyone knows what they're doing, and I have to catch up to *them*... I grew up having Holly, so I find that if I ever need anything I'll look to Holly.

Holly also explained that she felt it was part of her responsibility as an experienced MSk to create a welcoming atmosphere to those who just joined the team:

I see my role as making sure that all the new people do feel welcome. It's hard to join a new team and you really want to feel like you're valued for being there and people will enjoy it more, and skate better, and stay invested if they feel like they're a part of it...

With a new teammate, I want to make sure I get a chance to talk to them and learn some things about them. I've asked Julia about her lab exams and things like that outside of skating, just trying to make them feel welcome.

The MC also reflected on Holly's influence on Julia, "I think it's been good for [Julia]. I knew she'd have a good season next to Holly, and I think she did." Thus, mutuality was illustrated by the fact that MSks depended upon one another as much as they did on the MC in terms of manipulating the outcomes of their quality sport experiences. When the MC and skaters were on the same page and understood each other's situation and prior experience, they were able to work together toward positive outcomes.

Discussion

The aim of this instrumental case study was to provide insight into the phenomenon of relational coaching in Masters sport by investigating the role of interdependent relationships within C-A dyads, amongst MSks, as well as throughout the team as a whole. We explored the 3+1Cs model (Jowett, 2007) in relation to an adult sport team, in order to make nuanced interpretations about intra-team relationships. Poczwardowski et al. (2006) asserted that there might be team-context variables that influence C-A relationships and our results further indicated that each collective member and relationship within an all-women adult sport team can have a bearing on not only other relationships within the team, but also on the outcomes of the MC and MSks' sport experiences respectively, and collectively. This prompted the development of the TSMI, which illustrates the mutuality that structures the interdependent relationships within the team, resulting in desirable outcomes from the MC and MSks' sport experiences. The current findings have multiple implications regarding interdependent relationships between and among a MC and her female athletes, that can be considered conceptually and practically.

Conceptual Implications

Throughout our analyses, we realized it was not as simple as conceptualizing ID according to the (dyadic) MC and MSk's reported closeness, commitment, or complementarity.

In fact, it appeared erroneous to assume that a team functions as a collective of C-A dyads, or to attempt to isolate ID within the respective C-A dyads, separate from the overall team context. Jowett et al. (2005) stated that individual sports coaches and athletes have more opportunities to develop deeper and more interdependent relationships, and described team sport C-A relationships as “hierarchical, more formal, less intimate, and more flexible” (p. 159). Indeed, C-A relationships were variant and more flexible in the team, and the MSks’ also built relationships with others (i.e. teammates). However, in a Masters team, our results showed that autonomy supplants hierarchy (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; MacLellan et al., 2018), friendships replace formality and actually provoke intimacy, and flexibility can only be described as dynamic and context-specific. With that, if a single dyad does not demonstrate high levels of ID, it does not mean that the outcomes of either the MC or MA in that particular dyad will be hindered relative to the outcomes of their overall experience because of the nature of ID and mutuality beyond dyads.

Beyond the dyadic 3+1C’s model, the TSMI takes into account other interdependent relationships that occurred between the MC and the team as a unit, and amongst skaters, and explicitly considers the outcomes of mutual, interdependent relationships in a Masters team. For instance, initially attempting to operationalize the commitment and complementarity of dyads within the Masters team presented complexities, as the fundamentals of the sport required cognitive and behavioural cooperation with the coach, *and* with teammates in order to explain the team’s ID. When asked about commitment, MSks attested they were committed to the MC but *also* to the team, and to their love of the sport itself. When asked about complementarity, the MSks described reciprocal and corresponding behaviours that complemented the MC, but importantly, the MSks *as well*. This means we cannot exclude team variables (norms, roles, etc.)

from a discussion of ID in teams, nor can we exclude the subtle, often indirect, but significant influence of the MC on each of these factors. The broader social context had a bearing on individual and group satisfaction in terms of sport relationships and experiences, and therefore needs to be considered conceptually in regards to the experiential outcomes of the MSks. The TSMI depicts the MC as having a direct role on two planes (C-A dyad, C-GROUP). This conceptualization aligns with traditional models of coaching, such as Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Abderrahim, and Russel's (1995) coaching model, where the coach is placed at the center to depict the centrality of the coach's role in athlete development, athlete management, and coach-directed decisions impacting the sporting context and climate. However, the TSMI does not fully assign a MC a central role, but rather an influential, dynamic, indirect role on the plane that represents MSks' relationships and interactions. In Masters sport, while the MC is a leading asset in terms of structuring of the MAs' program, skill development (Callary et al., 2015a; 2017), commitment, and motivation (Young & Medic, 2011), there is equal weight (ergo, an equilateral model) placed on the MC and the MAs to manipulate the outcomes of their sport experiences. An important take-home of the TSMI is that the MC is not placed at the center point of the model. This signifies that while a Masters team could exist in theory without a MC, her presence significantly enhances not only the subjective experiences of each member, but also contributes to the development of relationships among teammates, to the cohesion of the group as a whole, and to the overall efficiency of the practice environment and competitive performance thereafter.

Practical Implications

The current findings illustrate various qualities and characteristics that provide insight into coaching practices for MCs, specifically with respect to relational approaches in an all-female adult team sport. Our findings suggest that relationships contribute to MAs' performance

and sport experience. These influential relationships were not only attributed to the C-A dyads, but also those that branched off, that is, they were influenced by C-A interactions and grew into important athlete-athlete, or group-based relationships. Within a web of influential relationships, we further encourage MCs to inquire about, and account for their respective MAs' social preferences. The current findings, obtained in an all-female team sport, reiterate key findings regarding coaching preferences and MAs' expectations from coaches in mixed-gender, individual-sport contexts. Specifically, the MSks had diverse preferences for feedback, distinct learning needs depending on their past experiences, and a variety of social preferences stemming from their sport involvement. These themes corroborate extant literature that suggests it is an expectation of MCs to understand MAs' preferences for individualized coaching (Callary et al., 2017), which should include cognisance of the diverse interpersonal expectations and different social narratives of MAs (Rathwell et al. 2015) that have implications within the sport context. This can be a challenge in a team sport where the experiences are shared, but with that, the MC can also utilize the support of a larger network of MAs to assist in her execution of coaching responsibilities.

This study has broader implications for understanding team-based Masters sport. Within their sport, MSks relied upon one another to be challenged, and to hold each other accountable to be better versions of themselves as athletes. While this study was focused on the important relationships with a Masters team, we wish to note the highly competitive nature of the team, and that the MSks' motivations towards performance mastery on competition day could be attributed to the relationships they had with team members, and their sense of responsibility to peers to perform in their role to their highest potential. Elements of peer advising or mentoring (Hoffmann, Loughhead, & Bloom, 2017; Ragins & Cotton, 1993) were evident, which had a

telling impact on the ID within the team. Ragins and Cotton (1993) asserted that those with past experience as a protégé in a mentoring relationship, were more willing to mentor others. This finding was consistent in the present study, which described multiple peer advisory relationships amongst skaters that enhanced the lifestyle and training development of teammates. These types of mentor-protégé relationships can benefit both parties, and encourages peer learning over the course of multiple seasons and generations of a team. A further advantage of peer advising in a Masters team specifically, is that it encourages leadership and accountability amongst MAs which could ultimately support MC in responding to the demands and inquiries of each and every individual in the group.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study elicited notable limitations. First, the PI was only able to interview the MC and 11 of the 20 MSks that comprised the team, causing her to draw interpretations from only just over half of the given team. In the same vein however, there was such an abundance of data collected from the participants that we were unable to present all the gathered information within the boundaries of a single manuscript. Future research on Masters teams could attempt to analyze the entirety of a group, or could further compare the variability of team climates, environments, and experiences related to the TSMI, across multiple groups or sports.

We further acknowledge the constraints of the study by the PI's limited ability to speak to the tensions/conflicts that (potentially) existed within the team, due to the ethical requirement to safeguard participants' confidentiality. Sharing the details of certain stories could have exposed both the teller, and the individual(s) featured in the stories, which could have had negative consequences for the MC, particular skaters, and/or relationships within the team. That said, while participants were probed on tension/conflict that had been present on the team, many

spoke to issues in previous seasons, and others could not think of an example and explicitly stated that the PI had 'caught a good year'. This instance speaks to the study framework in terms of sport satisfaction relying on rewards outweighing costs in sporting relationships. Regardless of whether tension manifested from C-A interactions, or A-A interactions, none of the narrated conflicts were so detrimental as to outweigh the rewards that the participants also reported.

Finally, while the notion of ID within a team could be understood in a variety of team contexts, including those outside of the realms of sport, the present instrumental case study was situated within an all-women context. Future research should inquire about what relationships and ID are like within an all-men context, or within a mixed-gender sample.

Conclusion

The present article sought to explore and explain what C-A relationships were like within a Masters team sport, as well as the broader development of ID that existed within C-A dyads, amongst athletes, and throughout the team as a whole. The Masters TSMI was created to visually represent the diverse yet mutual interdependent relationships within the team, that had a bearing on the overall outcomes of respective and collective MC and MSk sport experiences. We conclude that in a female Masters team sport, ID exists beyond the C-A dyad, and that the coach is not the individual and not necessarily the central determinant of the relational, social and developmental outcomes of her respective MAs. Rather, the group functions as a sum of mutually invested sportspersons towards subjective and collective goals.

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Table 1

Participant Demographic and Prior Experience with Synchro and Coach

Participants	Age	Prior years of synchro experience (approx.)	Prior years coached by Maddy
Maddy (MC)	32	10-15	--
Ellen	55	20-30	5+
Joan	53	20-30	4
Holly	53	20-30	5+
Sylvie	52	20-30	5+
Anneka	36	10-20	4
Danni	35	0	0
Clare	33	10-15	5+
Steph	31	10-15	5+
Alex	29	10-15	0
Erika	28	0	0
Julia	18	5-10	1

Note. Eleven MSks, and one MC participated in interviews. The average age of participants was 39 and they displayed a wide range of prior synchro experience.

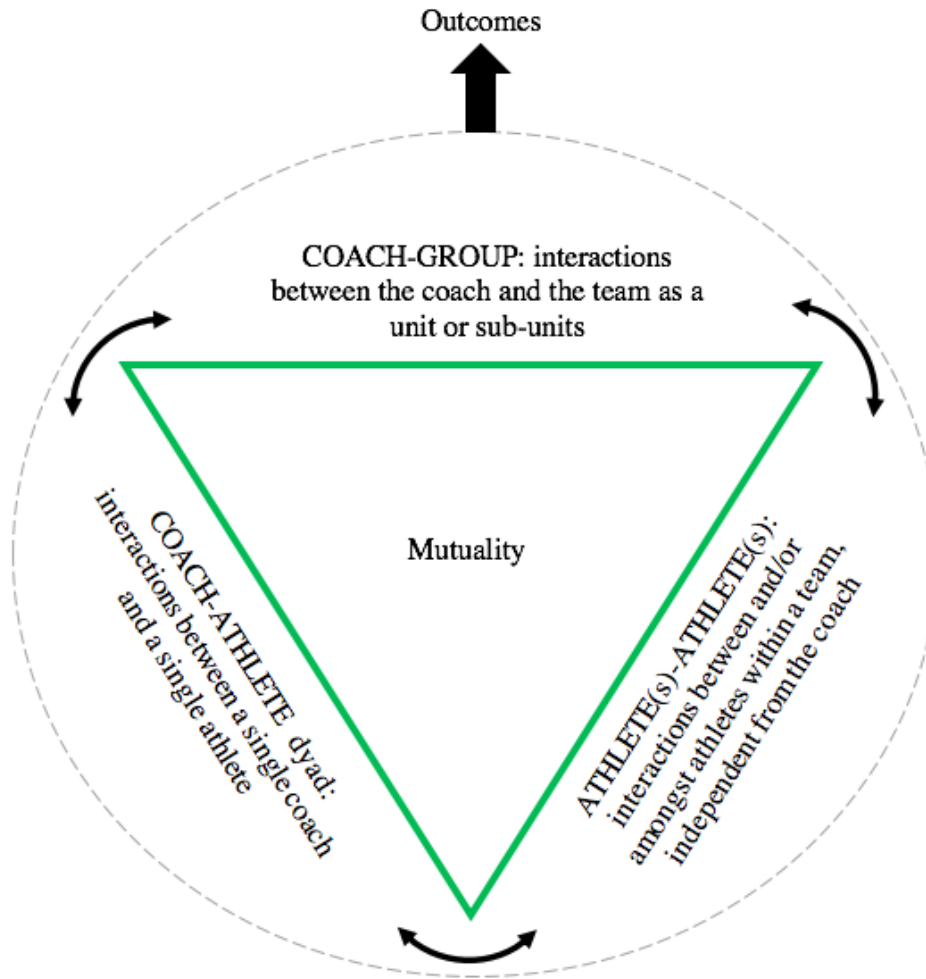


Figure 1. The Masters Team Sport Model of Interdependence represents the complex network of influential relationships that exist in a Masters team including the Masters coach, and Masters athletes.

Table 2

Themes and subthemes

1st Order	2nd Order	3rd Order
OUTCOMES	Corresponding QSEs	
COACH-ATHLETE DYAD	Closeness	<i>Conventional Friendship</i>
	Commitment	<i>Short term Long term</i>
	Complementarity	<i>Feedback preferences Lack of complementarity Negotiation of constraints</i>
ATHLETE(s)-ATHLETE(s)	Peer advisors	<i>Sport Lifestyle</i>
	Roles	<i>Extra responsibilities Expectations</i>
COACH-GROUP	Super-group	<i>Sport Social</i>
	Sub-groups	<i>Sport Social</i>
VERTICES	C-A \leftrightarrow C-GROUP C-A \leftrightarrow A-A A-A \leftrightarrow C-GROUP	
MUTUALITY	C-A DYAD ATHLETE(s)-ATHLETE(s) COACH-GROUP	

Note. First, second, and third order themes describing the interdependent nature of a Masters team. QSE stands for *quality sport experiences*.

Article 2

Glitter and guts: Narrative portrayal of the lived experiences of women in a coached

Masters sport team

Glitter and guts: Narrative portrayal of the lived experiences of women in a coached Masters
sport team

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Abstract

Although women have traditionally been underrepresented in Masters cohort, there is yet continuously growing interest by women looking to pursue sport into aging. Prior research has examined lived experiences of athletes in a coached context (e.g., Rathwell et al., 2015; Stevenson, 2002), but there is a lack of consideration for all-women sportspersons, particularly in a team sport. Further, the role of the coach in relation to these experiences has yet to be explored. The purpose of this qualitative investigation was to explore the lived experiences of women in the context of a coached Masters team. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 12 women, namely Masters synchronized skaters (MSks) and their MC, over multiple time points in their season. Observational field notes were taken during training, competition, and social engagements. Data were submitted to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and the results were presented in the form of three narrative stories, which speak to the novelties of a identifying with a Masters team. The narratives specifically highlighted the social influences within a) a Masters team and the nuances of sharing a sport experience, b) the women's empowerment through sport and what that meant for their respective identities, and finally, c) the surrounding support networks, such as family, in women's adult sport. Additionally, the extent of the MC's involvement in each of these themes in relation to the MSks is portrayed throughout each narrative.

Key words: women in sport, narratives, synchronized skating, social influence

Glitter and guts: Narrative portrayal of the lived experiences of women in a coached Masters sport team

As Baby Boomers and Generation X have aged into more mature sport divisions, there is increasing attention within the last decade granted to engagement in meaningful athletic pursuits for adults. This societal shift implicates new inquiry into comprehending who and what sport is 'for' by considering adult populations. Masters athletes (MAs) are changing the norm of traditional sport ideals by adhering to competitive sport well into aging. MAs are adult athletes typically over the age of 35 who train regularly in order to compete at different competitive levels, ranging from regional up to international venues (Young, 2011). Many MAs are serious-minded, belong to organized clubs or training groups, and have coaches who help to manage their pursuits.

Research on adult sport and MAs has emerged on several themes in sport psychology (e.g., see Young, Callary & Rathwell, 2018 for a review), including social motivations and social influence (related to peers, family and coach), motivation and commitment, social identity, norms around aging, and psychosocial benefits. Moreover, there has been increasing interest in the coached context (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2018), the interpersonal role of a coach with MAs (Callary, Currie, & Young, under review), and the reciprocal influences related to a sportsperson's peers within that context (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006). Our understanding of the psychosocial aspects of Masters sport, however, is generally dominated by inquiry within individual sports (i.e. swimming, athletics, canoe/kayak and cycling, but not team sports) and samples that are all men, or mixed-samples that include more men than women.

Research describes how various social motivational factors can promote the commitment of MAs to sport. Young et al. (2018) reviewed the social motivators of MAs which typically

stem from significant others such as one's spouse, children, training partners, or extended sport community (Santi, Bruton, Pietrantonio, & Mellalieu, 2014), as well as coaches or teammates (Young and Medic, 2011a). Extrinsic motivations include acting as models for their own children (Horton, Gard, Weir, Dionigi, & Baker, 2018; Young and Medic, 2011b) and receiving guidance and encouragement of a coach. Intrinsic motivation stems from holding a MA identity (Stevenson, 2002). Moreover, a coach of MAs, often referred to as a Masters coach (MC), has been identified as a key motivator for some, and is associated with MAs' greater intrinsic desire to accomplish in their sport, as well as to learn and acquire new things about their sport (Medic, Young, Starkes & Weir, 2012). Young, Callary, and Neidre (2014) called a MC a key social agent, who can better motivate MAs by organizing training and competition to emphasize involvement opportunities both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature, and by helping athletes navigate barriers like limited time.

Various nuances associated with the coached context and the coaching of MAs have already been established in research, including the need for age-appropriate strategies that enhance MAs' performances and overall sport experiences. For instance, MAs prefer a coach who can offer structured training, can give well-informed instruction and feedback, knows how to be sociable and relatable, and provides opportunities for MAs to provide their own opinions and feel autonomous (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2018; Rathwell, Callary, & Young, 2015). With very few exceptions (e.g., Callary & Young, 2016; Manuscript 1 in this thesis), this body of work has not examined female or team-sport MAs' preferences and experiences in the coached context. The value of doing so is attributed to the need to understand women's social motivators in the context of their sport environment, and in the supporting and surrounding social networks that influence their identity as sportspersons, to

understand and illustrate the experiences of women in a shared sport setting. This research would inform Masters coaching literature of team sport contexts, and would contribute to emerging understanding of a shift in societal perceptions of adults, particularly women, who pursue sport as they age.

A Need to Know More about Women in Masters Sport

Some estimates suggest women may comprise 35-45% of a Masters cohort (Callary & Young, 2016), so there is reason to inquire about the experiences which shape a woman's identity as an athlete, with respect to their surrounding influences in the sport-specific context and in the context of their day to day lives. Much of the literature that investigates women's sport experiences alludes to the fear of age-related decline that sport can help to mitigate (Bennett, Clarke, Kowalski, & Crocker, 2017a; 2017b; Horton et al., 2018). While fitness and health remain important reasons for Masters women to train and compete, there exists a plethora of other driving forces behind a woman's desire to maintain her sport identity. Labonté (1993) suggested that the experience of being involved in an activity, rather than interest in a particular activity, is what encourages women to commit to, and enjoy active living. In a study that compared aspects of men's and women's Masters rowing, Toepell, Guilmette, and Brooks (2004) found that women generally lacked support relative to men, yet women's scores for enjoyment were higher, they enjoyed the physically demanding workout that their sport entailed, as well as the intellectual challenge that rowing provided more so than necessarily winning races. What we do not know, is where an MC might fit in enhancing these experiences; research has yet to discern whether she might maintain a traditional role of a coach and respond to the needs of her athletes via programmatic planning, provide skill feedback, etc., or whether she might assume a role that encompasses a broader catalog of responsibilities and expectations.

Further, in seminal work regarding women's experiences, Miller (1986) indicated that women seek out activities that give them a sense of identity and pride. Horton and colleagues (2018) noted that women often feel an internal passion and admiration for their sport that provides them with an intense desire for continued participation, which also causes the significant people in their lives to see these women as models of healthy aging and fitness. Family members (parents, spouses, children) may be supportive of women's sport pursuits, but are also commonly unsupportive (Dionigi, Thomas, & Logan, 2012). There are often conflicting priorities in women's lives that coincide with their time for sport, and it can be difficult to find the perfect balance of athleticism and conformity. For example, Toepell, Guilmette, and Brooks (2004) noted that women needed to navigate norms of being a 'good mother' and placing the needs of her children and family before her own over participating in sport pursuits (see also McGannon, McMahon, & Gonsalves, 2018). Still, women may also be surrounded by a broad network of supportive liaisons in and out of their sport environment, including their female sport peers (Dionigi, 2010; 2016), who can contribute to, or facilitate their overall sport experience.

A Need to Know More about Masters Team Sports

Team sport environments are unique in their interdependent nature, whereby each member (coach, and athletes) plays an important role within the group both in the context of training and competition. Masters teams in particular offer an opportunity for adults to be more deeply engaged and involved in collective pursuits (competitive or experiential); sharing in the mature life experiences, and athletic experiences of other MAs, thereby strengthening their social relationships in and out of sport (e.g., Manuscript 1 in this thesis). Beyond this sense of unity, many competitive Masters runners who trained within a group reported doing so as a strategy to overcome emotional lapses (Medic, Starkes, Young, Weir, & Giajnorio, 2005). Dionigi (2016)

mused that the “sense of collective empowerment, camaraderie, and community experienced by women in sport seems to be heightened in a team sport context” (p. 58). Cohesion was described as a relevant factor for performance in female teams (Eys et al., 2015), but literature has not yet explored this phenomenon in adult sport. There remains a need to describe how a Masters team environment can provide a unique sport experience for women, considering the valuable community atmosphere and shared competitive performance that a team sport may have to offer.

Purpose

The present study explored the experiences of women MAs comprising a team that was also coached by a woman. We delved into the broad meaning behind why these women chose to participate in an all-women Masters team sport (i.e., what they expected to be the outcomes of their experience), their identities as women MAs in a coached team, and how the MC and team context provided support. We took into account the broader social context that shaped each MA’s and the MC’s respective sport experiences with respect to joining, thriving within, and committing to the team. In exploring these experiences of women in a Masters team, we were also motivated to investigate the MC’s role. Thus, we aimed to illustrate the particularities of women in a Masters team while also broadening the scope of narratives about women in coached Masters sport. In parallel, by describing the lived experiences of these MAs, we hoped to enrich the dialogue around coached sport for adult women.

Methods

The study was underpinned by a constructionist paradigm, whereby the meaning behind a particular phenomenon is constructed from an interactive relationship between researchers and participants (Crotty, 1998). We attended to the MC’s role in the MAs’ experiences throughout the season, which contributed to a dynamic understanding of the data that were collecting. We

were receptive to, and cognizant of, the nuanced social roles and lived experiences of women in their sport. We obtained approval for procedures from the host university Research Ethics Board.

Participants and Sport Context

We purposively sought to recruit a coached female team of MAs who competed in a sport that required some level of collaboration and organization, trained regularly, and whose MC had a minimum 5 years of experience coaching MAs. Women's teams of various sports (e.g. Gaelic football, Ringette) were screened prior to selecting a suitable and available team for the study, taking into consideration the alignment of the study with the onset of the season. Thereafter, a team of all-women Masters synchronized skaters and their MC were selected as participants.

Synchronized skating (synchro) is a sport developed from figure skating in which a team of approximately 10-20 figure skaters perform a program in the form of a three-minute routine in unison. The program is choreographed and developed by a coach, and incorporates complex footwork and choreography. It is a female-dominated, judged sport, and conforms to the norm of some artistic sports in which there are visual aesthetic expectations and evaluations (e.g. costume, makeup). Despite the charisma and animation involved, it remains a highly demanding and competitive sport that caters to skaters in youth to Masters divisions both regionally and internationally. In synchro, adult (Masters) divisions include athletes starting at 18 years of age.

The MC was 32 years old, with over a decade of coaching experience at different age divisions, including 10 years specifically at the Masters synchro level. The Masters synchro skaters (MSks) ranged in age from 18-55 (mean of 39), with a variety of past skating experiences, as well as other adult sport participation and competitive experiences (see Table 1). The 21 participants were all women with well-established careers (2 retired), or were in the process of completing postsecondary or graduate studies (4). During the study, the majority of

women were in heterosexual marriages or serious relationships, 7 had dependent or fully-grown children, and 1 was pregnant. The team trained once a week for 3 hours between the months of September and March, plus a monthly competition either locally or provincially, culminating with a Regionals competitive weekend in March. Eleven of the MSks and the coach consented and agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews with the principal investigator (PI) over multiple timepoints in the season, and the entire team consented to being observed in their naturalistic sport settings.

Data Collection

Participant observation. The PI acted as a participant observer in the synchro team's sport and social context. Fifty-five hours of observation were done off-ice and on-ice during training, performance at competitive events, as well as during team social gatherings. The PI took notes by hand on-site or shortly afterwards, to record her interpretations of the training structure, MC and MSks' interactions, and other processes (e.g., travel arrangements, hair and makeup prior to competing, locker room preparation, etc.). Observations of various phases of the team's collective experiences enabled the PI to immerse herself into the team atmosphere, understand the important sport-specific terminology, and build rapport with participants, which contributed to natural and casual interview conversations. The observations better informed the interviews, so that the PI was able to ask more comprehensive and case-specific questions.

Interviews. Data were collected via one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Interviews were done face-to-face with the MC at three separate time points in the season (early, middle, late) and at two separate time points (early, late) with 11 of the MSks. MC interviews lasted between 75-90 minutes. Questions that were asked to the MC during the 1st interview pertained to a women's coached sport experience including, "Do you think your athletes value that you are

a female coach? Why or why not?” At later time points, the PI formulated questions to respond to inquiries following the preliminary interview, as well as her evolving perception of the context due to observations. Questions included, “Is there anything special about this experience related to being a woman?”, “Do you see the skaters as sister figures?”, and “Tell me about the role that skating plays/has played in your family and/or how family members were/were not involved.”

MSk interviews lasted 30-60 minutes at the first time point, and 15-60 minutes at the second. Questions that MSks were asked during the first interview similarly included, “Is there anything special about this experience related to being a woman?” Questions in the 2nd interview were informed by previous interviews and observations, such as “Do you find it difficult to make time for synchro? Are you supported in this? Are you hindered in this regard?” and, “Does the way the MC coaches the team influence the nature of relationships amongst skaters?” These questions were asked with the intention of understanding the phenomenon of a women’s Masters team sport, as well as the people and networks of support that influenced their experiences.

Additional questions were asked throughout each interview with the MC and MSks that aimed to understand the MC’s role on a Masters team beyond the traditional facilitative expectations of a coach. For example, the MC was asked, “In your opinion, what is your most important role as the coach of these MSks?”. The PI asked the MSks “When and why did you join this team?” and further probed whether or not the coach was involved in their recruitment.

Data Analysis

Data were thematically analyzed and translated into creative non-fiction narratives as a means to present the results both meaningfully and conceptually for readers.

Thematic analysis. Data were analyzed and coded deductively according to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step thematic analysis. Each interview was transcribed, then transcripts were

entered in NVivo12 software and preliminary codes were generated. Codes were initially placed into four broad themes and a second inductive pass was used to compare early themes to past research in Masters sport. First order themes are, a) the *Masters team* experience, b) a depiction of *women's empowerment*, c) the social phenomena surrounding *adult women in Masters sport*, and d) the extent of *coach involvement* in each of these domains. First order themes were divided where necessary into subthemes that illustrated this particular sport setting (see Table 2).

Narratives. Synchronized skating performances often seek to tell a story through movement, music, and rhythm. Suitably, the results were written in a way that incorporated aesthetic merit (Tracey, 2010) by being “presented in a beautiful, evocative, and artistic way” (Tracey, 2010, p. 845). Narratives are intended to evoke emotion and create a meaningful illustration for readers while remaining true to the nature of the data (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2015), as demonstrated in past sport psychology literature (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2012; Winchester, Culver, & Camiré, 2011). They are also exemplary in depicting common experiences of multiple perspectives in a shared setting (Clayton, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Rathwell et al., 2015). Three narratives were created from the first order themes focused on a) the Masters team, b) the sense of women's empowerment, and c) phenomena surrounding women's adult sport. The fourth first order theme (coach involvement) was woven into various facets of each of the three narratives, to describe the extent to which the MC had a direct influence on the components that, when combined, narrate the holistic experience of women on a Masters team. Each narrative highlights the phenomenon of a particular overarching theme, with specific subthemes that stood out as particularly relevant to participants, or were significantly noted from observations of the team. While each narrative has a specific focus, we were also cautious not to oversimplify the context, and thus allowed subthemes from other first order

themes to flow through the stories without becoming the dominant emphasis, as this depicted the natural sport environment (see Table 3). Further, these first order themes naturally interact. For example, the adult phenomenon is clearly understood within the frame of these participants being women, and thus their roles as adult women.

The characters within the story are fictional, however, they represent the interpretations of the MC's and MSks' life experiences, who comprised the participant team. Real quotes from interviews were used throughout each of the narratives to provide the bulk of dialogue. The remaining dialogue is fictional, but based entirely on realistic comments or scenarios that were gathered from the PI's interviews and engagements with participants, or from observations.

Critical friends. The PI and her supervisors met bi-weekly to discuss interpretations of the data as they developed over the course of the season. Peer debriefing (Smith & McGannon, 2017) allowed for multiple perspectives and ideas to emerge. This enabled discussions about ideas that the PI herself might not have considered, encouraged the PI to be reflective, and was conducive for in-depth consideration of the meaning of each participant's data set as it pertained to their life context. Having both a man and woman as critical friends allowed for a variety of gendered perceptions. We got to engage in interesting conversations about our own experiences in sport and coaching, particularly how sport-type and gender norms of the sport (e.g. co-ed, masculinized, or feminized sport) can have a bearing on perceptions of gender more generally.

Results

The narratives are realistic accounts of the synchronized skating context that was observed over the course of an entire season, including training, competition, and social engagements. The majority of the dialogue comes from quotes (in italics) gathered from interviewed participants; all other quotes in the narratives are comments that were added to

complement the flow of the story, and are based on observational notes. Episode 1 is a description of the broad network of social motivations that exist within the team sport context. Episode 2 highlights the significance of being in an all-women atmosphere, and speaks to how the environment of a unified team of women epitomizes the MSks' sport experiences through a sense of empowerment. Finally, Episode 3 addresses familial influences related to adult synchronized skating including family, friends, and colleagues, as well as how having and being mothers has had a bearing on the MC's and MSks' opportunities and experiences in Masters synchro skating. The MC's involvement is also characterized throughout each episode.

1. Masters Team: A Tale of Social Motivation

Candice, the coach of the *Great Skates* synchro skating team, waited for Sam to buckle her seatbelt before she threw the car in drive and took off towards the rink for practice. Sam was one of the newest and youngest skaters on the team at only 25 years old, but had known Candice for years due to having her as a coach in youth skating. It was still early in the season, so Candice intended on dedicating half of the evening's off-ice practice to meet with each skater so she could understand their goals and expectations for the coming months, as well as give some feedback they could apply to their skills. "So," she said to Sam, "We might as well take this opportunity to have our chat! Have you enjoyed being on the team so far?"

Sam was nodding before Candice finished her sentence, "definitely, I thought I would miss the team I was on in the younger division, but instead I've noticed I'm enjoying skating a lot more. *There's less drama and things like that. I think skating is often seen as a young person's sport; you look at the Worlds and the latest champion is what, 18? And you're like, 'at 18 years old I was not doing that'. So I think for me like, Masters sport is just motivating to see everyone still skating, we're all there because we really do want to be there.*"

“A hundred percent.” Candice was happy to hear this, because Sam’s effort in training was evident to all and made the team as a whole more accountable to work hard.

“I have to admit though, I was nervous that I wouldn’t fit in at the start, being a bit younger and all.”

“Honestly, on this team your age would never impair whether you fit in. In fact, *I’m convinced that there’s a formula for fitting in on this synchro team. The criteria are – being a good skater, being a really nice person, and being on the team for a long time. As long as you have one of those, you’re gonna be okay, if you have two you’re going to fit in, if you have three you’re going to be like everyone’s favourite.*”

“Noted!” Sam responded cheerfully, “I think I can handle that. Overall, *I’d really just like to make sure I’m getting a workout in because I’m big on fitness, and I just hope it’s a fun time.*”

“Okay, great. If anything, I want you to see it as an opportunity to skate for as long as you like.” In her past coaching experience, Candice often found it challenging to make sure that each skater felt heard, that they were getting what they wanted out of the experience, and that they were encouraged to come back season after season, all while building a program that made everyone appear as if they thought with one mind. “*I’m really keen on making a really fun experience. That said, I have high expectations for you ladies to skate to your potential, and you’ll never hear me say that something is ‘good enough for an adult’, there’s no limit. So if you hear me say that something looks good, I really mean that it’s good.*”

Sam appreciated this candour and commented, “*The team is already fun, but if you don’t have a good coach who can inspire you to be better, then it’s just social more than anything else. I think being with this team will make me a better skater in the end. I feel like it’ll kind of push me to the point where I like it, it’ll be a challenge, but it won’t be so challenging that it’s*

discouraging.” Sam felt even better about joining the team after her conversation with her coach, and was already starting to feel that she would be right at home with the *Great Skates*.

They rolled up to the arena just in time to join the last few skaters as they walked inside. Candice gestured to the team captain to get the warmup started, so she could have a brief chat with another skater, Sandra. Candice motioned Sandra to a place off to the side while the rest of the team was getting into the off-ice session. Sandra, at 53 years old, was a recurring member of the team and had been synchro skating for over 25 years. In that time, Candice had developed a relationship with her in which she valued hearing her input regarding the group. She asked, “I wanted to get your opinion on something Sandra. *You probably noticed that I didn’t do a tryout this year. The reason I didn’t is because I kind of wanted to protect everyone who had made the commitment last year, who wanted to return.* We do have a few new skaters though...and *I really take it seriously when someone is a problem to you.* So I’m curious about your perspective of whether everyone is settling in, and trying to keep up with the pace of the rest of the team now that things have gotten moving this season?”

“It’s still early so it’s hard to say for sure if the new ones understand how we do things around here just yet.” Sandra responded, “But I think everyone understands this year that you’ve just got to put in the effort on the ice to get ready for competition, and *like anywhere in society, just be polite. If you’re going to be a B-I-T-C-H, you’re not going to be welcome here. As you know, in the past there have been cliques that were too cool for school, one young woman in particular was very rude and said ‘you know, some people are just too old to skate and should give up’...*” Shaking her head, she added, “*And that’s exactly why she’s no longer with the team.*”

As they both grinned and shrugged, Candice said, “Well keep me posted, hopefully the new ones can add value whether it’s on or off the ice! Let’s talk about you now...” Candice continued, “What is it that you’re looking to get out of skating this year?”

“Same as always, I want to maintain my skating with people that I like being with. *I really like the team thing. You know, I really like to walk, but I really love to walk with people. I think it says something about my personality, I will push myself for other people way more than I’ll push myself for me.*” Sandra appreciated having her teammates by her side to challenge her, and to hold her accountable to skate to her best potential. She glanced over at the rest of the team, who were gleefully invested in their dance warmup to the tunes of Ricky Martin. “*Some of these ladies are my best friends, I’m just happy as long as I can compete, I can have fun, and I can still skate. I feel pretty lucky.*” She continued proudly, “*Some of my middle-aged friends who don’t skate are like, ‘you’ve got 20-year-olds on your team?! And you keep up with them? You must be so good!’ So I try to take that step back and think ‘well, yeah!’ It builds my confidence.*” Being a synchro skater was something Sandra was always proud to share with others. She attributed being a skater to her uniqueness, her athleticism, and her artistic side all at once.

“Because of that type of attitude you’ve always been a leader on this team,” Candice answered, “Keep that up, especially with the new skaters, I want them to understand what it means to be able to say that you skate for the *Great Skates*. And, I’ll make sure to give you all the feedback *you* need to maintain your skating skills.”

The two finished up, then Candice asked Sandra to send Janet over on her way back to the group. Candice always made a habit of this, ensuring to check in with a few of her skaters, to encourage them, before every practice.

Similar to Sandra, Janet was a long-time synchro skater, who made skating work for her schedule despite her very demanding job: a judge for the federal government. “*Skating is my religion. This is the one thing I do for myself, I set this aside as me-time,*” Janet told Candice after she had asked what kept her engaged every year. “Of course, however, I do come for ‘me’ but then I stay because of the team.”

“What do you mean by that?” Candice asked.

“Well”, Janet responded, “I do set this night aside every week as a chance to take a moment away from all the craziness of work, but it’s nice to be able to do that with people that I enjoy spending my time with. We’re truly all *so* different, but I think that’s what brings us closer to one another and makes us skate well together.” Candice was nodding. It was part of her job as the coach to get to know all these different personalities, to figure out where she could place each skater within their performance program, but to also understand the women as people, and not just athletes. She was convinced this made the overall experience better for everyone.

“I know some of the ladies *feel cool when they show up to work on a Monday morning after competition, with sparkles still stuck to their faces,* because they can brag about our weekend,” Janet laughed, “but that’s not so much the case for me. My work *colleagues know I skate but when we had the local competition, I told a little white lie and said we were going out of town for competition again,* because I didn’t want them coming to watch.” When Candice asked why, Janet told her, “*It’s not the way people perceive me at work I guess, nor how I want to be perceived.* Especially at work where I have to maintain a stringent, professional demeanor.”

Candice was nodding while she shared this, and was glad that she had taken the time to hear Janet’s perspective. She thought how easy it was for her, as the coach, to get caught up in the program planning and skill development of the skaters, and to forget about understanding

what brought them all together in the first place. For most of the skaters, their time spent at synchro was a time to focus their minds on how to be present in the moment, in a space that was meant for them to identify as a *Great Skates* skater, and that was all. “Synchro is our reset button of my week,” Candice replied to Janet.

“Certainly,” Janet started again, “I just love performing in the greatest sport, with the greatest team. At work, I’m ‘your honour’ where I’m the most respected person in the room, and have to act to maintain those perceptions. But *skating allows me to be somebody I’m not. For three minutes and 40 seconds, I’m Batman, or The Gladiator, or I’m part of Cirque de Soleil, or I’m Freddy Mercury! I’m not Janet the federal public servant, mother of two, I’m not any of those things. I’m in position number 17 of 20 people and I’m part of this group that is delivering this show... I’m not me, I’m the program. So that’s what I like. It allows me to step out of myself and do things that I wouldn’t normally do...* surrounded by a group of women who want to do the same.” As they finished up, Janet heard the team’s program music, a Queen song, playing in the background. When she turned around, her teammates were egging her on to join them. She looked back at Candice to gauge whether their conversation was over, and once Candice nodded her head she replied, “Duty calls!” and danced her way over to the team.

2. Women’s Empowerment: A Tale of Pride and Prejudice

It was Friday afternoon and the 20 members of *Great Skates* and Candice gathered in the arena parking lot after a week’s worth of office meetings, grocery orders, and Little League drop-offs. They packed up the chartered bus with their suitcases and skating outfits before they boarded for their commute to the Regionals competition. “I’m so excited for this girls’ weekend!” Nadia exclaimed and several others responded in agreement. Another skater, Lucy, added, “This ride is one of the best parts about competition weekends. *We don’t have time to*

chat at practice because we're busy learning steps, so you get to learn more about people when you're stuck on a bus for six hours!"

Candice looked to Ed, the team's bus driver for the weekend, and told him they would just need a few more minutes and then they would be ready to leave. "Being with this team for a while now *I realized, you know, people are rushing home from work, trying to feed their family, getting ready for skating, and rushing out the door. I have to respect all of the things that the women have to do first, in order for them to get here and be ready to skate.* These women are often riddled with duties, both for their jobs and for their families, that make arriving on time for a competition weekend challenging. But, the freedom to have a weekend that is all about them is what will make this time away super-special."

"It's no problem at all," Ed responded, looking around bewildered at the group of buzzing women. Some appeared to be in their 20s, and others in their 50s, but they all matched in their energy and excitement as they loaded up their belongings. He imagined them moving throughout their entire week at this pace, and was in awe at the thought of them still having the stamina to carry that energy into the weekend. Nadia marched up the steps to board the bus, her bedazzled headband glittering in the sun when she caught Ed's eye, "I bet you've never driven a team like ours around!" she announced to him. Despite Ed's countless hours of traveling with sports teams of all sorts, he had never once met a women's synchronized skating team and didn't quite know what to expect. "Are you like the synchronized swimmers?" he asked.

"Kind of, but we dance on the ice instead of in the water. You've gotta have guts to dance with knives on your shoes!" Nodding inquisitively, Ed didn't know what to make of this description and wondered to himself if synchronized skating qualified as a *real* ice sport, like hockey. Once all of the women were settled, he took his seat at the wheel and hit the road.

“I can’t wait to compete, I have a good feeling about our skates this weekend,” Nadia said to the busload of women, to which Lucy responded, “I can’t decide if I’m more excited to compete, or for the post-skate celebratory beer!”

‘Beer?’ Ed thought to himself, ‘now this sport is starting to sound like something I could get into.’

“There’s nothing like looking forward to a girls’ weekend to get you through five days of meetings and paper pushing.” Lucy said to Nadia as they took seats next to one another.

“Well, girls’ weekend... plus Ed,” Nadia whispered in response, and the two laughed. Lucy added, “He’s in for an action-packed weekend, chauffeuring us around!”

“What are you two chuckling about?” Candice asked as she took the seat ahead of them.

“I was just making fun of Nadia for having sparkles on her face before we’ve even left the parking lot.” Lucy replied.

“Hey!” Nadia rebutted, wiping her cheeks.

“And how Ed would not look as stunning in sparkles as we do,” Lucy continued. Candice shook her head humorously at the two stooges, “*I mean, the sport itself is very geared towards being a woman.*” She said, “We could never discourage a man from wanting to synchro skate, in fact, other teams have excellent male skaters. But our team is all about intelligent, creative, strong, athletic *women*, and we’re producing something by ourselves, for ourselves.”

“Yeah!” Rita jumped in, “It’s not all the sparkles that make this a woman’s sport, it’s the hard work, the commitment to one another, and the genuine passion we all share for skating.”

“... and the beer!” Nadia yelled, prompting an outburst of laughter and applause.

“Exactly,” Candice added, “And from a competition perspective, part of it honestly has to do with standing out during the performance. It’s a lot harder than it looks to get a group of very

different people, to do the same skills at the same time, and at high speed! Synchro is a judged sport,” she continued, “and my job as coach is to try and prepare a team of 20 different skaters for competition by making them all feel united on and off the ice, so that they appear the same to the judges.”

“Right,” Lucy began to finish Candice’s thought, “So there’s more pressure on a male synchro skater, as the odd one out, to either blend in or to be one of the best because all eyes will be on him.”

“It’s kind of a girls club really, if you think about it.” Rita continued, *“It’s not that we wouldn’t want it to be inclusive-feeling, but it’s also nice that you’re there with that many women, doing a sport that mostly women do. It’s very empowering to put in the time and the work with these ladies in a sport we all love, to learn from each other, and then to see the outcome of our efforts at competition! So many sports are male dominated, so to be in a sport that’s very much women with women, I just think it’s cool!”*

Beth and Kelly were listening from a few rows back, so they moved ahead to join the discussion. Beth commented, *“Even amongst all of us women, I am aware that when I’m skating with the team I do stand out, I’m the only black skater on the team after all. But what is so great about skating on this team, is that we can all feel as one with the group. That’s why I never enjoyed singles skating as much... Get me in front of a crowd, all by myself, that big expansive ice and all those eyes on me, I’d totally freeze up. Within this group of ladies, the performance anxiety is cut in half, or to a dull roar at least.”*

“Oh sure,” Kelly added, *“I love skating, but it’s very girly, and I’m not very girly! I would never want to be in an open space by myself wearing fake eyelashes and pantyhose,*

because that's just not me. But when I get to do that with you gals, it feels amazing! We get to show off our group and our skills, and I love that."

"We all stand out in one way or another," Beth continued, "but that's what makes the Masters division so beautiful— when I was younger and in more elite divisions, there was a lot of pressure to fit the mould of a traditional, world-class figure skater barbie-doll. Here, we all skate so well together because of our collective uniqueness."

"Beth!" Lucy interrupted, "You nail it every time. Tell everyone how you described synchro to me the other day at the coffee shop."

"Well, sure," Beth started shyly, "*What I love about synchro skating is that it combines artistry and sport. It's like the perfect intersection of artistry and sport.*" The rest of the women were nodding along, "*So, you're doing something athletic and you feel good about that, but you're also creating something. I think you just get this satisfaction on two different levels from that. You created something together, and I think, it's perhaps a sweeping generalization to say that women are maybe more emotionally intelligent than men, but probably as a population we are. And I think as women we can really wrap ourselves around that, 'we created something together' idea, and we get this really tight bond from the artistry and the sport.*"

There was a pensive silence in which everyone was processing what synchro meant to them, until it was broken by Kelly, who yelled, "Beth for Prime Minister!" Beth laughed while the whole team cheered. Meanwhile, eavesdropping Ed was totally absorbed by the team's passion for their sport. Nadia continued, "From that bond, we're able to really be there for each other when life isn't so easy. *When my late husband was really sick, I didn't ever want to leave his side. But synchro was my outlet, and all my family and friends knew that, and on Wednesdays everyone was like, 'You have to go to practice. Go skate.'*" This emotional comment encouraged

the skaters to share with each other. All down the bus aisle, the women professed what synchro meant to them – it was an outlet. It was more than just a chance to get a workout, and more than just a night out with the girls. Synchro was a chance to relieve themselves of the pressures and expectations bestowed upon them daily with other women who also understood these stresses. It was a moment set aside each week to get in touch with what they loved about themselves beyond being ‘the mom’ or ‘the teacher’, and to revive their sense of what it meant to be women.

Hours later, the bus arrived at the hotel and the team began to unload. Ed was glad to have been enlightened about such an incredible sport, from such interesting women. He could not wait to share everything he had learned with his wife, whom he hoped to encourage to join a similar team. As the skaters piled off, Candice said to Ed, “You better be in the stands cheering us on tomorrow!” Newly impressed by these women, and intrigued about how they performed together, he adamantly stated, “I wouldn’t miss it!” He laughed to himself, convinced there was something special about these sporting women. Because of their collective energy and gusto for their sport, he found himself wondering what it would be like to be ‘one of the girls’.

3. Phenomena Surrounding Women’s Adult Sport: All in the Family

It was a typical scene before practice: skaters were readying themselves, embroiled in loud banter and cathartic discussion on a mishmash of topics, as late arriving skaters rushed in. Some of the skaters were discussing what their life partners thought of their skating. Tina commented, “*when I first announced it to my husband, like we had been together for almost seven years, I’m going back to synchronized figure skating, he goes ‘what?! I didn’t even know you were a skater’*”. Her teammates chuckled at her husband’s disregard for her admiration of skating, some nodding along empathetically as they laced up their skates. There was a wide range of support the women received from their partners when it came to synchro skating every

Wednesday. In contrast, Eve added, *“When I met my husband, I was like ‘this is a thing I do... this comes with me. And then later on our kids just grew up knowing ‘mummy skates on Wednesdays’”.*

“You’re lucky. That type of spousal support is the best case scenario,” Tina responded, “the way I see it, if my husband doesn’t get it, I have to help him understand! *And I got my revenge*” she exclaimed with a lighthearted smirk, *“by signing him up for volleyball behind his back!”* The locker room broke out in laughter over the music playing in the background. *“So, once he had ‘his’ night too, then he kind of got it. It’s nice to be something other than Tina the worker, or, Tina the mother. It’s Tina something else.”*

The team was composed of a diverse group of women, but on Wednesdays they all came together to celebrate what they had in common, to be one synchronized team, to skate. They grew closer to one another because of the three hours a week they set aside for themselves, and for the ladies that made up their second family. “It’s Tina the skater!” Mia acknowledged, then added, *“We plan a lot of things around Wednesday nights, like even my colleagues know. They’ll say, ‘Mia, can you help with—oh oops, never mind that’s a Wednesday’.”* Mia conveyed how her friends all knew that nothing else could ever compete for her time on a Wednesday evening, and how she called it “my night, for me”. She protected her skating time with this team just as assertively as her non-skater friends drew boundaries around their family time. “Yeah!” Eve concurred, *“It really doesn’t matter what’s going on in your life, like, you can still take that one night and go be with the people you want to hang out with, go do something that’s for you. I’ve been called a lot of different things throughout my life, but I’ll never surrender my skater title!”*

“Alright ladies,” coach Candice spoke up, “I love the enthusiasm, but we’ve only got 10 minutes before our ice time starts. Anyone know if Trish is coming tonight—?” And just as the

words echoed around the locker room, Trish came hastily through the door. “Sorry I’m late ladies, *it’s torture every Wednesday because my little ones don’t get bedtime reading time with me, and so they spend like minutes and minutes like, ‘another kiss, another kiss!’ as I’m heading out the door.*” Trish found a place to sit and get ready. She continued, “I hope that *they’re starting to get that skating is just what I do, it’s a part of who I am and I think it’s important for them to see that mom and dad can have their own separate things as well.*”

“For sure,” said 20-year-old Kate from across the room, “My mom was my model. *I’ve grown up with synchro in my life, because my mom skated before I was born, and still does!* So she is actually the reason I got into skating, and decided to join the Masters team even after I got too old for the youth team. I want to be like her as I grow older, I just fell in love with the sport.”

“I totally get that.” Candice added, “*My family has played a big role in my skating career too. My mom still does it, she doesn’t know how much longer she’ll be able to do it, but considering she started her figure skating career at 45, she’s incredible.*” Candice reminisced about her mother cheering her on in the stands as a young skater, and was so proud that she now had the opportunity to return the favour by watching her mother compete as well. “This has me thinking about starts, and who gets me into stuff. You know what’s also really special?” she continued, “when I first moved here and started coaching, I was by myself in this city for the most part, and only 23 years old and getting my start as a coach with Great Skates...”

“That’s right,” Eve interjected, “and us *veterans of the team kind of adopted Candice for a while.*” She said, looking towards some of the newer skaters, “I didn’t think I’d ever have to teach my coach how to do her laundry, but we did with you!”

Candice laughed and covered her face to hide her blushing cheeks. The rest of the skaters laughed too, and that prompted more conversation about the people that influenced each of their

sport experiences. Some women on the team began to share some of the judgement they received about their continued involvement in skating with regards to their age. These confessions revealed tension. *“My mother in law was telling me I was too old to skate”* said Tina, defiantly adding, *“oh well, I’m 55 and I’m still a skater. And I haven’t quite decided when I’m going to stop!”* She continued, *“As much as I disagree with her outdated views on sport, I understand where she’s coming from. Her generation didn’t necessarily have the same opportunities that we have to skate, or to do any other sports for that matter.”*

“That’s really is too bad, that family support is so important. But, our family in this locker room is going to keep you forever!” Candice joked. Then she added, *“You’ll always be supported here. This adult age division is the best. There’s so much potential to still have the same quality of experience... to improve your skating, and to be with fun people... all without the bullshit politics that come with parents getting involved in younger divisions. This is the greatest shit ever.”* Candice had coached almost every age division there was to coach in synchro, and coaching adults was by far her favourite. To her, coaching Masters skating felt like she was coming ‘full circle.’

“Oh you’re sweet.” Said Eve, *“What would we do without you?”*

“I’m sure you’d get along just fine!” Candice laughed.

“No really, it’s not like our performance could just self-evolve, can you imagine the 20 of us trying to get anything done, blabbing like we do? We definitely need your coaching. Plus,” Eve added, *“girls who continue to skate become moms who skate, which can inspire their kids to skate, and just like that you’ve got generations after generations of skaters-for-life!”*

“Oh yes,” Candice exclaimed, in a half-joking tone. She turned her attention to Heather, who was new to the team and was expecting a baby girl herself. *“And Heather is about to start a*

new synchro circle!” Heather smiled modestly and lightly patted her baby-bump, “Well, considering the little avocado in here has spent as much time on the ice this season as I have, I’d say she or is off to a good start.”

“Absolutely,” Candice continued, “you’re a special circumstance this year! We’ve actually had skaters on the team in past years who have intentionally timed their conception to maneuver their pregnancy around skating season! *Like typically if you’re gonna start trying to have a kid and you want to manage it around skating, well when you first start trying, try to do it so you know that if you do get pregnant you’ll only be like four months by the end of the season in March, and then you can have your child before the following season starts!*”

“Now *that’s* commitment!” exclaimed several of the women in unison. “Yikes, it’s a little late for that strategy.” Said Heather, who was already four months along at mid-season.

“Oh don’t worry, we’ll help you along the way.” Eve assured her, “It doesn’t always work out that way for everyone, so we try to be supportive as a team however we can. *It’s kind of funny, but there have definitely been skaters who have had to pump breast milk on the bus to competitions because the ride is so long.*”

“Oh wow,” Heather gazed off at the thought, “That could not have been very comfortable...”

“It wasn’t!” Mia shouted from across the room. Mia had two young children around the same time she started competing in adult synchro. “But if you’re comfortable enough to pump on a bus in front of all your teammates, you’re willing to make anything work. For me, it meant the difference between being the ‘new mom’, or the ‘new skater mom’, and I wasn’t ready to hang up my skates just yet. Whatever you decide, whether you want to take a break for a while or you want to finish the season, you’ll have all of us to support you.”

“We’ll help you *figure* it out!” Eve joked. “On that cheesy note team, let’s get out there!” Candice urged, and the skaters started making their way towards the ice, continuing their bantering conversations. Heather was the last one to leave the locker room before Candice. “I’m really glad I joined the team this year,” she said to her new coach, “*the women that are attracted to do a sport like this are really awesome, strong, and you know cool, interesting women*. I was worried when I moved here that it would be tough to make friends, but now I’m so grateful to have joined this family before starting my own.” Candice smiled and told her that she was right at home. They made their way onto the ice, and someone shouted, “let the music play!”

Discussion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the lived experiences of women in a Masters team, and to investigate the nature of the coaching role within an all-women sport setting. The one-on-one interviews with over half of a team of MSks provided insightful information into the catalysts of each woman’s respective athletic pursuits, which, when combined, constructed a collectively meaningful female Masters team sport experience. The lived experiences of these women skaters converged on themes of sisterhood that developed from the unity of the team, the value of surrounding support networks that had an important bearing on the women in sport, including their recurrent participation in synchronized skating. Each narrative represented a derivative of what was cultivated when a group of ardent women shared a sport experience. The narratives entailed thematic overlap in order to illustrate the fluidity between the concepts of the *team*, the *women’s empowerment*, and the surrounding and supporting phenomena of *women’s adult sport*, as well as the integration of the coach to varying degrees throughout.

The Team

Episode 1 was a testament to the group's adamant pursuit of unification through a common passion for their sport, by acknowledging their individual roles and *raison d'être*. The narrative also intentionally depicted the MC's efforts to check in with skaters individually, which reinforced their sense of belonging on the team, and made them feel heard. Much of present day coaching literature suggests individualized coaching interactions are often preferred by athletes, and can be beneficial to development (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; Erickson & Côté, 2016). Consistently, the results of this study suggested there are social and psychological benefits of the MC taking into account the diversity of identities and motives amongst MAs. This can typically be difficult in a team, when there is often a limitation on time for individualized attention, and more of an expectation for members to conform to collective motives and norms. The specialized norm on this adult team it seemed, was the expectation that each MSk would have the capacity to be flexible due to the interplay of conforming *by* catering. Specifically, the MC's efforts to acknowledge and cater to her MSks' individualities using personalized attention seemed to encourage their compliance to team norms and support their sacrifices for the team, while still allowing them to remain true to their respective motives and identities. The MC therefore indirectly created a climate of cohesiveness, and we considered her involvement in the team functioning as 'medium' in this respect. We acknowledge that synchro is, in fact, a sport that is very dependent upon a coach to design and continue to modify the team's performance program throughout the season to complement each skater's abilities. That said, once she had played her part in facilitation and direction, it was up to the team members to respectively, and uniformly, comply to norms and certain team personality characteristics – being open to sharing the experience, and motivating one another, in particular. The influence of cohesiveness in terms

of team interactions and buy-in to team procedures was more instrumental for competition and practice-related issues (e.g., readying the technical aspects of the competitive program), whereas more socially-oriented norms of compliance made sharing the interpersonal, emotive and aesthetics elements of the team experience desirable amongst MSks. This notion that coaching can encourage team cohesiveness and sisterhood within a Masters team (both directly as a result of coaching approaches, and indirectly) is novel compared to extant literature that positioned individualized coaching practices as having primary benefits related to individual performance (Callary, Currie, & Young, under review; Cassidy, 2010; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2019).

A theoretical implication of this work is that understanding the team context offers a broader scope on coaching Masters sport, relative to prior research derived from predominantly mixed-sex, individual sports (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2017; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2018; Rathwell, Callary, & Young, 2015). The findings in the synchro team context show that, in addition to prior focus on how a MC can support MAs through feedback and instruction, there needs be acknowledgment that members of a team can support the MC in building collective expectations and norms to facilitate learning, training, competitive preparation, and sharing. For instance, in Episode 1 the team captain lead a warmup for her teammates in order for the MC to consult with individuals. This not only facilitated the coach-athlete individualized learning, but allowed MSks to develop a pre-training/competitive routine that they were familiar with, and did not depend upon the MC to carry out.

In terms of social motivation, MSks and the MC often held each other accountable to not only be present at the skating venues, but to be socially and physically engaged with the team. Within the narrative, one MSk described how she was more motivated to push herself when she was surrounded by her teammates, not only for performance reasons, but because she enjoyed

the company. Similarly, Kirby and Kluge (2013) interviewed a volleyball team comprised of women 65+ who were new to team sport and competition, and concluded that “being on the team and committed to their teammates appeared to be the glue that kept the women coming back” (p. 302). Thus, having teammates of various ages, especially those younger than herself, allowed one MSk within this narrative to perceive herself as a model of active living and fitness relative to her peers outside of synchro, giving her a rightfully positive self-perception. By consequence, her confidence fostered similar ideals within teammates of fun and fitness, which was portrayed in the narrative via way the coach describing her as a leader, “especially for the new ones.”

The Women

Episode 2 sought to illustrate the experiences of a group of women in synchro skating. The MC’s involvement in this regard was again considered ‘medium’, because she was not *essential* per se in terms of creating the women’s empowerment, but she was an equal contributor, and was not only valued by the other women, but influenced their relationships and experiences with others. In this way, the coach shared power with the team, while still maintaining a leadership status. Cooky (2016) argued that power, hierarchy and/or oppression must be taken into account when examining notions of gender, and while the present study was situated within a supportive all-women atmosphere, there were still external factors that shaped the respective experiences of the team’s constituents that were based on dated views of women adhering to sport as they aged. Specifically, woven into Episode 2 were opinions from Ed the bus driver that supported, as well as portrayals from the MSks that disproved the notion that synchro might not be considered a “real” sport relative to other ice sports, and disproved the assumption that a group of diversely aged women might not have the stamina or energy to compete for an entire weekend following a typical work week.

Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser (2004) attested to the fact that “most socially and culturally valid undertakings, both creative and intellectual, have historically been produced within male-dominated social spheres” (p.6). This is the case with synchro, whose creation occurred in the latter half of the 20th century and is credited to a man named Richard Porter who is referred to as the “father” of synchronized skating (U.S. Figure Skating, 2019). Despite Dr. Porter’s progressive intentions of creating a sport that was developed for women to perform and compete, there remains an acquiescence towards the fact that a sport for women, which is judged and still relies on aesthetic appeal including makeup was in fact “fathered”.

The value of this study then, was to give a voice to the present-day perceptions of the women who participate and compete in a sport experience that they are the producers of, and can call their own. In doing so, Episode 2 put forth a representation of women’s empowerment through sport, which can be subjective in its nature, as it can be generalized. Every MSk had their own description of what their sport meant to them respectively, but they shared in the sense of empowerment that it provided. On a larger scale, regardless of the sport activity, these women’s sport experiences pointed towards whatever she chooses to make it, rejecting limitations or restrictions on age, experience, size, or race that are socially constructed, as well as cultural beliefs about sport that have burdened women for generations. A team sport provides a chance for women to gather and to feel supported; when a group of women can acknowledge their differences and coalesce from their collective variety, a sisterhood can develop that is powerful and meaningful to its constituents beyond the sport context.

The current narratives on synchro prompt a point of discussion regarding its aesthetic expectations and requirements during competition. Fink (2012) emphasized common perceptions of women in sport, whereby “women ‘naturally’ are not ‘supposed’ to be as strong, athletically

gifted, or powerful as men. Females are ‘supposed’ to be ‘naturally’ feminine, perhaps graceful in movement, but weaker and less ‘genuinely’ athletic.” (p. 53). While these expectations of female athletes can be countered widely as inaccurate, synchro does in fact require elements of femininity and grace in terms of the women’s appearance on the ice, and the execution of the skills in performances, likely making it challenging for the sport to be well-respected by those outside of the synchro sphere. This may also explain the tension that existed for some MSks in Episode 2 around wearing sparkles, fake eyelashes and makeup, and not fitting the idealized woman’s “barbie-doll” body. The women identified with, and appreciated standing out amongst the group, but did not always want the same attention on their own. Contrary to this were the ‘Chlorine Queens’ in Stevenson (2002), who identified proudly with the oddities of swimming (e.g. wet hair and smell of chlorine). Synchro thus seemingly represents both ends of a gender-norm spectrum that houses both traditional femininity, and contemporary understandings of women’s athleticism through challenging on-ice footwork and skills that require above-average fitness and strength. While synchro remains loyal to its aesthetically feminine roots, it is an internationally competitive sport, not to simply be taken with a grain of salt... or glitter.

Finally, this narrative projected the value of having masculine figures as allies of women’s sport (Callary, 2019). In Episode 2, Ed’s character reveals an initial prejudice that is still often unconsciously played out regarding women in sport, but shows his evolving understanding once he is able to witness why sport for this demographic is significant. This invites women’s significant others (e.g. male friends, spouses, fathers) to be active in supporting them in sport.

Phenomena Surrounding Adult Women in Sport

Episode 3 portrayed how each member of the team, including the MSks and the MC, had different experiences with synchro throughout their adult lives, including the way they were (or were not) supported throughout their synchro careers. Family members of the MSks and the MC had an important influence on the participants' synchro experiences from the time of their commencement with sport, to their enrollment in the Masters category. In Episode 3, the group discussed how skating was something to be shared within families, and that parental support in sport was often inherited and passed on to subsequent generations. Masters sport provides ample opportunity for family members to share in sport experiences (Dionigi, Fraser-Thomas, & Logan, 2012), which was described by the MC in Episode 3 when she shared how she could now watch her mother compete at the same competitions where she would be coaching her own team.

Research on MAs has consistently shown time as a barrier to be negotiated to maintain participation (Cardenas, Henderson, & Wilson, 2009; Young, 2011); time barriers are a key feature in our understanding of leisure constraints among sportspersons (Young, Medic, Cameron, Theberge, & Latham, 2009), and has been conceptualized as a critical facet in readiness to train among adult athletes (Callary et al., 2017). The MSks each made their own respective efforts to negotiate for their 'me-time' in sport, while harmonizing other priorities like their families, demanding careers, and all the other engagements of mid-life. However, the narratives also illustrated how the women had to negotiate with more than time to pursue their involvement in synchro. Negotiating with significant others and self-expectations was necessarily implicated in making adult sport a priority in their lives. Some women were supported, yet others were not completely encouraged by the important people in their lives to carry out their weekly sport commitments. MSks made claim to the restraint they felt from loved

ones; one attested to the guilt she felt leaving young children (despite having a partner to attend to them) to skate each week, and another had to justify re-joining skating after several years, because of partner's disregard of her sport passion.

The present study further accentuates the benefits of discussing with spouses what equates to a healthy balance of sport and motherhood, embedded in a complex process of negotiating for time away from the family. This process seems to be a burden placed on women sportspersons, and particularly mothers, and not necessarily on males or fathers (Dionigi et al., 2012). Dionigi et al. (2012) found that female MAs' successful compromise with family members enhanced their leisure experiences by allowing for enjoyable family time *and* training time, which was consistent with the present study in that they were given the freedom to express their athletic identities on top of their familial priorities. As well, the MC can support this balance by acknowledging the multiple livelihoods of her MAs and adjusting her expectations for MAs accordingly. A century ago, there was overwhelming opposition around the world to women's competitive sports by numerous national organizations. Pfister (2000) explained that intensified female physical education and training took a back seat, in order "prepare girls for their future roles as mothers and 'worthy citizens'" (p. 8). Now, there is less inquiry of a woman's place in competitive sport, but pockets of society still bat an eye at the idea of serious-minded, competitive athletes beyond youth and elite spheres, particularly in the case of women. In Episode 3, the MC openly disputes preconceived notions of adult women in sport by explicitly reminding her skaters of the advantages that Masters sport divisions offer, such as the lack of political interference and opportunity for long term friendships and fitness.

The MC was considered of 'high' importance with pertinence to the phenomena surround a women's adult sport experience, because she was able to empathize with, plan around, and

respond to (by supporting) the women's out-of-skating experiences that affected their in-skating experiences. A caring and compassionate personality held by the MC, is of critical importance in making the team feel like a second family to the MSks (Manuscript 1 in this thesis), ultimately making their time away from their respective families more meaningful and justifiable to themselves and their significant others. Elsewhere, MacLellan et al. (2018) described how a mixed-sex sample of Masters canoe/kayakers viewed their coach's demonstrable commitment as a type of validation support, because it allowed them to feel their own commitment was understood by the MC. In the current portrayals, we see validation support from the coach, manifested in caring and compassion (i.e., empathetic approaches).

The MC also employed various specific strategies that ensured quality time within the coached context, further validating MSks' convictions about their 'me time'. She enhanced the quality of her MSks' training and competition experiences through prepared and organized training, by demonstrating her knowledge about the sport, and effectively and systematically preparing MSks for competition. The MC also allowed the MSks to be autonomous by including them in decision making and accommodating their requesting feedback, coaching practices which have proven to influence MAs' enjoyment and sport commitment to sport in prior studies (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015a; 2017; Manuscript 1 in this thesis). In relation to aforementioned negotiations, she was cognizant and accommodating of the MSks' priorities and conflicts (e.g. family needs, work priorities, injuries/ailments). Overall, the MC's approaches corresponded to the unique lived experiences of adult women skaters, helping to confirm the MSks' investment in processes of negotiation and their convictions about skating as 'me time'. Moreover, in keeping with the notion of sisterhood, the convictions about 'me time' were shared among all members of the team.

Further contributions from this study include how the shared gender of the MC and MAs seemed to positively influence coaching strategies and the overall experiences of MAs, as well as the extent to which the MC's coaching was paramount in the team varied, depending on the team's needs pertaining to practice/competition efficiency, their sense of empowerment, and their support networks. Regardless of the extent to which the MSks were supported within their own social circles, the MC built an atmosphere that made the team feel like second family, securing them to commit in subsequent seasons.

Involvement of the Masters Coach

Throughout each narrative we demonstrated the extent to which the MC appeared to be involved in the MSks' experiences. Coaches are considered amongst the most important influences on younger athletes' motivation and performance (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). In Masters sport however, there seems to be more fluctuation in the extent of the MC's importance in given settings. Within this women's team sport setting, the MC was influential at times during the entire season. The MC had an overall 'medium' responsibility in light of *the team*, because she was paramount in its assemblage and in getting to know every MSk on an individual level, but she was also often able to leave the MSks to cater to their own needs and responsibilities throughout training. As a woman amongst *women*, the MC appeared to have only a 'medium' but equally important influence relative to MSks' experiences on a female team because she blended in amongst the group, participated in their engagements (i.e. social gatherings, casual conversations) and shared the empowering experience with the MSks. Together, these two 'medium' influences are noteworthy, and particularly relevant for adult sport. In essence, the present narrative embody the dispersal of power dynamics on the team, particularly manifested in how the MC encouraged MSks in decision making and practice- or performance-based

discussions. In terms of the phenomena supporting and surrounding *women's adult sport* experience, the MC had a significant, and therefore 'high' influence in this sport, whereby she enhanced the training environment given her knowledge of synchro, provided MA-specific coaching strategies that were technically-sound, empathetic, and validating for the women, and whereby she supported all MSks despite great variability in their needs. Despite the MC's role having more importance in certain circumstances than others, she was considered an inextricable component of not only the narratives, but the women's team sport experiences. As suggested by one MSk in Episode 3, the group would have had less rigour and structure had the MSks self-directed the context. While MAs are likely the most viable demographic of athletes to lead themselves in sport (e.g., coaching by committee), the MC in this particular setting provided an experience that made her role integral.

Conclusion

Future research could expand on the meaning of coached sport to women in Masters divisions across broader cohorts, to examine how cultural and family norms and priorities come to bear on the experiences of women outside of North American culture. Also, exploring various coached scenarios for adult women's involvement in sport might provide insight into how to create and maintain quality women's Masters sport experiences across contexts that involve, for example, coaches who are also players/athletes on the team, or teams that are largely un-coached. Finally, future research could examine Masters coaching strategies across multiple Masters teams (considering distinct female and male teams) to explore the variation of collective social motivations, team norms, and gender differences in coaching over a range of competitive levels. To conclude, the MC for this women's team was as functional and instrumental as she was an emotive asset. The climate that was facilitated by the MC allowed the team to gather as a

collective of driven MSks, who were empowered by one another in their sport, and the MC positively depicted how her role could enhance quality sport experiences in an all-women sport team.

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Table 1

Participant Demographic and Prior Experience with Synchro and Coach

Participants	Age	Prior years of synchro experience (approx.)	Prior years coached by Maddy
Maddy (MC)	32	10-15	--
Ellen	55	20-30	5+
Joan	53	20-30	4
Holly	53	20-30	5+
Sylvie	52	20-30	5+
Anneka	36	10-20	4
Danni	35	0	0
Clare	33	10-15	5+
Steph	31	10-15	5+
Alex	29	10-15	0
Erika	28	0	0
Julia	18	5-10	1

Note. Eleven MSks, and one MC participated in interviews. The average age of participants was 39 and they displayed a wide range of prior synchro experience.

Table 2

First and second order themes with operational definitions.

First order	Second order
<p>Masters team- an interdependent group of adult athletes that train and compete together for the purposes of a shared performance within the same venue, and share common goals.</p>	<p><i>Personality compliance:</i> there are collective expectations and social norms with respect to personality to which MSks conform in order to remain congruent with the team; it is likely that adverse personalities will be dismissed from the group.</p> <p><i>Sharing the experience:</i> MSks in a team often prefer the environment that a like-minded group has to offer as it provides a supportive, social context within which to train and compete.</p> <p><i>Social motivators:</i> MSks are encouraged by significant others (e.g. coach, teammates) to remain engaged, to be challenged and to be accountable to giving effort to compete, and to improve in their sport.</p> <p><i>Social identity:</i> an awareness of the subjective meaning that underlies each individual MSk's or coach's desire to perform.</p>
<p>Women's empowerment- a sense of strength derived from an activity in which women are the primary participants/competitors, and are empowered through their involvement with other women</p>	<p><i>Sisterhood:</i> a feeling of unity and familiarity that is shared specifically among female members of a team (e.g. coach, athletes) demonstrated by support and camaraderie in and out of the sport context.</p>
<p>Women's adult sport- nuanced aspects of an athletic activity that is pursued by adult women in coached training and competitive venues, as well as the supporting and surrounding social phenomena.</p>	<p><i>Familial encouragement:</i> coach/skaters' sport experiences are influenced by members of their families (spouses, children, parents/parents in law) through their initial introduction to skating, continued support, or shared involvement in the sport.</p> <p><i>Lack of support:</i> coach/skaters are not encouraged by significant others (family, friends, colleagues) to participate or compete in their sport, or barriers that are not supportive for skating that must be negotiated/navigated.</p> <p><i>Considerations for coaching adult sport:</i> elements of Masters sport that coaches need to navigate when working with adults including age-appropriate coaching approaches, and the broad social support networks surrounding athletes.</p>
<p>Coach involvement- the extent (high, medium, low) to which a coach facilitates an optimal experience for MAs, based upon the needs of the individuals, and of the group.</p>	

Table 3

First and second order themes per narrative

1st order	2nd order	Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3
Masters team	Personality compliance	X		
	Sharing the experience	X	x	
	Social Motivators	X		
	Social Identity	X	x	x
Women's empowerment	Sisterhood	x	X	
Women's adult sport	Familial encouragement		x	X
	Lack of support			X
	Considerations for coaching adult sport		x	X
Coach involvement		Medium	Medium	High

Note. These 1st and 2nd order themes broken down by their respective subthemes, as they are depicted in each narrative. Uppercase 'X' signifies a main focus in a narrative, and a lowercase 'x' signifies the subtheme as relevant within a narrative, but not a main focus. Coach involvement describes the extent to which the MC influences each of the main themes.

Chapter 5: General Discussion

Convergence of Articles 1 and 2

This thesis investigated psychological interdependence between a MC and members of a women's Masters sport team. The objectives of the study were to explore the nature of C-A relationships within a female Masters team sport setting as they related to the MC, the MAs, and the team as a whole, and to examine the lived experiences of a coach and her female athletes within a Masters team sport. Article 1 answered the question, "what are C-A relationships like within a female Masters team sport setting as they relate to the MC, the MAs, and the team collectively?" We explained that the complex interdependent relationships in a Masters team are not entirely dependent upon respective C-A dyads, or even A-A dyads, but rather they work as a network of mutual interactions that ultimately shape the quality of sport experiences for all involved. Article 2 answered the question, "what is the MC's involvement in the MAs' sport experiences, and what are the MC's roles in the context of a coached all-women adult team?" Through the use of narratives, we illustrated the particularities of the lived experiences of women in a coached Masters team. In doing so, Article 2 also expanded our understanding of the MC's involvement in her adult skaters' sport experiences, and spelled out her roles in the context of a coached all-women adult team. The findings showed that a team environment provides women in Masters sport with a nuanced social experience with team members, that they develop an empowered self-perception through sport, that they are influenced by a broad social network outside of their sport liaisons, and importantly, that the MC has a significant involvement and varied roles in each of these aspects.

Collectively, these two articles conveyed how team-based C-A relationships influenced the participants' sport experiences. The thematic analyses and narrative portrayals also

characterized the lived experiences of these MAs, which in turn serves to broaden the scope of coached Masters sport and enrich the dialogue around coached sport for adult women. The discussion of interdependence in Article 1 elaborated on the creation of the TMSI model that encompassed the C-A relationships, and mutuality embodied in other influential relationships within a Masters team that generated desirable sport and social outcomes. These ‘outcomes’ were detailed in what MAs identified as the determinants of their optimal quality sport experience, such as fitness, friendships and skating improvement. These outcomes were then embodied in the narratives about the lived experiences of the women skaters within Article 2. More poignantly, Article 2 described team collectivity, women’s empowerment, and the broader social influences that support and surround women in adult sport, which paints a fuller picture of an adult woman’s sport narrative. As such, the main takeaways for readers are that the mutually interdependent relationships built within a female team of MSks do not solely rely on C-A dyads, but are instead influenced by, and include the MC amongst the mutual influence of the rest of the team. Furthermore, the outcomes of this mutuality are meaningful to the women that comprise the team within and beyond the sport context as the embodiment of such outcomes in a culture of sisterhood contributes to an enhanced self-view, and quality sport and life experiences.

Hereafter, we outline the conceptual, methodological, and practical implications of this thesis. Conceptually, this thesis assisted in developing a deeper understanding about C-A relationships among Masters team sports and has increased the knowledge of how MCs can use relational approaches to inform a heuristic model of coaching in this context. The methodological approaches used to gather, analyze, and relay the data in this study suggest rigorous and impactful approaches that can be refined in future qualitative research in this area. Practically, MCs might be able to interpret the present findings benevolently, for example, to

inform their approaches on how to more effectively coach their MAs, in ways that seek to enhance many different facets of women's sport experiences (social, psychological, etc.).

Information relative to the art and science of coaching MAs is expanding, and the current thesis adds team-specific material to this increasing pool of knowledge.

Conceptual Implications of the Findings

With the findings from Article 1, I outlined and then designed a novel and contextually-specific model for understanding interdependence in Masters teams, which was entitled the *Masters Team Sport Model of Interdependence* (TSMI). The TSMI (see Figure 1 on p. 73) offers an expanded understanding of how interdependence exists in a team, beyond the traditional understanding of interdependence which is concerned with C-A dyads only. It includes how each member including all MAs and the MC, creates relationships with other members from the psychological dependence that develops through meaningful interactions. The TSMI goes further, and exhibits the flow of influence between each relationship-type (coach-athlete, athlete-athlete, coach-group). Unlike other coaching models advocated in youth, adolescent or elite sport coaching of younger adult athletes in the high-performance trajectory (e.g., Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Abderrahim, and Russel's (1995), the TSMI does not necessarily assign a central role to the coach in the development of interdependence and mutuality on a Masters team. The role of a MC is undoubtedly very important, but it is dynamic, direct, *and* indirect via the coach's influence through others, and through the team as a collective. The team's influential interactions are indicated by the bi-directional arrows, which demonstrate how these interactions flow between the triangles planes, i.e. the C-A dyads, A-A relationships, and the entire team. Each plane of the TSMI is thus interactive with the next, and the team's collective affective, cognitive, and behavioural mutuality are incumbent upon the interdependence of the team's constituents.

The framework that provided the basis for Article 1 was interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibault, 1978) as it has been conceptualized for sport settings (i.e., 3+1Cs model; Jowett, 2007). The mutuality of a C-A dyad's closeness, commitment, and complementarity are said to be the basis of an interdependent relationship, and the rewards from such relationships should typically outweigh the costs, in turn creating positive sport outcomes. Poczwadowski, Barott, and Jowett (2006) then expanded beyond the C-A dyad to account for the team setting as part of the broader social context, and stated the emotional climate and team cohesion could be considered *team* variables associated with dyadic interdependence. In line with these assertions, the TSMI situates C-A dyads on one of its planes to demonstrate the importance of the coach interacting with athletes on an individual level. Beyond that, the TSMI responds to Poczwadowski and colleagues, whereby respective C-A dyads influence, and are influenced by the surrounding social sport network. Thus, the TSMI portrays that C-A dyads are but one component of a Masters team's interdependence, to be considered in-line with the relationships that emerge amongst MSks without direct intervention from the coach (a second plane in the TSMI), as well as how the MC interacts with and is considered integral within the group as a whole (a third plane in the TSMI). Furthermore, the TSMI more clearly elucidates and operationalizes the outcomes of these interdependent relationships. The collective mutuality embodied in the interdependent relationships illustrated in the TSMI facilitates greater rewards than costs, with the rewards of being ingrained in a Masters team determining a quality adult sport experience. Article 2 described the outcomes of these relationships (i.e. how the relationships manifested specific outcomes), and situated each of the subjective rewards and costs of the experience within the overall team context. These quality experiences were not only for MSks but also for the MC, and while outcomes derive from a group setting, they can be

specific to each individual member based on what she is looking to get from sport (e.g., develop skills, social venue, fitness).

Conceivably, the concepts of the TSMI could be applied in group contexts outside of women in Masters sport although future research is needed to check such a proposition. The reason this team was able to create such a dynamic network of relationships, appeared to be because of the MC's role in fostering a close, interpersonal atmosphere, and because she was willing to share power. LaVoi (2007) contested that individual sport athletes cited significantly more closeness dimensions than team sport athletes, and that coaches could achieve relational expertise through a "power-with" attitude. In this particular Masters team, the MC was willing to share responsibilities and make decision *with* her MSks, but she also made efforts to assure that the MSks built relationships with one another, so that the interpersonal aspect (i.e., closeness) fixed within the team existed and perpetuated beyond her dyadic interactions. For instance, while this study was situated within the scope of a relational model, the MSks were highly competitive, and attributed their competitive drive to their reciprocal relationships with teammates and the support provided on the athlete-athlete plane. With that, while some MSks might have had less-close relationships with the MC relative to peers, their close relationships with teammates offset any need to be maximally "close" with the MC. This might be a particularly relevant finding to consider beyond women in Masters contexts as it speaks to the nature of team/group networks, and may encourage coaches to consider sharing power, but also to share in constructing interpersonal relationships with close and reliable intermediaries.

Moreover, findings from Article 1 showed that MSks had a psycho-physical dependence on their teammates, in parallel with their psycho-social interdependence. For instance, MSks explained that they found it difficult to perform the team's choreographed routine when a skater

who normally filled the place next to them was absent from practice, and that it was beneficial that the MC had the capacity to skate and fill-in in these situations. Thus, the data pointed to a potentially significant *physical* dependence on top of the psychological dependence within a Masters team. Prior work that has considered physical dependence used the term *field dependent*, describing one who uses the environment outside of the self as a reference for behaviour, which can affect interpersonal behaviour (Witkin & Goodenough, 1977). Early studies on social references in groups found that the extent of an individual's field dependence was significantly related to the surrounding group's effect on his/her judgements of movement in an autokinetic situation (Linton, 1952; 1955). This is analogous to a synchro skating performance, where MSks movements are often dictated by the team around them. The *psycho-physical* variation of interdependence could be important to conceptualize in team sports that have a high kinesthetic demand, because it may have an influence on relationships between MAs, and could be relevant for coaches to understand the psycho-physical aspects that affect the broader context of a team.

Methodological Merits and Implications

Throughout both articles, we sought to be rigorous in our methods, and as reflexive as possible in order to be aware of how our interpretations were being molded. In Article 1, IPA was a highly suitable methodology for investigating the lived experiences of MSks (a distinct population of MAs) because it allowed me to not only understand the phenomena of a synchro team, but also how each individual experienced the sport respectively. The particular approach used over the course of this thesis adhered to the usual guidelines of IPA, but still allowed for the study-specific expansions as I saw fit. As such, multiple participant interviews were done throughout the season, to allow a comprehension of the evolution of relationships within the team, and to encourage iteratively revisiting the data to reflect upon how my interpretations of

the team climate and the MC's and MSks' experiences changed as well. IPA is typically inductive, but using the mix of inductive and deductive analyses in Article 1, I did not simply take existing themes and fit the data to them. Instead I expanded my judgment of those existing themes, in line with IPA's interpretative hermeneutic.

A multidimensional approach to IPA. This study entailed various elements of IPA that can be appraised methodologically for their merits and limitations. Our methods of rigour (i.e. bracketing, triangulation, member checking, use of critical friends) allowed us to be confident in our interpretations of the sport context. A multidimensional approach to IPA allowed us to gather context-specific information from multiple perspectives, over multiple time points. Callary, Rathwell, and Young's (2015b) description of the IPA process was used to guide the planning and implementation of data collection and analysis, particularly in light of the dynamic interpretative nature of the study over these time points. In doing so, I needed to consider multiple dimensions of the data: the MC's experiences, and the MSks' experiences respectively, how their experiences overlapped and connected, and over multiple time points. By coding my first set of transcripts (early season, time 1) individually and then collectively prior to advancing to the second set of interviews (see illustration in Appendix B), I could examine multiple facets of the team sport experience over the course of a full season, such as the integrations of new team members as well as their adaptation to team norms, how coaching styles were adapted and changed over time, and importantly, the evolution of intra-team relationships (e.g. how they were built and/or maintained) among the MC and MSks.

Since we engaged in more than one interview with each participant, we considered the work of McDonough, Sabiston, and Ullrich-French, (2011) who performed an IPA of 17 dragon-boaters that were interviewed at 4-5 different time points between the pre- and post-season.

Following their approach, I coded all transcripts ideographically from the *first* time point, first examining each transcript for its own themes before identifying how these themes converged across transcripts. I then moved on to the second set of interviews using the converged themes. This allowed me, in keeping with other analytic precedents in the literature (for further examples see Holt and Dunn, 2004; McDonough, Sabiston, and Crocker, 2008; Smith, 1994), to examine the dynamic process of the participants' relationships and experiences chronologically.

Generating meaning through narratives. Thematic analysis lends itself well to an analytic narrative that results in illustrative extracts, by encompassing broader contexts and interpretations of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For Article 2, I wanted to fully engage readers in my interpretations of the data by using narratives, or storytelling, in an attempt to draw a parallel from the text to experiences in the reader's own life (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2015). Synchro is a sport that goes unknown to many, but it was my hope that the narratives painted pictures that would resonate with readers' own experiences in social groups, their families, and in their own sport experiences. Despite the uniqueness of synchro, the experiences of its participants hold many translatable values to other Masters sport contexts including the sense of unity that a team can provide, and the networks of support that influence a MA's adherence to sport. Therefore, I included various depictions of the interactions that took place to account for the different perspectives within, and surrounding women's adult sport experiences. In my attempt to evoke emotion through the narratives (Smith, McGannon, & Williams, 2015), I hope to have created a lasting impression that goes beyond academic reaches and methodological implications, so that women MAs and sportspersons, coaches of women's sport, and allies of women's sport can visualize what sport might mean for them, fellow participants and teammates.

Prolonged engagement and observation. Additionally, my continued commitment to, and engagement with the team over the course of the full season had important implications both methodologically and ethically. While my ability to build rapport with the MC and MSks contributed to the depth of information collected, it was apparent that my prolonged engagement (Burke, 2016) was also beneficial to the participants. I followed the team during their major events, which meant I cheered on the sidelines with the MC during performances, celebrated milestones with the group in social settings, and on one fortuitous occasion, received the full hair and makeup experience. The participants claimed that they appreciated sharing their experiences during interviews and casual conversations, that their participation caused them to reflect on their own sport involvement, and that having an extra fan in the stands was meaningful to them. Humphrey (2007) illustrated “the potential for confusion and contradiction” (p. 23) when in the role of an insider-outsider, but highlighted the uniquely valuable opportunity of crossing between the two realities: as an affiliate of the phenomenon of interest (i.e., ‘insider’), and the researcher (i.e., ‘outsider’) investigating it. While it became necessary to frequently reflect upon the extent of my involvement in both roles, I recognized that mine was an opportune experience to more holistically understand the team context, and to empathize with the participants’ environment.

My consistent and prolonged participant observation of the team over their season caused me to reflect upon my status in the sport context as both a researcher, and sharer of the experience. Thorpe and Olive (2016) discussed the challenges of distinguishing between an insider/outsider status, and in turn debated the advantages and disadvantages of representing participants’ subjectivities, while *also* gaining the critical distance necessary to contextualize the participants’ views and actions (Wheaton, 2002). I carried out observations, alternatively considering the merits, challenges and limitations between an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ status. Early

in the season, when in a setting alongside the coach and skaters, I simply shared a space into which the team invited me, and I entered to the extent I felt comfortable. This was effective for building rapport, but sometimes I felt inconsiderate taking notes during moments that felt genuine. I was welcomed to join off-ice team events; despite my enthusiasm to do so, I struggled with whether this was an opportune occasion to visibly take notes, or whether I should engage naturally and reflect. I decided to do the latter, experienced the event candidly, then recorded my notes thereafter. Finally, my interview data collection came to an end shortly before the end of the season. I had been invited to the last competitive event, and I discussed with my supervisors whether I should attend this event, since I had all the data that I needed. Here is where I felt that it was important ethically that I remain engaged with the team that had given me so much over the course of the season – it felt as if I would be letting the team down, and feared they would think that I no longer cared if I did not attend. I thus extended my data collection and observations in order to remain loyal to the team and accept their invitation. This ‘ethic of care’ is an important aspect of qualitative IPA and narrative research that warrants further reflection.

Practical Implications of the Findings

The information gathered in this manuscript highlights a few important novelties that can be applied to a real-world setting. Findings from this thesis showed that there are opportunities for a MC to collaborate with MAs in avant-garde ways. In this study, MSks used their MC for resources such as learning, organization, and support, but the MC also used the MSks as resource to carry out extra responsibilities, to welcome new members, for social engagements, and as a social network to facilitate conformity to team norms, and for her own personal development. This is an important finding if we consider promoting Masters coaching as a parallel opportunity

to competing in Masters sport, in that coaching can drive an equally impactful and meaningful connection to sport well into aging.

In Article 1, particular facets of the TSMI outlined that the MC's interdependent relationships with dyads and with the whole group influenced the relationships amongst MSks, even without her direct intervention. Furthermore, the TSMI outlined how the MSks and MC's relationships influenced one another's interactions, decisions, and overall experiences. This serves as practical evidence supporting the insights of Callary, Currie, and Young (under review) who compared the components of the C-A relationship (3+1Cs; Jowett, 2007) to those of andragogical Masters coaching principles (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015a; 2017; MacLellan, Callary, & Young, 2019) and maintained that relational methods of coaching MAs could serve as an effective way to instruct MAs and positively facilitate their sport experiences.

Additionally, findings from Article 2 discerned that the MC is in fact a crucial component to the team in ways that have not previously been considered. She was aware of each MA's surrounding social influences and priorities that impact their sport experiences, and reciprocally, she was able to situate herself within the sisterhood of the team over multiple seasons, and attributed much of her coaching ability, and her general understanding of herself as an adult, to the women on the team. LaVoi (2007a, 2007b) contended that there is value in a coach who is responsive, engaging, empowering, authentic, and open to outside influence, and that framing the C-A relationship in a relational context is a necessary feature of psychological development. The results of this study endorse these beliefs, both in the context of sport where a MC and MAs can support one another's athletic development, and outside of sport where they can empower one another to grow as individuals.

Additionally, this thesis' unique sport sample speaks to the specialized opportunities that exist for adults to participate in sport over the course of a lifetime. Larson, McHugh, Young, and Rodgers (2018) found that swimmers' decisions to participate in the Masters division after ageing out of youth divisions was predicated upon valuable involvement opportunities which included enjoyment, sociability, and opportunities to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. Each of the MSks in the present study started their youth career in individual or pairs figure skating, which are traditionally early retirement sports. Synchro however, because of its larger focus on choreography and rhythm, is more attractive to aging skaters who do not wish, or are not physically able, to perform the jumps and spins that are necessary in other forms of competitive figure skating. Synchro therefore makes skating available to those who wish to continue in their sport, with the added interpersonal opportunities that a Masters team provides.

Finally and of recent interest, I have begun to consider how this work can translate to inform adult sport and recreation programming in my new position as a recreation coordinator for the adult and senior population of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality in Nova Scotia. Miller (1986) suggested that sport may be a way for women to restructure a sense of identity in their lives after meeting the needs of their families in everyday living. On Cape Breton Island, there is a strong sense of family pride typically in a setting of traditional and modest living. With that, much of the aging population (particularly women) has never attempted to engage in recreational activities. It is now within my portfolio to not only support existing programs that cater to the recreational desires of adults and seniors in our communities, but to develop new programs and activities that are inviting, inclusive, accessible, and enriching to more residents.

Based on the results of this thesis, I hope to make sure that programs, program leaders, and Masters coaches provide social motivation for participants, take into account family and life

priorities that need to be navigated, and that programs are enjoyable and available for recurrent seasons. For instance, I intend to support existing programming (e.g. dragon boating) and implement new (multi-sport) women-inclusive programs that provide a space for sport and physical activity, social engagements, and support, which, as suggested by the participants in this thesis are important outcomes of their sport involvement. These opportunities could build significant relationships, mirroring the sisterhood of the MSks, giving community members a chance to thrive in social recreation and enhance their overall wellbeing and commitment to continue over time. Further, I would like to follow up with program facilitators to ensure that they are active in understanding the desired outcomes of their participants, as well as how they might be able to integrate themselves within the group and make more meaningful experiences for themselves and those involved. Thus, I plan to apply what I have learned from this thesis regarding the importance of team relationships and individual needs for adult sport participation, and how a coach/facilitator can play a role in the quality of adult sport and physical activity.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the C-A relationships within a female Masters team sport setting as they related to the MC, the MAs, and the team as a whole, as well as the lived experiences of a coach and her female athletes within a Masters team sport. The knowledge gained from this investigation supports the need to comprehend the complexities experienced by women in adult sport so that we can uphold and enhance the important sport opportunities that exist for this demographic. The TSMI expands upon previously conceptualized notions of interdependent C-A relationships, and considers the broader team environment and adult sportspersons in particular. Further, this new model of interdependence epitomizes the network of influential, and mutually interdependent relationships that comprise a Masters team, which in turn supports not only the

MAs, but the MC in realizing a quality adult sport experience. Notably, sharing a sport experience with a Masters team of like-minded women provided a venue to illuminate subjective sport identities, aspects of sisterhood, social motivation, and how sporting women were empowered by their continued involvement in team sport throughout aging. This thesis provided a more concrete depiction of the specific Masters coaching considerations to be accounted for when directly instructing and leading, but also indirectly facilitating, the experiences of a group of women. In sum, when a MC is reciprocally engaged with, supportive of, and empowered alongside her MAs, there is an excellent potential for her involvement to positively impact her MAs' experiences and to enhance her own experiences, both in and out of the sport context.

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Statement of Contributions

My contributions as the primary researcher were primarily to vet existing literature and identify gaps in Masters coaching research and coach-athlete relationships. Thereafter, it was my responsibility to recruit participants, collect data by interviewing participants, attend practices, competitions, and social engagements to record observations, analyze the data and information collected, and finally write my interpretations and discussions to compose the contents of the present thesis. My co-supervisors Dr. Bradley Young, and Dr. Bettina Callary challenged my interpretations of the data throughout the process of collection and analysis, responded to inquiries I had regarding methods, and provided important feedback from the original interview transcripts to editing the final thesis document.

Appendices

Appendix A: Coach and Athlete Screening Sheet

Sport: _____ Team Name: _____

- 1) Does your group play a team sport? Y / N
 - a. If yes, which sport? _____
- 2) What is the range of ages on the team?
From _____ to _____.
- 3) Was the team selected based on try-outs? Yes or no _____
- 4) To what extent would you say your team is led by a coach on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always). Please circle a number and justify your answer below: 1 2 3 4 5
- 5) Does your team acknowledge only *one* coach? Yes or no _____
- 6) Is the coach male or female? _____
- 7) Does your team compete in a recognized league? If yes, which? _____
- 8) One a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always), how often is your coach present at competition events? Please circle a number below:
1 2 3 4 5
- 9) How many Masters/adult competitive events does your team participate in during a season? Please circle one of the following options:
1-2 3-4 5-6 7+
- 10) Are these events games, tournaments, etc? Please explain your answer below:
- 11) One a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always), how often does your coach participate as an *athlete* at these events?
- 12) How many **months per year** does your team spend with the coach?
1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10 11-12
- 13) During those months, on average, how many **times per week** do you practice with a coach?
1-2 3-4 5-6 7+
- 14) During those weeks, **how many hours** do you practice with a coach?
1-2 3-4 5-6 7+
- 15) On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very competitive), how would you describe the competitiveness of your team?
1 2 3 4 5
- 16) Please answer the following three items as you feel they relate to your team's training habits on a scale of 1(not at all true) to 5 (very true):
 - a. Players on my team train regularly in order to get ready for our sport competitions. 1 2 3 4 5
 - b. Players on my team think it is necessary to prepare for upcoming games by participating in advance. 1 2 3 4 5
 - c. Players on my team show that they are committed by showing up for most training sessions. 1 2 3 4 5

17) Prior to this season, how many seasons have you spent on a team with this individual as the coach?

1 2 3 4 5+

18) At which levels does your team compete in Masters sport? Circle all that apply.

Recreational Regional/local Provincial/state National International

Please respond to the following questions only if you are the coach:

19) Approximately how many seasons have you been the coach of a Masters team? _____

20) Approximately how many seasons have you coached the current team? _____

21) Do you have any formal coach training? Yes or no _____

a. If yes, which courses have you attended?

Appendix B: Timeline of Data Collection

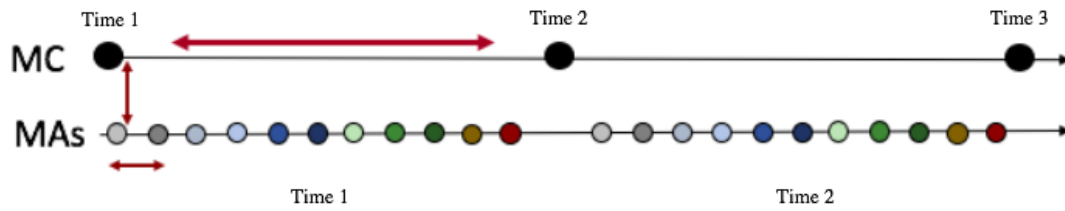


Figure. Vertical and horizontal analyses between the MC (Masters coach) and MAs (the adult synchronized skaters). Each coloured bullet represents an individual interview participant at various time points in the season. Horizontal progressions illustrate the analyses between time points of each MC interview, as well as all MA interviews. Vertical progressions illustrate how the data sets from the MC and each of the MAs were analyzed with respect to one another.

Appendix C: Masters Coach Interview Guide 1

- 1) How long have you been involved in this sport? a. ...in this sport at the Masters level?
- 2) Do your skaters address you as the coach? a. Are you also a full-time MA on the team (i.e. are you considered a player- coach)?
- 3) How would you describe your coaching role on this team?
- 4) Tell me about the coach education/training that you've received... general education?
- 5) What is the nature of your relationships *with* your skaters? *Amongst* skaters? Do they vary?
- 6) Is it important to you to develop *personal* relationships with your athletes?
- 7) Is there anyone in a captain role on the team? If yes, how is this relationship different/unique, if at all?
 - b) Can't be benched, but are there superior roles?
- 8) Is it difficult to maintain relationships with *each* skater (if you do)?
 - a. If so, what are the challenges you face? b. How do the relationships differ? Examples?
- 9) How does being with many of the same athletes throughout almost the entire year (pre-season, season, off-season) influence your relationships with them? Influence team cohesion/chemistry?
- 10) Can you describe a time that you experienced a close relationship with a skater you coached?
- 11) Does your relationship with your skaters influence how committed you are to the team?
 - b. Do those who miss practice struggle to catch up? How is this mitigated?
- 12) Do you feel as though your various relationships with your skaters affects team or individual performance? Examples?
- 13) Do you feel as though your relationships with some skaters, affects your relationships with other skaters? The team?
- 14) Do you feel as though your relationships influence your methods or coaching style? Examples? (Performance, task/social cohesion)
- 15) Do you think your newer team members have a similar perception (of you as the coach) in the same way that your returning/senior skaters do?
- 16) Do you assign skaters to groups based on anything in particular?
- 17) What might you say is a major source of tension/adversity on the team, if there is one? Can you describe a situation in which tension/adversity on the team had to be dealt with?
- 18) Have you ever had/can you describe a negative relationship/negative run-in you've had with an athlete? How was this dealt with?
- 19) How do you approach a situation in which there is tension/adversity between team members?
- 20) Do you think your athletes value that you are a female coach? Why or why not? Can you provide a specific example?
- 21) Have you ever coached men?
 - a. If so, what is distinct, if there is anything, about coaching women?
 - b. If not, do you think there is anything distinct about coaching women?
- 22) If not, would you ever consider coaching male MAs? Why or why not? co-ed?
- 23) How do you feel about coaching MAs?
- 24) In your opinion, what is your most important role as the coach of Masters Athletes?
- 25) Is there anything unique about being a part of this team that you would attribute specifically to *Masters* sport (i.e. what is special about being a MC)?
- 26) How would you describe a quality sport experience? How does your coaching style/team cater to that? Does your team lack anything that might enhance your coaching experience?

Appendix D: Masters Coach Interview Guide 2

- 1) Why do you coach? What is it that you get out of coaching, that you weren't getting out of skating?
- 2) If you moved to another city, would you pick up another team? Why or why not?
- 3) How do you build relationships specifically during training? Is it different than how you build relationships outside of skating? Which is more impactful?
- 4) Is closeness to athletes different in adult sport than it is in coaching youth?
- 5) Are you able to do anything in your one-on-one interactions that influence the relations among your skaters?
- 6) Do any of your one-one one interactions influence how you coach the team? Do you think that's important?
- 7) Does the way you coach the team, influence any of your one-on-one relationships?
- 8) Do you prioritize any given individuals for one-on-one feedback? Is there ever more one-on-one time at given points in the season? What situations might bring on more one-on-one interactions?
- 9) How do you cater to learners that don't want a lot of feedback? Do you know of these skaters?
- 10) How do you cater to different goals/motives? I.e. those who want to win vs. those who are satisfied with beating personal bests?
- 11) What are your expectations for your athletes that I might not see when I'm observing the team?
- 12) Is there anything special about this experience related to being a woman?
- 13) Did/do you see some of your older skaters as "mother" figures? Younger skaters as "sister" figures? Can you explain this or provide an example?
- 14) Are there differences in how you interact with older/veteran skaters vs younger skates? If so, is this something you intentionally try to do? If not, why?
- 15) Does having a variety of different ages bring any richness to the team? Any challenges?

Appendix E: Masters Coach Interview Guide 3

- 1) Since our first intake interview, have you thought about how your research influences your coaching practice (especially with regards to the social dimension)?
- 2) Tell me about the role that skating plays/has played in your family.
- 3) How have your relationships changed from the start of the season with the newer members? Younger members? Older members?
- 4) Can you describe for me how and why you go from coaching the group/team, to sending the athletes work amongst themselves? “Can you describe how the athletes go from working amongst themselves back to working with you?”
- 5) What was a highlight from this season for you? What was a “lowlight”? Can you speak to any conflict that happened amongst the team/ any skaters and yourself?
- 6) Do you have intentions to hold tryouts next season, why or why not? Will you attempt to keep the same group together?
- 7) Anything else you’d like to add/share about your experience this year? Questions about the study?

Appendix F: Masters Athletes Interview Guide 1

- 1) Tell me about your experience with synchro skating (when/why did you start). Were you a figure skater or dancer first?
- 2) When, and why did you join this team?
- 3) How many seasons have you spent on a team with this coach?
 - b. What do you want from your coach this season?
- 4) Describe how practice and/or warm up is run? What does your coach do throughout? Is it always the same? Do you as MAs have responsibilities?
- 5) How important is it to you to establish some sort of relationship with your coach (e.g. personal, professional, both)?
- 6) Can you describe the relationship that you have with your coach? Examples.
 - b. Do you think that your coach feels the same way about your relationship as you do?
 - c. Are there benefits of that? Or, is that a problem to you?
 - d. Do you have any shared goals?
- 7) How do *you* like being coached?
 - b. Does your coach do that? Is there anything else she could do?
- 8) Have you ever had/can you describe a negative experience/tension that you've had with this coach?
- 9) Can you describe an experience that made you feel closer, or that enhanced your relationship with this coach?
- 10) Does your relationship with your coach influence (positively, negatively, neutrally) your sense of belonging on the team?
- 11) Does (your relationship with) your coach influence how committed you are to the team?
- 12) How important is it to you to establish some sort of relationship with your teammates (e.g. personal, professional, both)?
 - b. Can you describe the relationships that you have with teammates? Could you give me specific examples?
- 13) Does your coach (or relationship with), influence your relationships with teammates?
- 14) What might you say is a source of tension on the team, if there is one? Examples?
- 15) Does the team engage in any outside-of-sport activities? a. If so, does the coach participate?
- 16) Do/does your relationship(s) with your coach and/or teammates seem to affect performance? Either your own, or the cohesiveness of your team?
- 17) Do you think that skating with the team makes you a better skater?
- 18) Is it important to you that your coach is a woman? Why or why not?
- 19) Have you ever had a male coach as an adult? a. If so, how was that experience different?
 - b. If not, how do you think that experience might be different, if at all?
- 20) Is this your first time being involved in Masters sport?
- 21) How does being a Masters Athlete make you feel?
- 22) Is there anything unique about being a part of this team that you would attribute specifically to being in *Masters* sport (i.e. what is special about being a MA)?
- 23) Can you describe what a quality sport experience looks like? What makes that *quality*? What is the coach's role in that?

Appendix G: Masters Athlete Interview Guide 2

- 1) How do others understand/react to synchronized skating when you talk about it?
- 2) Do you find it difficult to make time for synchro? Are you supported in this? Are you hindered in this regard?
- 3) Is there anything special about this experience that relates to being a woman?
- 4) Does having a variety of different ages on the team bring something different to your experience? Richness? Any challenges?
- 5) Are there any norms on your team, or team norms, that spell out expectations of skaters? Do these norms vary at all depending on skaters' ages, or age differences among skaters and/or the coach?
- 6) Can you tell me about any subgroups that you think exist on the team? How do subgroups evolve around the age of team members? (Probe age & status)
- 7) How do subgroups influence the team? The coach?
- 8) Do various/any relationships amongst skaters influence how the MC coaches your team?
- 9) Does the way the MC coaches the team influence the nature of relationships amongst skaters?

Appendix H: Author's Personal Experience Review (prior to study)

Prior to writing the current proposal, a bracketing exercise was done with my supervisors that revealed some useful information that will likely be relevant to my interpretation of the data for this study. Over the course of my athletic career, I have been fortunate enough to have experiences as both an athlete, and a coach in women's sport. I began playing soccer at the age of 5, and continued to do so at a competitive level until the age of 22 when I completed my 5th year of university eligibility. Over the course of those 17 years, I also participated in a variety of both individual and team sports at different timespans and competitive levels including gymnastics, snowboarding, volleyball, and basketball. I gained valuable abilities from individual sports, yet I always had the best experiences within a team sport setting because of the friendships and learning opportunities that transpired from sharing a pitch or court.

Eventually, I began to receive more leadership opportunities as the captain of the soccer teams that I was on, and these skills later encouraged me to coach youth girls (from U4-U12) soccer in the local community (Sydney, Nova Scotia) within which I was raised. I attempted to foster the philosophy of sport that I had developed over time within the team of girls that I coached, which was first and foremost to enjoy your sport, and subsequently to put in your maximal effort. I found that my role as a coach was not only to teach the girls how to play the game, but also to be a female role model, and to encourage them to be strong young women. As a youth and adolescent, I had far fewer female coaches (roughly 2-3 in total) compared to male coaches, and so it was important to me to have a lasting perception on the girls that would hopefully carry over throughout their future sport and life experiences. Therefore, my experience as a woman in sport in both the domains of being an athlete, and being a coach, will hopefully provide me with an empathetic understanding of how both the MC, and the MAs describe their own experiences with their team.

My understanding of Masters sport had only somewhat recently been sparked prior to the commencement of my master's thesis project. As a youth and adolescent athlete, I was only ever aware of organized sport for athletes within my generation, through either club or school organizations, or for elite athletes through channels such as the Olympics, FIFA, etc. I knew adults that participated in either beer league hockey, running clubs, or fitness classes, but I had no knowledge of even the term 'Masters sport' until the latter years of my undergraduate studies. The idea of competitive sport later in life had not necessarily been a topic that I put a lot of thought into, because I was so focused on being successful in my varsity career. However, once the end of my eligibility was in sight, I started to realize that if I wished to keep soccer a part of my life, I would need to look into what sorts of options were available for serious minded, non-elite, older athletes. At roughly the same time, I began exploring the literature in Masters sport for my undergraduate thesis and started to gather a richer understanding of what Masters sport is, what it means to its athletes, and what it could potentially mean to me in the future as both a researcher, and athlete. Now, my knowledge of Masters sport is far deeper, but my direct experiences are still somewhat lacking. I hope that by speaking with MAs and a MC throughout this process, I might better understand the individuals' direct experiences, and gain an idea of how I might further incorporate Masters sport into my own life, either as a coach or an athlete.

Appendix I: Operational Definitions for Article 1

Outcomes- the consequences (e.g. benefits, results) of a shared sport experience.

C-A dyad- The one-on-one relationship between the coach of a Masters team, and a Masters athlete on the team, which ensues due to their affective, cognitive, and behavioural interactions.

Closeness- The emotional/affective component of the C-A dyad which describes either a functional and sport-focused relationship, or a companionship that extends beyond the sporting context.

Commitment- The cognitive component of the C-A dyad which describes a coach's and athlete's intention to commit to the sporting relationship over the course of a single season, and/or for future seasons.

Complementarity- The behavioural component of the C-A dyad which is demonstrated by a coach's and athlete's corresponding actions regarding feedback and other training strategies.

Athlete(s)-Athlete(s)- The relationship or interactions that exist between two athletes, or within and amongst a group of athletes on a team, which influence the nature of their sporting context and/or lifestyle beyond sport.

Peer advising- Interactions (e.g. behaviours, verbal discussions) that occur between two athletes, or amongst a group of athletes, that promote learning within the sporting context, or within life beyond sport.

Norms- Habits or routines that are established in a team as a result of the mutual understanding amongst athletes regarding their training and social context

Navigating incongruency- Occurs when an athlete(s) on a team needs to adapt their attitude or training habits as a result of adverse behaviours of an adjacent teammate(s).

Coach-Group- The relationship or interactions that the coach and the team share as a whole, or that the coach and particular subsets of athletes on the team share pertaining to the sporting context, or social engagements beyond sport.

Super-group- The manner in which the coach and the team interact as a whole, regarding their training, pre-competition, or social engagements.

Sub-groups- The manner in which the coach and particular subsets of the team interact according to the athletes' sport knowledge/experience (e.g. rookies, veterans), or pre-established relationships.

Vertices- Referring to the Team-Sport Model of Interdependence, these represent the bi-directional influences that the relationship types in a team (C-A, A-A, C-GROUP) can have on one another— whereby interactions that occur in one relationship, directly influence an interaction or behaviour that occurs in an adjacent relationship.

C-A → C-GROUP- Interaction within a C-A dyad that directly influences the interactions between the coach and team (super- or sub-groups) that a coach, as a result of the coach or athlete *within* the dyad transferring information from their interaction, to the team context.

C-A ← C-GROUP- Interaction between the coach and the team (super- or sub-groups) that directly influences an interaction within a C-A dyad, as a result of the coach or an athlete transferring information from the team context, to the dyadic context.

C-A → A-A- Interaction within a C-A dyad that influences an interaction between or amongst athletes, as a result of the athlete transferring information from the dyadic context, to the athlete context.

C-A ← A-A- Interaction between or amongst athletes that influences interactions within a dyad, as a result of an athlete transferring information from the athlete context to the dyadic context.

A-A → C-GROUP- Interaction between or amongst athletes that influences interactions between the coach and the team unit (super- or sub-groups), as a result of the athletes transferring information from the respective athlete group, to the coached team context.

A-A ← C-GROUP- Interaction between the coach and the team (super- or sub-groups) that influences an interaction between or amongst athletes, as a result of the athletes transferring information from the coached team context, to the athlete group.

Mutuality- when a coach's or athlete's thoughts, feelings, behaviours, etc. are congruent with those of another team member or members regarding training, or their interpersonal relationships.

Appendix J: Ethics Approval Certificate

10/08/2018

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

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