

Exploring the Process of Lifelong Learning:  
The Biographies of Five Canadian Women Coaches

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Dissertation submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Kinetics

School of Human Kinetics  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of wonderful people who supported me throughout my doctoral studies. First, I would like to thank the five fantastic women who were the participants in my study. Your honest and straightforward stories were so rich in information, not only for my study, but for my own lifelong learning as well.

I would like to acknowledge the support and feedback from my committee members, Dr. Guylaine Demers, Dr. Charlotte Beaudoin, and especially Dr. Natalie Durand-Bush and Dr. Diane Culver for their ongoing support. You are role models to me. To Dr. Penny Werthner and Dr. Pierre Trudel, I could not have anticipated the road we traveled, and I am forever grateful for your support and inspiration throughout the process. You are exceptional supervisors, giving me the freedom to pursue my passions and find my own direction. Thank you.

I would also like to thank Rhoda and Rhona Wurtele for their amazing story that was an inspiration for my own work. On that vein, thank you to my aunt and uncle, Brigitte and John Eaves, for their constant support and ongoing interest. I would also like to thank Mary Ellen Jeans and Kitty Rowat for their encouragement, comments, and recommendations in all things academic and for being excellent friends. Indeed, to all my friends and family (including in-laws!), thank you. In particular, to my brilliant and lifelong friends, including Beth & Adam, Aman, Chris, Sarah, Jenny & Nick, Chantale & Armin, Eva, Dawn, Shaunna, and Lauren who have listened, commiserated, provided advice to all my various roadblocks, and celebrated successes, thank you!

I was often asked how I managed to complete my dissertation in four years while having two children and coaching alpine skiing. I am forever indebted to the following people for making this happen: To Melina, you have been the most incredible friend to me and to my family, and you continue to astound us with your ability to care for us all and be one step ahead with ideas on how to help me succeed through this process with ease and grace! I thank you so much for being in my life. To Erin, thank you for helping me think harder, re-evaluate, and realize that this is my life path. As my little sister, I think I've learned as much from you as you have from me! To Catherine, thank you for helping me learn to become the person I am today. To Mom and Dad, I am so proud to be your daughter, and I feel that I have become who I am in large part because of your constant support, encouragement, and respect. To Anneka and Julia - your Mama's a Doctor! But not one that can re-set any broken bones in the future... You have been an integral part of my PhD process, you have changed me for the better, and I cannot imagine life without you. I love you both very much. Finally, and most importantly, to Tom: your love and support has been the number one reason that I have been able to finish my PhD. You are the best husband and father, and I am the luckiest person to have found you and can't wait to see what the future with you has in store. Thank you from the depth of my heart.

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## Abstract

Coaches learn from a number of different situations and their past experiences influence what they choose to pay attention to and learn (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Understanding the process of learning to coach can be explored holistically over the course of an individual's lifespan. This thesis is guided by Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2009) theory of human learning, which takes a psychosocial perspective to understanding the way that individuals perceive their social situations, change their biographies, and become who they are over the course of their lives. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the biographies of five Canadian women coaches to understand how the multitude of experiences throughout their lives have contributed to their learning and coaching development. Four in-depth interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim with each coach. From these interviews a biographical narrative analysis was created to document how each coach learned throughout her life. The transcripts and narrative analyses were member checked to augment trustworthiness. Four articles and one research note comprise the results section. The main points in this dissertation are as follows: (a) experiences in primary and secondary socialization influenced the coaches' approaches to coaching; (b) specific meaningful learning experiences helped the coaches develop and become experienced as coaches; (c) values develop throughout life experiences and influence coaching actions; (d) Jarvis' theory is used to explore my own process of learning throughout the PhD degree, and how this learning was influenced by my lifetime of experiences to date; and (e) a brief research note highlights how the research process was a co-creation between the researcher and the participants. These findings add to the emerging body of literature on female coaches and coach learning by further understanding how the coaches' biographies determined what kinds of learning opportunities they each found meaningful; the importance of social connections in learning to coach; and the importance of reflection in understanding the interconnections of learning from life experiences. The study may motivate women coaches in understanding how lifelong learning influences their career paths and it informs coach education programs about the muddled reality of coaches' learning and development.

*Keywords:* lifelong learning, coach, experience, reflection

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION**

## **Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature**

Coaching is a complex process that is developed over time (Lyle, 2002).

Understanding how coaches learn to coach should not be restricted to researching their attendance at weekend coach education courses as adult learners. Indeed, understanding the process of learning to coach must arguably begin much earlier and can be explored holistically over the course of an individual's lifespan.

This thesis is guided by Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2009) theory of human learning, which takes a psychosocial perspective to understanding the way that individuals perceive their social situations, change their biographies, and become who they are over the course of their lives. Jarvis noted that individuals have the opportunity to learn in every experience and this helps shape the way that they subsequently learn, forming their life path.

Duffy et al. (2011) noted that coaching research is beginning to recognize that formal coach education, nonformal professional development, and informal experiences are all contributing to a lifelong learning process. More specifically, Trudel, Gilbert, and Werthner (2010), using Jarvis' (2006) theory of human learning, suggested that coaches' development is multifaceted and should be considered a lifelong learning process. Coaches learn from a number of different situations and their past experiences influence what they choose to pay attention to and learn (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). It is not clear how past experiences influence coaches' development. Given that the majority of research on women coaches has dealt with barriers and issues that women have faced as coaches (Kilty, 2006; Mercier & Marshall, 2010; Norman, 2008), there is a gap in the literature in how women coaches are learning and developing within their social context. Therefore, there is a need for more research on women's development in coaching: what their experiences are and how they are learning (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Kerr, Marshall, Sharp, & Stirling, 2006).

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the biographies of five Canadian women coaches using Jarvis's theory of human learning to understand how the multitude of experiences throughout their lives have contributed to their learning and coaching development.

### **Research Approach: Narrative methodology**

A constructivist paradigm was used to explore individual perceptions of social experiences (Light, 2008) and to understand how coaches learn based on their experiences. Purposive sampling, as recommended by Polkinghorne (2005), was used to select five women coaches with long careers in coaching and representing a variety of sports. Four semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with each coach. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. Jarvis' (2006) theoretical framework guided the questions in the interviews. Each interview was transcribed and sent to the participants via email to be member checked. In keeping with Creswell's (2007) and Polkinghorne's (1995) outline of a narrative methodology, the interview data were chronologically organized into a narrative of the learning experiences that occurred throughout the lifespan of each participant. Each narrative was structured into approximately 20 pages single-spaced based on an in-depth examination of each transcript to ensure that all learning experiences were included in the narrative. The narratives produced from this analysis provided the basis for further analysis for each of the dissertation articles.

In qualitative studies using a constructivist paradigm, the researcher is an inextricable part of the research process (Mantzoukas, 2004). In order to be transparent throughout the dissertation, I acknowledge that my own assumptions and biases play a part in the dissertation study. These assumptions and biases are based on my own biography of being a woman coach and learning throughout my lifetime of experiences.

## **Results**

The articles in this dissertation have been submitted for review to be published. There are four articles and one research note. They comprise the results section.

### **Shaping the way five women coaches develop: Their primary and secondary socialization.**

The purpose of the article is to explore how the career choices and the subsequent coaching approaches of five Canadian women coaches have been influenced by their primary and secondary socialization. A content analysis was performed on the narratives of the five participants. It was found that parents, school experiences, and athletic experiences all played a significant role in the development of each of the women coaches and subsequently influenced their approach to coaching. In the article, we demonstrate that what is learned in childhood and adolescent experiences is influential and so coach training courses given in a few hours or over a few weekends may not be enough time to create changes in coaching philosophies and approaches that originate in coaches' upbringings. It is hoped that coach educators and course facilitators will come to understand that coaches arrive at formal coach education courses with a variety of biographies, influenced by their primary and secondary socialization, and that it would be wise to create an environment where there is time for the coaches to discuss and critically reflect on their coaching approaches.

### **How meaningful episodic experiences influence the process of becoming an experienced coach.**

The purpose of the article is to demonstrate how specific episodic experiences, deemed meaningful by each of the coaches, had an important influence on the individual coaches' processes of becoming experienced coaches. Five non-fictional vignettes describe the

meaningful episodic experiences of each one of the participants over the course of her coaching career. The vignettes demonstrate how one of the five coaches learned from her experiences coaching a particular athlete, how another coach learned from experiences interacting with other coaches, how a third coach learned from experiences in coach education courses, how a fourth coach learned from experiences with her family, and how the fifth coach learned from the process of reflecting on her experiences. Indeed, in this article we establish how certain episodic experiences were meaningful to the coaches and changed the way that they made decisions and choices in their coaching. Moon (2001) suggested that what is meaningful to one person may not be significant to another, and so we cannot say with certainty that all coaches must engage in particular learning situations in order to learn to coach effectively. However, in this article we examine in depth the complex nature of learning from the perceptions of women coaches.

**Exploring coaching actions based on developed values: A case study of a female hockey coach.**

Recent research has shown that coaches' philosophies are composed of behaviours based on values. The purpose of this article is to (a) describe a female hockey coach's approach to coaching using five key coaching actions, (b) identify the underlying values based on the coach's explanations of her actions, and (c) explore how her values were developed throughout her life. A case study of the transcripts from one participant in the dissertation is analyzed to find coaching actions deemed meaningful in describing her current coaching approach. Thereafter, according to the participant's description of her actions, we establish the values underlying the five actions. Finally, relevant learning experiences as described by the coach were coded to display categories of experiences that illustrate how the coach learned each of the values. The participant confirmed her values and indicated how

they had been learned and developed through childhood, adolescence, and ongoing coaching experiences. As a result, it is suggested that coaches should reflect on their actions within their social and coaching situations to become aware of and better articulate underlying personal values that influence their coaching actions.

### **The lived experiences of a doctoral student: The process of learning and becoming.**

The purpose of the article is to explore, through a reflective self-study, my process of learning throughout the PhD degree, and how this learning is influenced by my lifetime of experiences to date. Data was collected in a personal, professional, and academic journal throughout the four years of my PhD. I assess my biography entering the program based on my previous experiences and I assess my readiness to document my learning. I then include journal entries in which the process of learning is apparent through changes illustrated in reflections on my beliefs about pursuing a career in coaching, reflections on becoming a new PhD student, reflections on becoming a new mother, and reflections on becoming an aspiring professor. What I learned in my PhD experiences was influenced by both my previous experiences before entering the PhD program and my experiences from the various roles I played during the four years, including my roles as a coach, as a student, and as a mother.

### **Ethical issues in narrative research.**

The purpose of this research note is to describe three ethical issues that were considered in collecting and analyzing the data from my five participants. The questions raised include: Did I create results? Are the narratives a realistic representation of the participants' life experiences? Who is the author of the narratives? Polkinghorne (1995) suggested that the narrative is a result of interactions between the researcher and participant

and so researchers should acknowledge the constructive contributions that they make. In this dissertation, having the participants each member-check their four transcripts and the narrative analysis of the transcripts helped to ensure that the participants were satisfied with the written interpretation of their learning experiences. From this perspective, I took measures to guarantee that the ethical considerations were dealt with to the best of my ability as the researcher.

## **Discussion**

In the general discussion of the dissertation, I bridge the main findings from the articles in order to address some key issues in lifelong learning. Namely, this research helped to uncover (a) how the coaches' biographies determined what kinds of learning opportunities they each found meaningful, (b) the importance of social connections in learning to coach, and (c) the importance of reflection in understanding the interconnections of learning from life experiences. Indeed, these findings add to the emerging body of literature on female coaches and coach learning. However, I acknowledge that this study does not delve deeply into the social structures and institutions that create the learning opportunities for the coaches. In taking a psychosocial perspective to lifelong learning based on five women coaches, the more sociological themes were beyond the scope of this research.

This research contributes to the field in two main ways: (a) it may motivate women coaches, who find similarities in their own experiences to the participants' experiences, in understanding how lifelong learning influences their career paths; and (b) it further advances our understanding of coach learning and thus informs coach education programs to the messy reality of coaches' learning and development.

**CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**  
**HUMAN LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN**

There are different theories and approaches that are used to explain human learning. Jarvis (2006) regrouped them under four broad approaches: behavioural theories, cognitive theories, emotive theories, and experiential theories. For Jarvis, each of these four approaches, when taken in isolation, tend to create depersonalized, objective studies on human learning that take away the importance of the unique experiences that each person has had. For this reason, Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009) explored human learning within a comprehensive and multidisciplinary, lifelong learning perspective to understand learning in all its complexities.

Learning throughout a lifetime is a natural occurrence and individuals become more experienced based on their learning (Jarvis, 2006). The concept of lifelong learning varies widely (Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010) and the way in which it is conceptualized impacts the potential research approach that is taken. I begin this chapter by exploring lifelong learning as a policy strategy in order to situate the term within the broader literature on lifelong learning, in which learning is seen as a way to boost economic competitiveness in organizations. This perspective centers on social and institutional structures that help adults learn. However, the perspective that guides the present study is Jarvis' (2006, 2009) psychosocial perspective, which is oriented toward understanding individual learning and development and allows for a holistic understanding of lifelong learning. This perspective enables our understanding of the depth and breadth of lifelong learning that is pertinent to the dissertation research question.

### **Lifelong Learning From a Policy Perspective**

Lifelong learning is a widely discussed concept in adult education. However, it is a contradiction in terms given that adult education focuses on adults and primarily on formal

educational situations, whereas lifelong learning denotes learning from experiences throughout the lifespan. Jarvis (2009) noted that most books on lifelong learning are restricted to adult learning. In using the term lifelong *learning*, as opposed to *education*, organizations can access multiple opportunities to help employees adapt to the changes of the workforce (Edwards & Usher, 2000; Field, 2006). Therefore, lifelong learning is a term used when discussing work policy strategy, in which a variety of activities can be considered educational within the workforce (Edwards & Usher, 2000; Jarvis, 2007; Morgan-Klein & Osborne, 2007). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has adopted a policy strategy on lifelong learning in order to grant workers and employees a multitude of opportunities to educate themselves, adapt, and gain new skills required in the ever-changing workforce (Jarvis, 2007; OECD, 2007). This approach assumes that if workers continue to learn, to be educated, and to upgrade their skills, it will help organizations compete more effectively in the global economy. In this sense, lifelong learning is “not really about human learning” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 125); instead, it is used as a standard for organizational competitiveness (Maehl, 2000).

It cannot be discounted that in improving skills to increase human capital and economic competitiveness, the outcome is also individual development (Delors, 1996). In this sense, lifelong learning includes goals to improve knowledge, skills, and competence in personal, civic, and employment functions (European Commission, 2006). However, it is the organizations, and not the individuals, that are targeted in promoting lifelong learning policy strategies (Morgan-Klein & Osborne, 2007).

The definition of lifelong learning according to a policy-driven agenda focuses on the collective development of professionals, for the purpose of acquiring specific information

deemed important by the organization. Jarvis (2007) defined lifelong learning from this perspective as:

Every opportunity made available by any social institution for, and every process by which, an individual can acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses within global society. (p. 99)

In this definition of lifelong learning, “the opportunities to learn are provided by social institutions, such as the State and employers” (Jarvis, 2007, p. 99). However, Jarvis (2006) argued that learning should be understood as occurring over the lifespan, starting before entry into the workforce. Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, I chose to take a psychosocial approach to exploring the learning process, examining learning within a social context from an individual perspective.

### **Lifelong Learning From a Psychosocial Perspective**

Jarvis (2006, 2009), using a psychosocial perspective, examined lifelong learning as a process where learning occurs for an individual over the course of a lifetime. Jarvis (2009) explained that lifelong learning, when viewed this way, is

both a psychological and a sociological study of learning, although it must necessarily incorporate philosophical aspects since learning is, in one sense, a humanistic process. The approach of any one discipline to learning is insufficient for our understanding of learning to be a person in society but we will rely very heavily on psychological studies, especially of early childhood. (p. 3)

For this reason, I refer to Jarvis' approach as a psychosocial and individual approach to human learning, where the learner is becoming more experienced as a result of doing, thinking and feeling in social situations. Therefore, human learning occurs within lifelong learning. Jarvis (2009) defined lifelong learning as:

The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, meaning, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person (p. 25).

Learning is a very complex human and lifelong process and, as a result, it is not easy to clearly draw the learning path of an individual. In exploring lifelong learning from this humanistic, psychosocial perspective, Jarvis (2006) presented learning as holistic, encompassing behaviours, thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

I now explore the key concepts inherent in the psychosocial perspective of lifelong learning. These include: the person's biography; the nature of experience; disjuncture; types of learning; meaning; and perception within a social context. It is also important to differentiate between the various learning situations that occur throughout life. Finally, I delineate some of the limitations of using Jarvis' (2006, 2009) theory of human learning.

**Biography.** Since certain events change individuals' lives but are sometimes not recognized or deeply understood until later in life, there is merit in exploring learning as it occurs over the course of an entire life (Jarvis, 2006). One of the key concepts of the learning process is the concept of biography. Jarvis (2006) referred to a person's biography as what he or she has previously learned and how this affects the person bodily, emotively, and cognitively. Therefore, the biography is composed of the memories of former learned experiences that will influence how the individual perceives new experiences. Furthermore, the biography will be evolving as a person learns from his or her new experiences (Jarvis,

2006). Every person has a different biography that determines how he or she approaches and perceives social situations and what he or she learns (Jarvis, 2006). Jarvis wrote that,

Because we are, we both think and act and by so doing we learn and, therefore, continue becoming... At the heart of all learning is not merely what is learned, but what the learner is becoming (learning) as a result of doing and thinking – and feeling. (p. 6)

**Experience and disjuncture.** Experience is not well defined within the broader context of learning, but it is an essential element in human learning (Jarvis, 2006). Individuals experience situations differently based on their unique biographies (Jarvis, 2006). Jarvis (2009) distinguished between individuals becoming more experienced over the course of their lifetime from an experience in time by referring to the latter as an episodic experience. Jarvis (2006) explained that there is a continuous spiral of individual episodic experiences throughout life. For this reason, episodic experiences are interconnected and influence the way that individuals learn from other episodic experiences. All episodic experiences are potential learning opportunities. However, in any given situation, the person may take common episodic experiences for granted until something new happens, he or she has a sensation, and then experiences what Jarvis (2006, 2009) referred to as *disjuncture*.

Disjuncture is “the gap between what we expect to perceive when we have an experience of the world as a result of our previous learning, and, therefore, our biography, and that with which we are actually confronted” (Jarvis, 2009, p. 29). The desire to overcome the feeling of disjuncture is the fundamental motivating force in learning (Jarvis, 2006). Bateson (1994) described it as follows: “Each person is calibrated by experience, almost like a measuring instrument for difference, so discomfort is informative and offers a starting point for new understanding” (p. 17). Disjuncture is a regular part of every-day life, and can

manifest as a negative feeling, such as anxiety, or as a positive feeling, such as excitement and wonder. When a person feels 'at ease' with the world, the person knows that he or she could repeat his or her past successful acts. In this case, it is possible that no new learning or no meaningful learning occurs. However, when there is change in the situation, the person experiences disjuncture and is exposed to an opportunity to learn. When this opportunity is taken, the person can give meaning to the sensation, learn, and resolve the disjuncture within the episodic experience. As a result of that experience, the person is changed (Jarvis, 2006).

As well, when an individual learns in a new situation, according to Jarvis (2006), there is a transformation. The individual experiences a situation through his or her senses. The senses (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling) transmit information to the brain where they are transformed into thoughts, emotions, and/or actions. Jarvis noted that when an individual experiences disjuncture, he or she transforms senses into new mental meanings so that he or she can explain those personal experiences. Therefore, the transformation in the process of learning is a lifelong personal development in making meaning from experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006; Jarvis, 2006).

**Types of learning.** Jarvis (2006) differentiated between non-learning, non-reflective learning, and reflective learning. In every situation, there is a possibility that a person does not learn: The individual may not experience disjuncture because he or she already possesses the knowledge or presumes that he or she has the knowledge related to that particular situation. The individual may also simply decide that he or she does not need to consider the situation.

Non-reflective learning occurs when an individual learns by memorizing information or from practicing the same thing over and over. This is what Jarvis (2006) called intended learning and the person will be changing. It is also possible that the person learns non-

reflectively in an incidental way. Incidental learning happens in human development and lifelong learning as individuals acquire attributes such as self-confidence, self-esteem, identity, and maturity through their social context (Jarvis, 2006). It is also possible that an individual experiences a situation that he or she does not consider a learning opportunity at the particular point in time, but at a later date remembers learning from the situation. Jarvis (2006) called this pre-conscious learning. Indeed, when an individual learns pre-consciously, he or she then requires another experience to bring the learning into awareness. Jarvis (2009) suggested that preconscious learning is one of the most fundamental forms of learning throughout life.

Reflective learning occurs in simple contemplation of an experience, in intentional reflective practice, and in experimental learning. It involves a complex process of emotions and thoughts as individuals experience possible learning situations (Jarvis, 2006). Learning from reflection occurs when individuals think about experiences they have had, evaluate them, and learn from them (Jarvis, 2006). Reflection is therefore an important part of lifelong learning.

While some authors, such as Merizow (1990) believed that the mark of adult learning is the ability to reflect on experiences, Jarvis (2009) believed that even children are capable early in life of being reflective. Jarvis did not distinguish between childhood and adult learning. However, he noted that adults tend to make meaning of their thoughts, emotions, and actions more often than children (Jarvis, 2006). Jarvis noted that studying lifelong learning, beginning with an examination of the early years, can demonstrate how reflection develops.

Jarvis (2006, 2009) did not specifically distinguish at which point learning does or does not involve a reflective process (aside from explaining types of learning), but Moon

(1999) proposed a five-stage map of learning, moving from noticing and making sense of information (surface learning) to making meaning, working with meaning, and transformative learning (deep learning). Moon (1999) argued that until someone reflects, he / she is not capable of moving past a surface approach to learning and that reflection results in deeper learning.

**Meaning.** In Moon's (1999) analysis of adult learning, using a constructivist view of learning, she aptly discussed how the learner judges learning to be meaningful. Learning becomes meaningful when what is learned is linked to what the individual knows at that particular point in time and to her or his previous experiences. This process entails reflection (Moon, 1999). Whether learning is meaningful or not is important because of its implications in retaining and demonstrating what is learned, which is revealed through thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to Moon (1999), these thoughts, feelings, and actions represent the learned material. The more meaningful the experience is to the learner, the more effectively it can be recalled and associated with other ideas (Moon, 1999). Since the meaningfulness of a situation is determined by one's biography, it is important to look at an individual's previous experiences.

According to Jarvis (2009), a situation itself has no intrinsic meaning; the meaning given to the experience is dependent on an individual's perceptions that are based on his or her biography (Jarvis, 2009). Therefore, some people may consider certain learning situations as more meaningful than others and may be more ready to learn and change their approach.

Learning, then, is at the heart of growth and development, and a major aspect of that learning is the way that we seek to give experiences meaning and that meaning will change and deepen as our experiences of the world and of the people with whom we

interact. This is a process that begins early in life and continues until late in life.

(Jarvis, 2009, p. 76)

Jarvis (2006) noted that not all experiences are meaningful. Throughout life, individuals focus on certain learning experiences that they deem meaningful, and often exclude those that they do not deem meaningful. It is for this reason that each individual's biography is unique (Jarvis, 2006). In Jarvis' (2009) theory of human learning, he noted that what individuals deem meaningful is learned from internal perceptions of the external world. Indeed, in his theory, individuals learn from sense data rather than directly from the external world. Therefore, perception links the way that individuals interpret their senses and this interpretation occurs as a result of being open to the external world.

**Perception of the social context.** Jarvis (2009) noted that early childhood development occurs within a particular culture and underlies an individual's perceptions, attention, motivation, level of expectation, and her or his sense of place in the social world.

At birth then, culture is external to us but internal to our significant others and through interaction with them we internalise (learn, often non-reflectively and unintentionally in the first instance) it. Once they have shared and we have learned the relevant knowledge, values, beliefs, etc. the culture becomes our own subjective reality and as such helps determine the way that we perceive and experience the world, and consequently we learn in it and from it. (Jarvis, 2006, p. 57)

Jarvis (2009) noted that it is false to view the psychological processes of learning and making meaning as separate from the social context in which they occur. He stated that,

The organizations, groups, social classes, etc., that individuals occupy in society are going to affect, or reinforce, the meanings that they place upon their lives and even the meaning that they give to all other aspects of social life. Meaning is... a social and

personal quest to understand the experiences of everyday living. Experiential learning, therefore, must always be seen within the social context within which the learner is living. (p. 73)

Children learn socio-cultural meanings that affect the way they view the world. Later in life the memories from early childhood are the building blocks that create meaning of new experiences. The values, beliefs, and knowledge that individuals learn from their culture remain mostly outside of their awareness. They often do not explicitly know the complex patterns of human relations that they are unconsciously taking on through actions and language of others (Bateson, 1994). Then, as children are educated, they learn more explicitly the dominant cultural norms (Jarvis, 2006).

Culture itself is a difficult term to define since it has many accepted meanings, but Jarvis (2006) defined it as: “all knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, and emotions that we, as human beings, have added to our biological base” (p. 55). In this sense, individuals internalize the cultural norms that they learn from their early experiences, and these become the basis from which new experiences are interpreted (Jarvis, 2006). Gender roles are most certainly learned within a culture. Individuals learn from socially constructed experiences in interactions with others. As a normal part of relationships, people exercise power or influence over others. Therefore, power is involved in all learning situations (Jarvis, 2007). However, Jarvis noted that power is not a unidirectional process, but involves the way that individuals present themselves and what they expect from others. Through living, they learn to play a social role and thus learn about power (Jarvis, 2007).

Changes, as a result of learning, occur on a daily basis in our society. Jarvis (2006) explained that the ‘life-world’ of an individual is the combination of experiences that are life-wide (including all aspects of one’s life) and lifelong (throughout the course of one’s

life). An individual's life-world is dependent on the social forces in the wider world that are generated by globalization (Jarvis, 2007).

Our life-world is also about people's life-worlds. Not only is the life-world contained within a wider society, there is a total mixture of institutions and groupings within it, such as the family, school, work and informal meeting opportunities during leisure and so on. Each contains its own sub-culture and we adjust our behaviour automatically to fit into the organizations and groups with which we are familiar.

(Jarvis, 2006, p. 54)

Based on the demands of one's life-world, individuals can encounter different opportunities to learn (Jarvis, 2006). Contemporary society changes so rapidly that individuals live in constant change so that, unless they disengage from social living, they are constantly engaged in potential learning situations (Jarvis, 2007).

**Different learning situations.** It is apparent, in examining the concept of lifelong learning that individuals learn in many different situations. However, when adults are asked about how they have learned what they know, they often only talk about their formal learning situations (i.e., situations that are highly institutionalized, curriculum driven, and formally recognized with grades, diplomas, or certificates) and nonformal learning situations (i.e. situations that are short-term and voluntary, such as courses that have a facilitator and complement the formal system) (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006). When further questioned, adults may then talk about informal learning situations as well (i.e. important events in life such as an illness or parenthood) (Merriam et al., 2006).

Jarvis (2006) referred to formal and nonformal learning situations as events where purposeful learning is sought. The difference between learning situations and experiences must be clarified: A person is present in any given situation, and this may include other

people who are present in the same learning situation (i.e., a coach education course).

However, what the person experiences within that learning situation may be different than what others experience. An experience is dependent on the individual's perceptions of the situation and this is influenced by the individual's biography (see above). In being in the world, the person places new meaning on experiences as he or she lives. Merriam et al. (2006) referred to being in the world as engaging in informal learning.

Informal learning is the spontaneous, unstructured learning that goes on daily in the home and neighborhood, behind the school and on the playing field, in the workplace, marketplace, library and museum, and through the various mass media. Informal learning is by far the most prevalent form of adult learning. (p. 35)

However, Merriam and colleagues also acknowledged that the nature of learning in informal situations makes those situations difficult to recognize as opportunities to learn since they are so much a part of everyday living. Jarvis (2006) acknowledged that formal, nonformal and informal learning situations are suitable terms to help people discuss the variety of ways that they learn.

**Limitations.** Jarvis' (2006, 2009) theory of human learning does have limitations and Jarvis (2006) himself noted that learning cannot be understood in all its complexity. Jarvis presented both a psychosocial perspective on lifelong learning as well as a policy driven perspective, so in essence, he presented two different and even contradictory definitions of lifelong learning. However, given the scope of Jarvis' theory, his inclusion of both perspectives is warranted. Depending on the lens from which researchers wish to explore lifelong learning, each definition has value. Jarvis' theory is broad and does not go into detail regarding important aspects of learning such as reflection and meaningfulness of learning, and he does not expand on transformational learning. Indeed, Jarvis does not focus his theory

of learning on adult education, and so he does not explore surface versus deep approaches to learning to explain the manner and stages of learning important in understanding how individuals may be more effectively educated.

Nonetheless, the use of Jarvis' (2006, 2009) framework of lifelong learning to guide this research study helped to uncover and delve deeper into the way that a number of different learning situations and experiences influence how coaches learn. Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, and Rynne (2008) stated that coach development is a lifelong process, and all forms of learning and education should be valued. In the next chapter, I will review the literature on coaching as it pertains to lifelong learning and elaborate on the dissertation study's purpose.

### **CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE & PURPOSE**

### **Review of the Literature on Coaching and the Dissertation Purpose**

This review of literature covers three broad topics in coaching: The different sport coaching contexts; coach learning and development; and women coaches. In the first section, I examine the literature on coaching contexts to understand the multidimensional view of sport coaching. In the second section, I review the literature on understanding coach learning from an individual's perception within a social context. The third section focuses on the literature dealing with women coaches to help situate this research within a wider context in which the participants in this study learn and develop their coaching careers. The purpose of this dissertation research study is explained at the end of this chapter.

#### **Literature on Different Sport Coaching Contexts**

The term 'sport coach' has been defined as an individual who "fulfils a leadership role within sport, which is characterized by goals based on improved sports performance" (Lyle, 2002, p. 40). More recently, Lyle and Cushion (2010) have noted that this concept of a sport coach is so generic that in some ways it has become an unhelpful term. For the purpose of understanding in-depth how coaches develop and learn to coach, it is therefore not particularly wise to simply lump together all coaches based on such a generic interpretation of their goals.

Lyle (2002) noted that coaches have varied characteristics that demonstrate the different skills and roles they fulfill. Indeed, there are wide variations in coaches' approaches (Duffy, Crespo, & Petrovic, 2010). Duffy et al. (2010) recently differentiated the coaching contexts to help to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to understanding sport coaches. The authors suggested two standard occupations and four coaching domains. The two occupations differentiate between coaches who coach individuals involved in

recreational sport (participation-oriented) and those involved in competitive sport (performance-oriented). Within the participation-oriented occupation, the two coaching domains are (a) coach of beginners and (b) coach of participation-oriented sportspeople. Within the performance-oriented occupation, the two coaching domains are (a) coach of talent identified/performance athletes and (b) coach of full-time/high performance athletes (Duffy et al., 2010). Furthermore, four coaching roles have been identified: apprentice, coach, senior coach, and master coach. These can be either full-time paid positions, part-time paid positions, or volunteer positions (European Coaching Council, 2007). Finally, coaching characteristics also vary in terms of qualifications, levels of experience, motivation, hours of practice or training time, and remuneration (Duffy et al., 2011).

Similarly, the Coaches Association of Canada recently re-worked its certification and education courses into three streams in order to educate coaches depending on their different roles: competition stream, community stream, and instruction stream (Coaching Association of Canada, 2012). Within the competition stream there are three coaching contexts: introduction, development, and high performance. These contexts reflect the stages of athlete development with whom the coach is working, with references to competition. Within the community sport stream, there are two coaching contexts: initiation and ongoing participation. The initiation context refers to coaches who are introducing individuals to a sport. The ongoing participation context refers to coaches who coach individuals in a recreational environment. The instruction stream includes three contexts: Beginner, intermediate, and advanced performers. Coaches typically do not coach athletes in formalized competitions within the instruction stream (Coaching Association of Canada, 2012).

The generic definition of what is a coach is inadequate for understanding how coaches develop into their roles, learn their skills, and enter into their coaching contexts (Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Indeed, Lyle (2002) had noted in earlier work that depending on the role and characteristics of the coach, particular experiences may vary in significance for the individual and that no two coaches will think, feel, or behave the same way due to different combinations of demands and personal qualities. Furthermore, coaches may also change their coaching context, domain, role, and status so that coaching must be examined as a process that is developed over time.

### **Literature on Coach Learning and Development**

Lyle (2002) noted that a significant amount of the research on coaching focuses on coaching behaviours. These studies generalize coaching roles and focus on coaching sessions and direct interventions between the coach and athletes instead of viewing coaching as a long-term process that is shaped over time and is unique to the individual. Rather than examining coaching as a series of isolated training episodes, Cushion and Lyle (2010) suggested that researchers study the coaching process longitudinally to explore coaches' learned set of skills. They emphasized that it is important to explore coach development as an individualized process occurring over the course of a lifetime.

The literature on coaching research is only just beginning to recognize that formal coach education, nonformal professional development, and informal experiences all contribute to a lifelong learning process (Duffy et al., 2011). Indeed, there is a need to go beyond researching coach *education*, which is associated with coach learning that occurs within coach education programs, and is often examined from the perspective of program developers (Mallett et al., 2009). Instead, there is a need for research on coach *development*, which is an all-encompassing term that is often viewed from the perspective of the learner

(coach) and includes learning that occurs in all situations (Mallett et al., 2009). There is therefore a need to research coaches' individual lifelong learning to further understand the process of learning and development.

Research demonstrates that coaches learn from a number of different sources. Werthner and Trudel (2009) examined the learning situations of 15 elite, Olympic level Canadian coaches. They found that past experiences as an athlete; formal education (schooling); coaching courses; mentoring from other coaches; and "constantly thinking" about coaching contributed to coach learning. Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, and Côté (2008) found that high performance coaches learn by doing (including working with athletes), by interacting with coaching peers, and through formal coach education programs. Wright, Trudel, and Culver (2007) explored the different learning situations reported by youth ice hockey coaches and found that coaches learned from coach education programs, clinics, and seminars; formal mentoring; face-to-face interactions with coaches; personal experiences related to sport, family, and work; and from books/videotapes and the Internet. It appears that throughout the various coaching contexts, similar learning opportunities exist for coaches. However, on closer inspection, Werthner and Trudel's (2009) findings indicate that elite coaches' learning paths differ greatly based on their previous learning and past experiences. These authors suggested that even coaches within similar contexts place differing degrees of importance on common coach learning situations, and that previous experiences influence what they choose to pay attention to and to learn (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Therefore, there is merit in exploring coaches' unique development within their social situations.

Based on Werthner and Trudel's (2009) work, it is clear that coaches have different past experiences that can influence how they learn and therefore how they coach. For

example, some studies indicate that there is an advantage for coaches to have athletic experience within the sport that they coach (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Erickson, Côté, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007) and yet other studies point out examples of coaches succeeding with little or no past athletic experience (Carter & Bloom, 2009; Werthner & Trudel, 2006, 2009; Wright et al., 2007). Coaches also display a wide range of values and beliefs that stem from their varied backgrounds (Jenkins, 2010; Nash & Sproule, 2009). Jenkins (2010) stated that coaches recognize that values learned in athletic and educational experiences influence their coaching approach. Interestingly, coaches' personal values seem likely to help them match their predispositions to type of coaching context in which they coach (Lyle, 2002).

Research on coach learning situations has focused on coach education courses and these courses have been criticized for lacking depth and relevance (Armour, 2010). A number of authors have made suggestions on how learning to coach can be improved (Armour, 2010; Cassidy, 2010; Trudel et al., 2010). Certainly formal and nonformal courses appear to be only one of the ways that coaches learn. Coaches spend relatively little time engaged in coaching courses compared to other situations so it makes sense that these programs play a marginal role in coach development when compared to other learning situations (Trudel et al., 2010). Nonetheless, these professional development and certification courses are practical ways to mediate coach learning in an otherwise largely unstructured and unguided series of learning opportunities. Armour (2010) suggested that professional learning activities should be designed and organized to build on coaches' existing understandings and arouse their curiosity for continual learning. This would ensure coaches become aware of and seize further informal opportunities to learn outside of formal courses.

Côté (2006) contended that, “effective coaches are lifelong learners committed to personal growth and that their development extends far beyond any formal training program” (p. 221). Thus coaches learn and develop when they engage in informal social interactions and experiences related to coaching. Cassidy (2010) also noted that coaches’ learning takes place outside formal training and argued that coaches can learn be encouraged to reflect and experiment in their practice when they are challenged to think about how they learned their coaching knowledge. Clearly coaches have a multitude of experiences from which they can find opportunities to learn in meaningful ways.

While coaches who pursue coaching for a considerable time have many experiences from which to learn, it is clear that not all experiences will carry equal weight in regards to meaningful learning (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Indeed, what a coach finds meaningful is dependent on his or her perception of the situation, and this in turn shapes his or her coaching practice. Through an integration of coaches’ personal interpretations or perceptions of experience and their learning, Lyle (2002) noted that “individuals have a facility to ‘become’ – that is, they have an (infinite) potential for change and growth... Personal growth and development is, therefore, an appropriate goal in its own right in any human endeavour, including sports coaching” (Lyle, 2002, p. 178). Indeed, this is in line with Jarvis’ framework and we see how coaches’ biographies made up of their previous experiences “play an important role in what coaches can and want to learn” (Trudel et al., 2010, p. 149). Therefore, there is a link between Jarvis’ theory of human learning, his concepts of biography and experience, and how this theory helps us more deeply understand coach learning.

## **Women Coaches**

Hodkinson, Biesta, and James (2008) have noted that it is important to explore the past life history of both the individual and of the situation to understand learning. The place of the individual in the social context of learning must be addressed (Hodkinson et al., 2008). Therefore, because this study is on women coaches and how they have learned, I explore the literature specific to women coaches.

Throughout the Western world, the sport coaching culture still seems to be predominately male-dominated. Although it is very difficult to find the exact percentage of women who coach, it appears that approximately 25% of coaches in Canada are women (Kerr, Marshall, Sharp, & Stirling, 2006; Reade et al., 2009). This number is concerning because this under-representation of women in the coaching field reduces the choice and quality of coaches available to work in sport (Lyle, 2002). For this reason, it can be argued that it is important to look at the situation of the women coaches who do coach. This section therefore includes the research that has examined (a) the learning situations created to help women coaches learn to become effective coaches, and (b) the issues that women coaches often face in their careers as coaches. This background information situates the research within a wider contextual framework to help better understand the inherent perceptions and interpretations that the participants may make within their social experiences.

**Specific learning opportunities for women coaches.** It has been noted in the literature on women and coaching that formal and nonformal learning opportunities exist for women coaches. Formal learning opportunities, such as the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), increase women's opportunities to learn and develop their abilities to become good coaches (Kilty, 2006). Coaches take courses in coaching education programs in order to learn how to coach effectively, in order to get certified, and to have their learning

recognized. They are taught specific coaching skills and are then evaluated on those skills. However, as noted earlier, the literature has also pointed out the limitations to these formal learning opportunities and Trudel et al. (2010) argue that it is more often than not left to coaches to find continuing learning opportunities in addition to these courses.

Nonformal learning situations such as coaching conferences for women, have been implemented by some sport organizations. Coaching conferences created specifically for women coaches generate opportunities for women to learn that they are not alone as they gain access to a network of other women coaches (Kilty, 2006). Different intervention studies exploring this type of networking have proved to be useful. Sisley and Delaney's (1990) research on the creation of workshops for women proved valuable for increasing knowledge of coaching for novice female coaches. The innovative National Women and Coaching Apprenticeship Program, set up by the Coaching Association of Canada, was specifically designed to enable women coaches to take part in national team training camps and other ongoing learning opportunities, and to network with other women coaches to develop their knowledge in an inclusive environment (Werthner & Callary, 2010).

Informal learning situations create an environment where women coaches learn through guidance in the workplace (Marshall, 2001). Kilty (2006) suggested that institutions could restructure work environments to create collaborative learning and mentoring opportunities that would allow women to teach, guide, and advise new women coaches. Marshall and Sharp (2010) have also suggested that women coaches develop their coaching practice from observing and interacting with coach mentors. Other coach literature supports mentoring as a means by which coaches learn (Werthner & Trudel, 2009; Wright et al., 2007). The rewards for the protégé (in this case, the women coaches) have been documented as leading to other opportunities to coach, getting advice on setting realistic career goals and

strategies, and avoiding errors (Marshall & Sharp, 2010). Furthermore, Mercier and Marshall (2010) proposed that women could be advocates in their coaching profession by encouraging one another, by identifying and promoting their strengths, and by refusing to participate in women-debilitative dialogue.

It has also been suggested that women coaches need to take a proactive approach to planning their careers and reflecting on what they learn (Kilty, 2006). Inglis, Danylchuk, and Pastore (2000) advised that women in control of their careers, who set clear and flexible goals, are the most satisfied with their jobs. This involves creating a plan, knowing what level to coach, defining personal success, and making a conscious choice to coach (Inglis et al., 2000). This planning should not only occur in coach education courses, but as on-going learning involving the process of reflection and application within the context of being a woman coach (Inglis et al., 2000; Kilty, 2006). Indeed, the importance of reflection has been shown as an important skill for coaches' development within the general coach learning literature (Cassidy, 2010; Werthner & Trudel, 2009).

**Issues faced by women coaches.** There is considerable research on the barriers that often prevent women from remaining in the coaching profession for long periods. These issues are examined below in order to understand the social context in which women coaches learn.

Several authors have argued that there is an underlying assumption in society in general, that also exists in the sport world, where male coaches are automatically assumed to be more competent than female coaches (Demers, 2004; Kilty, 2006; Norman, 2010). Werthner, Culver, and Mercier (2010) suggested that the sporting environment is “androcentric”, meaning that it emphasizes masculine interests and points of view. Therefore, the structure of sport organizations is not neutral and includes invisible gender-

bias. The authors suggested examining deep assumptions, challenging androcentric values, and accepting new models of coaching including co-coaching, knowledge sharing, and a greater emphasis on hiring coaches based on effective interpersonal skills that value both men and women's skills in order to change the status quo (Werthner et al., 2010).

Kilty (2006) suggested that there are discriminatory hiring procedures whereby unconsciously it is easy for employers to fall into the "Principle of Similarity". This means that the subtleties of discrimination include the tendency for men to hire men since it is a comfortable thing to do. Women coaches may have a hard time getting hired and may learn that finding a job and a career in coaching is quite difficult. Indeed, even when female coaches land their jobs, Norman (2008), in her study of elite British female coaches, found that they felt they had few opportunities to progress as coaches within their sport and felt isolated and unsupported by their governing bodies in their roles as elite coaches. Norman (2010) noted that this subtle discrimination contributes to women's continued under-representation in coaching.

Currently, the devaluation of women in sport has often created a lack of opportunities for careers in sport coaching (Thorngren, 1990). Furthermore, this devaluation persists as individuals, both male and female, base their knowledge on their past experiences as athletes with predominately male coaches (Thorngren, 1990). Demers (2004) suggested that an environment dominated by male coaches does little to enable women athletes to understand that coaching is a viable career for women. Women may not be inspired to become coaches or believe in their abilities to do so since there are few women coaches to support them or act as role models and mentors (Demers, 2004; Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998; Lirgg, DiBrezzo, & Smith, 1994). More recently, there are women that have taken that experience and turned it around, advocating for female athletes to become coaches. It is hoped that, as a result, the

gender bias is perhaps becoming lessened, and the number of women coaches at all levels of sport may begin to grow (Marshall, Demers, & Sharp, 2010).

Another issue women coaches face is that they are initially more likely to be hired in assistant coaching positions rather than in head coaching positions (Sagas, Cunningham, & Pastore, 2006). It is often difficult to remain in assistant coaching positions because the irregular hours and time demands of the job interfere with having a second job, which is necessary to supplement one's part-time coaching income (Pastore, 1993). At the same time, because of the time demands, women coaches with families may end up declining head coaching positions to take assistant coach positions instead (Kilty, 2006). The difficulty of a career that is both time-consuming and often not-well paid or only part-time results in a difficult situation for many coaches, but doubly so for women coaches, who still take on most of the work in the family home (Robertson, 2010).

The above-mentioned learning opportunities and issues affect women coaches' experiences, which, in turn, affect how they learn over their lifetime. In investigating how life experiences contribute to how women coaches learn over their life spans, we take a holistic view and explore the interconnectedness of different learning experiences and opportunities.

### **Dissertation Purpose**

While we have briefly outlined the literature on women coaches, authors such as Gilbert and Trudel (2004) and Kerr and colleagues (2006) have argued that there is still a dearth of women coaches and a paucity of peer-reviewed empirical research on women coaches. Furthermore, Lyle (2002) noted that much of the research on women coaches "has an emancipatory tendency in which the numbers of coaches and the search for sociological explanations for differential access and opportunity have dominated" (p. 232). He noted that

without research on women's coaching practice and behaviours, as well as a number of other more psychosocial factors, an integrated understanding of women coaches' issues is not possible (Lyle, 2002).

In terms of the literature on learning, Jarvis (2007) criticized much of the research on lifelong learning as being male dominated. The research often promises self-evidently 'good' opportunities to learn throughout an adult's career in formal and non-formal educational situations, which in turn takes time and does not always fit well with women's responsibilities in life. In studying learning using Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2009) framework, it is clear that any life experience can be a potential learning situation. In this dissertation I strive to take the research on coach learning one step further than simple classifications or learning sources and endeavor to look at how experiences throughout life influence the learning process of women coaches. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the biographies of five Canadian women coaches using Jarvis' (2006, 2007, 2009) theory of human learning to understand how the multitude of experiences have contributed to their learning and coaching development throughout their lives. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following question:

How have five Canadian women coaches learned, changed, and developed their coaching careers based on their unique, interconnected, and socially bound experiences in different learning situations throughout their lives?

People learn differently within their own life-worlds (Jarvis, 2006) and this research explores women coaches' experiences, perceptions, and meanings they have learned as they have lived their lives as women and as coaches.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH**

This section will address: (a) my research paradigm and epistemology; (b) my choice of methodology, including the participants chosen, an explanation of the data collection, and the data analysis; and (c) the trustworthiness of the research and transparency of the researcher.

### **Paradigm and Epistemology**

A constructivist paradigm was chosen for this research since I wanted to explore the lifelong experiences of my participants both within and outside of their coaching careers. The constructivist paradigm denotes the constructed realities of the participants through the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Hoskins (2002) stated that constructivists look at *how* people come to know what they know, as well as *what* they know. Knowledge includes what is learned in everyday life through adaptation and change in the learner (Light, 2008).

Indeed, it is important to explore coach learning from a constructivist paradigm because we can expand our understanding of how coaches learn, including the multitude of life experiences that contribute to coach development. Traditional learning theories and epistemologies do not account for informal learning situations and “the range of embodied, cultural, and social learning, and human development that arises from children’s and young people’s engagement in sport and leisure pursuits over time” (Light, 2008, p. 29).

Constructivism is commensurate with Jarvis’ (2006, 2009) framework on human learning because it takes into account the whole person. Constructivism adopts

A more ecological, holistic view of learning that challenges the dualistic division of mind from body, the learner from learned, and subject from object. Implicit within this rejection of the division between mind and body is the importance of the body and its sensations in learning. (Light, 2008, p. 22)

Indeed, Light (2008) described psychological constructivism as investigating how individuals construct their knowledge based on previous and new experiences, and can be

used to explore the individuals' perceptions of social experiences. Learning is seen as complex, multifaceted, and involving continuous change, and Light argued that living is equated with learning. Furthermore, learning and its relationship to social interaction is central to Jarvis' (2009) definition of lifelong learning.

Paradigms direct the researcher's choice of ontology, epistemology, and method (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A relativist ontology is applied whereby the participants mental constructions are socially and experientially based so that despite shared elements among individuals, the nature of reality is dependent on individual perception (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It has been argued that participants' recollection of past events could be selective (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995, 2005). They could forget, exaggerate, or confuse their stories (Riessman, 1993). Proving the past as it actually existed was not the focus of the research, but rather the truth was in the participants' interpretations (Polkinghorne, 2005; Riessman, 1993) and how their interpretations had affected their learning. It is the ontological position that most differentiates constructivism from critical theory (including feminist theories) because as people learn from their experiences, they come to view the world and their experiences differently so that the individuals' perceptions of experiences influence their learning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Indeed, Polkinghorne (2005) noted that human experience is multi-layered and complex and that qualitative inquiry is designed to study experiential life.

Instead of an absolute truth, constructivists take a subjectivist epistemology in which reality takes the form of multiple mental constructions produced by individual perceptions and shaped by social and cultural factors (Mantzoukas, 2004). Therefore, I used a subjectivist epistemology, where my participants and I interacted to create understanding about their lifelong learning. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that with a subjectivist

epistemology, participants are seen to be the experts on their own lives. Jarvis (2006) conceded that knowledge is ever-changing as people learn and develop new knowledge.

### **Narrative Methodology**

The term “narrative” can take on a variety of meanings (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives convey the way that people make sense of their world, themselves, and the relationships they have in the ever-changing world (Murray, 2008). “In the context of narrative inquiry, narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) elaborated that narratives provide insight into individuals' experiences in the world and have a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way. In this dissertation, I chose a narrative methodology and a resulting narrative analysis.

It has been proposed that there are three dimensions to a narrative methodology: temporal, meaningful, and social (Elliot, 2005). The temporal dimension indicates the chronological embeddedness of experiences happening within a flow of time (Elliot, 2005). The plot is an important element in a narrative that creates causal links between events in time. Indeed, causality between events adds to the coherence of narratives. This has implications in the present study as I explored the life experiences of the women coaches, since early experiences influenced perceptions and learning in subsequent experiences (Jarvis, 2006). The second dimension, that narratives are meaningful, specifies how individuals can share experiences that they deem most significant and important (Elliot, 2005). In this study, the learning experiences that the women coaches shared were those that they deemed meaningful in their lives. Finally, the third dimension indicates that narratives are social such that participants tell stories within a specific social context and intended for a specific audience (Elliot, 2005). It must therefore be recognized that the questions asked in

the interview process in this study helped to shape the results of the study. Elliot (2005) explained that common themes in narrative research include:

An interest in process and change over time... An interest in the self and representations of the self... An awareness that the researcher him- or herself is also a narrator... Narrative crosses the usual disciplinary boundaries and has been taken up as a useful analytic tool by researchers with very diverse backgrounds. (p. 6/7)

Narratives are used broadly within the social sciences, and the approach therefore complements Jarvis' multidisciplinary theory of lifelong learning. Furthermore, narratives can be used to recount experiences, and experiences are central to women coaches' lifelong learning. The narrative methodology provides a deep and context-rich way to understand women coaches' temporally unified and meaningful learning experiences.

Creswell (2007) suggested that narrative studies may be biographical in nature, whereby the researcher writes about the experiences of the participant's life. This may be guided by a theoretical perspective. In this case, while a biography of the participants' life was written, the emphasis was on the learning experiences and development of the individuals as coaches, so that Jarvis' lifelong learning framework was a clear theoretical underpinning. Creswell further elaborated on informal procedures to conduct narrative research. These include: (a) ensuring that the research question captures detailed life experiences of a small number of participants; (b) selecting participants and spending considerable time with them; (c) collecting data based on stories of personal experiences and contexts; (d) analyzing the stories by reorganizing the data into a chronology; and (e) actively involving participants in the research by getting them to validate the analysis (Creswell, 2007). Steps b through e will be explained below.

**Participants.** A purposive, maximum variation sampling method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Polkinghorne, 2005) was used to select the five women coaches involved in this research study. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher wants to select participants who fit the topic (Creswell, 2007) while also seeking participant variety and opportunities for intensive study with few participants (Polkinghorne, 2005). Through maximum variation purposive sampling, participants with varied life experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005) were chosen in order to shed light on different learning pathways depicted through the numerous experiences throughout the women's lives. The participants were found through word-of-mouth, and were specifically selected because they had been coaching for a considerable amount of time, they had an established career in coaching, and they were still coaching at the time of the study.

Prior to interviewing each participant for the purpose of the study, I conducted a brief interview using the table in appendix A to determine a few key biographical details that would ensure I chose participants with varied life experiences who also fit the criteria for selection. The participants in this study were five Canadian women coaches who had extensive and on-going coaching experience (between 17-33 years). One participant, Darlene, worked full time as a coach for development and high performance figure skaters for 22 years and was the skating director of her club. Another participant, Sheilagh, worked full time for the past 33 years as a coach for entry-level, competitive development, and high performance figure skaters. She was also the director of the entry-level program at her club. The third participant, Shelley, worked full time as the head coach for a women's university hockey team for seven years and had coached women's college and girls' youth hockey teams for 10 years prior. The fourth participant, Lesley Ann, coached entry and development level canoe and kayak athletes, having founded and run her own club for 10 years. She had

previously coached development, provincial, and national level athletes for 20 years. She was also a high school teacher. The fifth participant, Nancy, was the head coach for a development level alpine ski club for the past two years. She had worked full time as a provincial level head coach for 17 years, and a development level coach and coach education facilitator for 11 years prior (see appendix A for a table of the biographical details of the five coaches). Patton (1990) states that information-rich cases should be chosen in order to learn as much as possible about the issues of the research. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the research is enhanced by having chosen viable sources that provide a deep understanding of lifelong learning due to their extensive experiences as coaches (Polkinghorne, 2005).

**Data collection.** In interviewing participants in narrative research, it has been suggested that the researcher meet with the participants on a number of occasions to gain their trust and confidence and to encourage them to reflect on their life experiences (Flowers, 2008; Murray, 2008). Furthermore, Polkinghorne (2005) emphasized that to get quality findings, it is important to engage in several interviews with participants and that a sequence of three interviews is likely ideal to collect data rich in depth and breadth. I conducted interviews with each of the five participants in this study on four separate occasions over approximately four months.

Murray (2008) suggested that the researcher inform the participant about the details of the issue to be discussed, so that the participant understands the direction of the conversation. Before the first interview, I gave each participant a consent form in which they read about the purpose of the study, and they were reminded at the start of each interview that the purpose was to uncover experiences that influenced the way that they learned to coach.

It is suggested that in the first interview, the researcher and participants become acquainted and develop a rapport, that the participant gains a surface understanding of the research problem, and that general questions are answered (Seidman, 1998). I started each interview by asking broad questions pertaining to the participants' biographies and coaching experiences, followed by particular probes to pinpoint and expand on specific experiences, feelings, thoughts, and actions to help answer the research question (Creswell, 1998) (see Appendix B for interview questions). The second and third interviews were in-depth and open-ended to explore the particularities of the participants' lives and their learning experiences inside and outside of coaching.

The three interviews each lasted approximately two hours and the second and third interviews built on the previous one. The interviews were digitally recorded, and then transcribed verbatim and cleaned up for grammatical errors. They were subsequently sent to the participants so that they could confirm the stories and experiences. Seidman (1998) suggested that between interviews the participant may reflect on the topic, so that the next interviews might be more focused and in depth. A non-directive approach was used, whereby the interview questions were open-ended in order to collect data on a wide range of possible learning experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In each interview, I asked questions that explored their learning situations and experiences as women and as coaches (see Appendix C for a detailed description of the questions). In this way, the interviews provided context-rich and deep data (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Conducting several interviews with each participant, I was able to collect data, transcribe and carry out a preliminary analysis, determine questions to ask to expand on the participant's lifelong learning, and return for another interview to expand on and clarify the participants' life experiences. In this way, the research process was iterative until the data

collection for the participant was deemed comprehensive since no new information was shared (Polkinghorne, 2005). In the fourth interview, each participant had the chance to comment on, clarify, and edit her transcript and my preliminary analysis. This process is described in more detail below.

**Data analysis.** Narrative research can be distinguished from other genres by its emphasis on the chronology and sequence of the data and analysis (Cortazzi, 1993). A narrative analysis was performed based on each of the participant's retrospective description of events in the interviews (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). In this way, each participant's data – her experiences, learning, and subsequent actions - were analyzed. Based on that analysis, a chronological narrative of meaningful experiences was created that described how each coach learned, changed, and developed her coaching practice over time. The narrative analysis involved steps throughout the data collection:

- 1) After the first interview with each coach, I immediately transcribed the data. I then created a timeline to clarify where significant learning experiences occurred throughout the participant's life. Timelines are useful because they help researchers focus their data collection on relevant events (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).
- 2) After creating the timeline, I further analyzed the data from the interview transcript and timeline to “re-story” and configure the transcripts with all relevant quotes into a chronological life story using a plot line that displayed the links of unfolding events and learning experiences (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). Narrative analyses organize experiences into interconnected sequences from start to finish, and take full account of the person's biography and context of experiences (Murray, 2008). The narrative analysis allowed me to explore the storied data in a meaningful and context-rich way in order to understand how the participants' learning experiences in different

situations changed their biographies and subsequently their coaching careers (Jarvis, 2006).

- 3) In reviewing the timeline and narrative, I was able to develop questions for the following interview aiming to fill in any gaps in the story, by searching to find key experiences that could be expanded upon. The questions that I developed for the second interview helped the participants to connect previous experiences to other learning experiences and to expand on how they had developed over time (Jarvis, 2006).
- 4) After interviews two and three with each coach, I transcribed the interviews verbatim, I developed questions for the next interview, and I added to the initial narrative that was created for each participant. This was accomplished by inspecting the transcripts for issues, experiences, and events (Riessman, 1993), in this case, important to lifelong learning. The goal of the narrative analysis was not to break the narratives into themes, but rather to examine how the participants learned over the course of their entire lives based on the broad themes and patterns (Murray, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1995). For each transcript, the information was categorized into key learning situations that were mentioned by the participant, such as “family”, “mentors”, and “networks”. I then chronologically structured the narrative using the learning situations to find connections between episodic experiences. The past, present, and plans for the future were accounted for, as well as the personal and social conditions and contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The narrative was plausible and understandable and contained descriptions of cultural contexts, historical continuity, personal goals, significant others and relationships, and choices made by the women coaches that enabled the reader to grasp the participants' meanings (Polkinghorne, 1995).

- 5) After the third interview, each participant had one narrative that had been expanded after each interview to a total of approximately 20 pages single-spaced. This narrative was re-worked, which involved a restructuring of parts to whole and back again (Polkinghorne, 1995) through an in-depth analysis of each interview transcription to ensure that I included all relevant learning experiences throughout the participant's life.
- 6) The narratives were member checked (Polkinghorne, 1995). They were emailed to the participants before the fourth interview so that they could read their own narrative to ensure that their stories were accurately interpreted and written. In the fourth interview, each participant had read the narrative and provided comments to expand on or edit any experiences. In this way, participants were prompted to remember what we discussed and had the chance to clarify and expand on any experiences, add any learning experiences that were not initially discussed, and confirm that the narrative was an accurate analysis of how they had learned throughout their lives. In this way, the participants were actively involved in the research analysis (Creswell, 2007). The participants each noted that the narrative was a realistic description of their learning and coaching-related experiences throughout their lives. Each participant made small changes that clarified the temporal flow of events.
- 7) From the transcripts of the fourth interview, small changes were made to each narrative to reflect the participants' comments. The final narrative therefore included a diachronic flow of learning that demonstrated the effects and relationships between experiences and brought order and meaningfulness that was not initially apparent in the unorganized raw data (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995).

These steps created a narrative for each participant (see appendix C). These narratives formed the basis for further analysis within the dissertation articles.

### **Trustworthiness**

To enhance trustworthiness, challenges involved in conducting narrative research should be acknowledged and dealt with appropriately. One challenge is collecting extensive data about the participants in order to get a comprehensive grasp on the topic that is researched (Creswell, 2007). In this study, there were four interviews per participant and they were long and in-depth in order to fully explore each participant's lifelong learning.

Another challenge is keeping a "keen eye to identify in the source material gathered the particular stories that capture the individual's experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). In my courses at the master's and doctoral level in qualitative research (including interviewing processes) and counseling, I was able to hone my interviewing skills. I also had previous experiences conducting interviews in my undergraduate and master's research studies, and through my Research Assistant position at the university. Each participant, in her own way, noted, "I am amazed at your ability to pull points from a conversation" (Shelley).

Finally, a challenge in narrative research includes the active collaboration with the participant. The researcher should analyze and discuss the analysis with the participant while reflecting on the way that the researcher helped to shape the analysis (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995). In this case, the meaningfulness of learning from interconnected experiences, as delineated in each narrative, was assured by asking each participant to member check each interview transcript and the narrative analysis. Having the participants member check the data and analysis, and discussing the narrative with them helped to ensure collaboration and trustworthiness.

### **Transparency**

Mantzoukas (2004) noted that the researcher is an inextricable part of qualitative research. Fontana and Frey (2005) stated that the researcher has motives, desires and biases

that are historically and contextually based. As a woman coach myself, my experiences, the learning situations that I have had, and the stories that I shared in the interviews were documented so that, as recommended by Polkinghorne (1995), my place in the study remained transparent. It is the researcher's responsibility to identify to the reader how they have included themselves (Mantzoukas, 2004). Therefore, it is important to outline my assumptions and my biography.

**Assumptions.** In preparation for the interviews with the participants, I engaged in a bracketing interview that I transcribed and analyzed to understand my assumptions and interest in this research study. Rolls and Relf (2006) suggested that bracketing interviews help the researcher in constructivist studies explore how assumptions and experiences influence the construction of knowledge. Rolls and Relf noted that researchers should understand the ways in which their assumptions are framing the research design. This exercise allowed me to understand why I wanted to use a maximum variation sampling method, in order to find and understand a wide variety of learning experiences; allowed me to develop sound interview questions based on the purpose of the study; and ensured that my own assumptions were not interfering with my research methodology. My assumptions are as follows: Women coaches have the ability to learn; they learn from their experiences; their experiences have helped them develop and become a coach; and coaches have experiences inside and outside of coaching through which they learn about issues relating to coaching. Finally, I believe that there are ways that coaches learn that have not been accounted for in research or in practice.

Since I outlined my assumptions, I was aware of my stance within the research so that I could understand my biases, feelings, and thoughts and acknowledge all the dimensions of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). Indeed, my experiences,

thoughts, and feelings were documented before and throughout the research process. I wrote in a field journal to track my reflections and learning, to chronicle how I felt about my experiences in doing research, my perceived relationships with the participants, and my experiences as a coach. The journal helped me to be transparent throughout the research process (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

**Biography.** My biography is an important aspect of this research and is explained in more detail to give the reader an understanding of the biases and assumptions that are inherent in this research. I was born in Ottawa in 1981. I have always had a loving and supportive family life. I have two sisters. One is five years older than me and was my role model throughout my childhood. My younger sister is seven years younger, and from what I remember, I always took care of her, taught her, and was her role model. I have coached my younger sister and many of her friends in skiing, gymnastics, and soccer. I grew up in a privileged neighborhood, and because of the school zone boundaries, I attended public schools with other upper middle class students, as well as attending an elite private school for girls for three years. The students at these schools, my friends, were high achievers, with parents like my own who had highly respected careers such as lawyers and doctors. For me, this was normal. I learned that I could do anything I set my mind to accomplishing, and that I needed to work hard. I also had an internal motivation to succeed.

I was active and involved in many sports throughout my childhood. I learned to ski at age two and raced in a club program from the age of 7 until 12 years old, and then continued to race in high school. I completed my level one coaching certification and started coaching in a grassroots ski program when I was in high school. My parents encouraged me to be a ski coach, valuing well-roundedness through the acquisition and practice of many different

skills, sports, and activities that would be difficult to do if I had specialized in one sport as a high performance athlete. Perhaps they could also see my leadership abilities.

After high school, I traveled to British Columbia and worked as a ski instructor at Panorama ski resort. That is where I met my future husband, Tom. He was a snowboarder, and I taught him to ski and eventually to coach. I took pride in teaching him because he did not have any previous skiing or coaching knowledge, and he learned quickly and well.

In 2000, I started my undergraduate degree in Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. The content of my coach education courses reflected what I learned in my degree and so I was easily able to put the theory into practice. This enhanced not only my coaching but also my academic experience. I decided to pursue my undergraduate thesis in sport psychology, studying the way that alpine ski athletes wanted to feel. During these years, I loved coaching because of the amount of information I was able to apply from my formal education in university, in the coach education courses I took, and from the people around me. I loved the structure, pressure, and obsession of high performance coaching; the discovery of how all the elements of performance fit together; and my own practice of these elements, both for my own ski training, and in training my athletes to improve and love ski racing.

After my undergraduate degree, Tom and I spent a year traveling and working in Australia as ski coaches. From there, we traveled to Argentina to coach the Argentina junior national and World Cup teams. This experience opened my eyes to the greater picture of world-wide ski racing, especially since it was the summer before the 2006 Winter Olympics, and many national teams were training in South America. I loved working with high performance athletes. I was quite sure that I wanted to be a high performance coach.

However, my academic interests prevailed and I returned to Ottawa to do my master's in Human Kinetics. I got married in 2006, and coached in a club for development level athletes with my husband as my assistant coach. In taking my master's degree in sport psychology, I was acutely aware of how I was feeling and what I needed to do to continue to enjoy coaching. In my thesis study, I carried out an intervention to help a coach (a) develop self-awareness, (b) understand how his athletes wanted to feel and (c) know what he could do to help his athletes feel the way they wanted.

I pursued my level 4 with the National Coaching Institute (NCI), meeting coaches from various sports who were a great support network for me. Because of my involvement in the NCI, I received funding from the Coaching Association of Canada's women in coaching grant and went to the World University Games as the coach for the Canadian university men's ski team. In the summer, I applied for and won a spot as a guest coach with the women's Canadian Alpine Ski Team, and was then invited back for another ski camp and a dryland training camp.

In 2007, I started my doctorate in Human Kinetics, and had the goal in mind to find out more about how women coaches enter into and stay in coaching careers especially at the national level. Furthermore, I started to plan my future family. I became pregnant and had a baby girl, Anneka. In the winters, I worked as a learning facilitator giving courses to certify entry-level ski coaches. I learned that I love to teach people about coaching and that I am very strong in the theory and practice of coaching. I also learned that I love being at school, coming up with ideas for research, exploring the ideas of others, and creating my own job and schedule. I worked as a part-time professor and continued to coach for development level athletes in a club into my fourth year of my PhD. I also gave birth to another girl, Julia.

In working towards completion of my PhD, I have learned what it feels like to be on more stable ground with regards to my expanding knowledge base in school. Through my experiences in these four years, I have changed my career goals (see article four in the results section of this dissertation). I am excited to become a professor when I graduate and see my coaching success as a huge contributor to my biographical base in becoming a professor.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

**Shaping the Way Five Women Coaches Develop: Their Primary and Secondary  
Socialization**

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### **Abstract**

Using Jarvis' (2006) psychosocial perspective of human learning, we explore how the career choices and the subsequent coaching approaches of five Canadian women coaches have been influenced by their primary and secondary socialization. A content analysis was performed to identify how coaches learned in their primary socialization with their family, and in their secondary socialization at school and in their sport experiences. The findings indicate that the learning situations in their primary and secondary socialization influence the coaches' career choices and their subsequent coaching approaches. These findings have implications for coaching education, enabling course developers and facilitators to understand (a) the importance of creating environments where coaches are able to critically reflect and (b) how coaching approaches can be influenced by early life experiences.

*Key words:* coach development, learning, family, school, athletic experiences

Research on coaches' development indicates that coaches engage in formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities, although the respective usefulness of these situations varies between individuals (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, & Rynne, 2009; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009). Research also indicates that a coach's previous experience as an athlete is an important way that coaches learn how to coach because these experiences help them learn about the subculture of the sport, enabling them to interact with others involved in the sport, such as athletes, coaches, and parents (Cushion et al., 2003; Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Stephenson & Jowett, 2009). Cushion and colleagues (2003) found that athletic experiences influenced future coaches' familiarity with coaching, collective understandings, and shared meanings and "such formative experiences

carry far into a coach's career and provide a continuing influence over perspectives, beliefs, and behaviours” (p. 218). Thus, even before individuals start coaching, they are learning from their sport experiences that may subsequently influence how they coach.

In further exploring research on athletic experiences, it is suggested that parents play an important role in children's sport participation. Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007) discussed the role that parents play in children's sport development and included parental support, modeling, and expectations as key influences. MacPhail and Kirk (2006), studying school sport, found that parents helped to initiate their child's involvement in sport, and continued encouragements from parents helped athletes become further involved. Parental support also helped athletes specialize in their sport. Some parents supported a teacher's suggestion that their child begin to play sport, and teachers' encouragements helped foster athletes' sport participation. Support from athletes' schools also helped them specialize in their sport (MacPhail & Kirk, 2006).

The research suggests that athletes' parents and school experiences can influence their sport participation either positively or negatively and that sport participation influences coaching approaches. However, the link between learning from family and school experiences, and how this influences future coaching approaches is unclear. Nonetheless, all these factors contribute to socialization, as Coakley (2001) has reminded us:

Socialization is a complex, interactive process through which people form ideas about who they are and how they are connected to the world around them. This process occurs in connection with sports as well as with other activities and experiences in people's lives (p. 106).

Therefore, we should expand our research to examine not only how athletic experiences influence coaching approaches, but also how other early experiences influence coaches and

their lifelong learning process (Trudel, Gilbert, & Werthner, 2010; Werthner & Trudel, 2009).

Jarvis (2006, 2009) examined the process of human learning from a psychosocial perspective over the course of a lifetime and therefore presented learning as a process of becoming. For example, a person will become a coach through many learning experiences. Learning is based on the individual's perceptions of experiences and is a lifelong process that involves all the seemingly separate parts of his or her life (2006). Learned experiences are part of our socialization and these experiences influence directly or indirectly our actions, thoughts, and emotions in future situations (Jarvis, 2006, 2009). Jarvis' work on human learning can be used to provide an understanding of the influence of early socialization (child / adolescent) on coaches' career choices and their subsequent approaches to coaching.

Jarvis (2009) explained that socialization is a series of learning processes. Much of what a person learns in childhood comes from what Jarvis (2006) has called 'primary socialization'. Primary socialization involves the initial interactions that children have, usually with their primary caregivers and/or family members. Much of what is learned in the early years stays with individuals throughout their lives. This learning gives children ways of coping so that as they grow and have new experiences, they gain confidence in responding to situations by using what they have learned (Jarvis, 2009). Jarvis (2006) noted that primary socialization is significant in an individual's development and should not be underestimated in lifelong learning.

As individuals grow and develop, they interact with a greater variety of people and learn in other sub-groupings aside from primary caregivers, and so they go through a process of secondary socialization (Jarvis, 2006, 2009). In these sub-groupings, such as in school or in sport, individuals learn and interact with others in specific roles that are ever changing

depending on with whom they are interacting. Indeed, they are also exposed to media that provide a global view early on in life (Jarvis, 2009). Secondary socialization occurs for the rest of our lives in informal, non-formal, and formal learning situations in becoming a member of different organizations such as school and sport groups (Jarvis, 2009).

For Jarvis (2006), learning is a lifelong process and any life experience is influenced by previous experiences and will thus influence future experiences. Based on this assumption, a coach's career and coaching approach will be influenced by experiences that she or he had as a child and adolescent. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that there may be a connection between what children learn in primary and secondary socialization and their future coaching development. Perhaps it is short-sighted to deduce that only parents and coaches play a role in the socialization of athletes and coaches since Coakley (2001) has noted that any number of people and situations may influence what an individual learns. Indeed, primary socialization and secondary socialization occur in many situations and it is impossible to document all of them (Jarvis, 2006). Such socialization is not easy to study because much of it happens in informal situations in which individuals learn as part of everyday living; thus it is often difficult for individuals to articulate how they learned (Jarvis, 2006). For this reason, learning in informal situations is less frequently studied than other ways of learning, but yet is an important source of learning (Jarvis, 2006).

Perhaps the difficulty in becoming aware of and articulating how an individual has learned knowledge through previous socialization in informal situations is a root concern for coaching education programs. Cassidy, Jones, and Potrac (2009) suggested that coaching education programs have separated theory from practice so that coaches fail to connect what they learn in their courses to their everyday coaching experiences. Indeed, coaching education programs have been criticized for lacking depth and relevance (Armour, 2010).

This criticism may stem from the idea that coaches likely come to coaching courses with quite different biographies that influence what they deem to be important or unimportant in a course and subsequently what they choose to learn (Werthner & Trudel, 2009). Indeed, Jarvis (2006) has explained that what is learned and integrated into one's biography will influence how one perceives and learns from new situations. Armour (2010) noted that in coaching education courses it is important to give coaches the opportunity to reflect on their existing understandings and arouse their curiosity in learning new information. Exploring primary and secondary socialization in understanding coaches' development may therefore be considered a worthwhile endeavour.

It must also be noted that women are under-represented in coaching. Indeed, according to various studies in Canada, the United States, and the UK, it appears that approximately 25% of the coaching population is female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006; Kerr, Marshall, Sharp, & Stirling, 2006; Norman, 2008; Reade et al., 2009). Studies on female coaches are also scarce (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). For this reason, it is important to explore female coaches' learning situations to understand their development. The purpose of the present article is to explore how the career choices and the subsequent coaching approaches of five Canadian women coaches have been influenced by their primary and secondary socialization. Such an investigation can help coaching course facilitators and developers understand why reflection on previous experiences (and not limited to athletic experience) is such an important tool in helping coaches further develop their awareness and comprehension of their coaching approaches.

## **Research Approach**

### **Participants**

Following Polkinghorne's (2005) recommendations for selecting few participants for

intensive study who fit the topic while also having participant variety, purposive sampling was used to seek out women coaches with a long history of coaching as a career, but from a variety of sports. Specifically female coaches were sought to shed light on the learning situations of an under-represented population within the coaching community in order to better understand their processes of becoming coaches. Patton (1990) stated that information-rich cases should be chosen in order to learn as much as possible about the issues of the research. All the coaches' primary and secondary socialization influenced their subsequent coaching approaches and the different sports helped to provide different situations from which the women learned so that we could explore a variety of different experiences within such socialization.

The participants were five Canadian women coaches between the ages of 42 – 51 years old, with 17 - 33 years of coaching experience. Four of five coaches coached full time as their only job, and the fifth coach had spent a number of years coaching full time. One coach had completed her Canadian National Coaching Certification Program Level 4 (there are five levels in total), three coaches were working towards their level four, and the fifth coach had her level three. Two women coached figure skating, one coached ice hockey, one coached canoe/kayak, and one coached alpine skiing. The coaches had worked with athletes from the grassroots level to the international level. In terms of early experiences, four of the women coaches were raised in two-parent families, while one coach was raised by only her mother. Two coaches had considerably older siblings and three coaches had siblings close in age. Three coaches began engaging in the sport that they coach at a very young age (i.e., five years old), while two coaches began engaging in their sport as teenagers (i.e., between 11 and 15 years old). The trustworthiness of the research is enhanced by having chosen participants who, due to their extensive experiences as coaches, could provide a deep

understanding of the process of lifelong learning (Polkinghorne, 2005).

### **Procedure**

After receiving ethical clearance to conduct the study through the university's board of ethics and receiving consent from the participants, the first author met with each participant on four separate occasions, over the course of three months, to discuss the events of her life and her learning. As Jarvis (2006) has noted, much of what is learned in primary and secondary socialization in informal learning situations is not initially seen as "learning". Given that exploring an individual's learning experiences over the course of a lifetime is a difficult task, a series of interviews with these coaches was necessary to genuinely understand their processes of becoming coaches. Polkinghorne (2005) strongly advocated that it is important to engage in several interviews with participants and that a sequence of three interviews is ideal to collect data rich in depth and breadth. The interviews were semi-structured. In the first interview, all participants were asked the same broad questions about their life experiences, such as "Tell me about yourself", "How did you start coaching", and "Tell me about your current coaching experiences". Probing questions were asked to personalize each interview based on the participants' responses. In line with Patton's (2002) recommendations, the second, third, and fourth interviews were largely guided by information provided in the previous interview. In these interviews, questions delved further into each participant's personal life experiences to better understand how she learned, for example "Can you explain what you meant and/or what you learned when you said in the last interview that...". The interviews were transcribed verbatim and resulted in a total of 600 pages of double-spaced text. Murray (2008) suggested that the participants become aware of the purpose of the study so that they answer questions in line with the research topic. The participants were reminded of the purpose of the study before each interview and they

understood the discussion was about the various ways they had learned throughout their lifetime. After each interview, the participants were able to member check their transcripts since a copy of the conversation was sent to the respective participant so she had an opportunity to comment on the content as well as clarify any comments.

This paper is part of a larger dissertation research project. The first author conducted all the interviews with the participants. The interview guides were created based on Jarvis' theory of human learning and the three authors' discussions about what to ask to gain a full and in-depth understanding of how the women coaches learned throughout their lives and how this influenced their coaching approach. The first author engaged in a bracketing interview to explore her biases prior to conducting interviews, and this exercise allowed her to develop sound interview questions based on the purpose of the study as well as ensure that her own assumptions were not interfering with the research methodology. Furthermore, the first author was trained through courses at the master's and doctoral level to perform qualitative interviewing. Additionally, she has experience in conducting interviews in previous and on-going research. After the interviews, the three authors convened on an on-going basis to discuss the data analysis.

For the dissertation study, the first author performed a narrative analysis on the data after the third interview with each participant (Murray, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1995). In this process, a narrative was created for each participant based on the interview transcripts that configured the data from the interviews into chronological order (Creswell, 2007) and explored the events of each of the participants' lives. The narratives that were created were each approximately 40 pages double-spaced, complete with extensive quotes from the participants. Through these narratives, we were able to explore the participants' process of lifelong learning, including how they learned from past experiences and how this impacted

their growth and development (Creswell, 2007). Each narrative was sent to the respective participant and a fourth interview ensued regarding changes, additions, or deletions to the narrative. Each of the participants suggested a few changes and clarified the order of certain experiences. One participant suggested a number of changes to ensure confidentiality. Each participant noted that her narrative was a true account of her lived experiences. As one participant summed up, the narrative was “like a diary in a sense – but written in the third person”. While participants’ recollection of past events might be selective and they might forget, exaggerate or confuse their accounts, proving the past as it actually existed was not the focus of the research. Rather the truth was in the participants’ interpretations and in how their interpretations affected their learning (Polkinghorne, 2005; Riessman, 1993).

A content analysis was performed on the interview transcripts and narratives (Patton, 2002; Smith & Sparkes, 2005). As recommended by Smith and Sparkes (2005), after thorough immersion in the data, links were made between the data and Jarvis’ framework. Following Denzin’s (1989) procedural steps for gathering data on participants’ biographies, the data were coded in life stages, including (a) childhood (from participants’ first memories to 12 years old), (b) adolescence (12 to 19 years old), (c) early coaching experiences (approximately the first ten years of coaching), and (d) later coaching experiences. For each participant, the codes relevant to primary socialization (i.e., family environment) and secondary socialization (i.e., school and athletic experiences) were then examined to understand what the participant said she learned as a result of her experiences. For each participant, the data were then examined to find the participants’ coaching approach (stated behaviours, thoughts, and emotions) that corresponded to the learned material from the coded primary and secondary socialization. As a result of this analysis, we could identify experiences in primary and secondary socialization prior to beginning coaching, what the

participants learned in their experiences, and how their coaching subsequently developed.

### **Results**

From the vast amount of data compiled and analyzed from the four interviews for each coach, it became clear that the coaches learned throughout their primary socialization within their family environment. This influenced their secondary socialization in school and sport experiences, from which they also learned. All these situations influenced their choice of a career in coaching and their subsequent coaching approach. It is the participants' perceptions of situations that created the experiences from which they learned (Jarvis, 2006). Therefore, throughout the results, their perceptions of the way others influenced what they learned are key to understanding how they learned.

#### **Jacqueline**

Jacqueline's father was in the military and so she grew up travelling back and forth between a military base in Germany and a city in Canada. She described her years in Germany as "key developmental years" and spoke of a very strict upbringing. Jacqueline's father told her to work hard at school and on the skating rink, go to the gym, and do mental training, while her mother, who was a nurse, emphasized eating and sleeping well. Jacqueline listened to her parents and learned a strong work ethic.

I realized that my parents have had a huge influence on me, and the decisions that I make – on my values and views. I had a very strict military upbringing. I carry that over into my expectations of my athletes – I'm clear and precise, and I think that's because my parents were like that with me. I like that and I think it works.

Jacqueline believed that her parents supported her interest in skating. They drove her to training and paid for her to fly to Canada during the summers to continue her training since she did not receive much coaching instruction in Germany. During the school year,

Jacqueline and a friend from skating would read rule-books and watch skating on TV to learn patterns and dances on their own. On the ice, Jacqueline was strict with herself and would not waste time. Her love of the sport and of teaching grew from these experiences: “I loved figure skating and I was doing well at it... Once I started to skate, I always said that I wanted to coach.”

At her school on the Canadian base in Germany, Jacqueline made friends easily. All the students moved regularly with their families and therefore she found it easy to make new friends since there were always many new students. Her school was strict and regimented.

At the military school in Germany, everywhere I went, I had to have ID and the gates would open and people were there with machine guns. It was a very strict upbringing... We were very aware of rules and standards because that's the way it was on those military bases. That is a big part of who I am.

In contrast, when Jacqueline moved back to Canada as an adolescent, and attended a public high school, most of the students had been together for many years and it proved much harder to fit into the social circles. As a result, Jacqueline turned her attention to competitive skating.

As a child and adolescent, Jacqueline was heavily involved in figure skating and knew she wanted to coach. As a beginner coach, Jacqueline took a rather strict approach with her athletes and expected them to acquiesce to her authority and expertise, just as she had done as a child and young adult. Five years into her coaching career, Jacqueline began to shift to a more lenient coaching approach when she noticed that skaters needed “to be coddled in order to keep up their morale.” At that time, she felt she had to ‘sugar coat’ her feedback and be extremely positive and encouraging. However, after five years using this approach, she spoke of coming to the realization that she was not being authentic to herself,

and that in fact, the athletes trained and performed better with more structure and discipline, so she returned to a more strict coaching approach. Each of these shifts in her coaching approach was preceded by much critical thought, but was certainly influenced by her primary and secondary socialization.

### **Olivia**

Olivia was raised by her parents on a remote outfitting ranch in the Canadian North. Her mother taught Olivia to alpine ski. She learned to be independent in this wild and remote environment. The following quote describes how Olivia learned from the environment in which she was brought up:

The ranch was a vast area and I spent a lot of time on my own. Most of the time my parents had no idea where I was. I was either out with the horses somewhere or out in a canoe on the lake – I was always out exploring. There was no limit to my independence, and not a lot of social support... I think other people see being alone as being lonely. I never felt that way... I always kept my brain busy and I was always doing things. I think that has continued.

Olivia was mostly home-schooled. Therefore, as a child and adolescent she had few social connections and learned to be self-directed and to think, as she said, “outside of the box.”

Being home schooled taught me to be more self-directed and it is a terrific asset in coaching. It is very applicable to keeping me two steps ahead of the game, for trouble shooting, for having back up plans, and for helping me manage athletes without them knowing that they're being managed.

As a teenage athlete in alpine skiing, Olivia said that she encountered a woman high-performance coach, and that initiated her thoughts about the possibilities of coaching as a career.

The exposure to this woman coach was an “ah-ha” moment: “There’s a woman coaching this camp!”... Having only exposure to men as coaches - it was not yet formed in my mind that coaching could be an avenue for me, until I got injured... lying in my hospital bed, I started thinking about coaching ski racing and that’s when I remembered this woman who had obviously had a bigger impact on my life than I had realized at that time... That’s when I started thinking about how cool it would be to be a coach.

Olivia learned from her primary and secondary socialization and this influenced her coaching practice. As one of a very few high performance woman coaches in her sport, Olivia needed to be comfortable in what she felt was an isolated environment.

I think the acceptance of being alone is critical for the success of women in this sport. I feel that it makes the men around me a little bit more appreciative that I have recognized that I am not “one of the guys.” For sure I missed out on a lot of fun, but I don’t really think I was entitled to share in that type of fun because I’m not a guy, and I don’t want to be a guy. I like being a female coach – I feel I have something different to offer in terms of approach and philosophy, which is in part due to being a woman.

Furthermore, the reflective skills in planning and management that she learned when she was home-schooled were useful when she became a coach. Olivia used these skills as the head coach of a provincial men’s alpine ski team, where she felt that the athletes would sometimes challenge her ideas.

I had to have a strategy for everything and yet be ready to go with whatever happened... I had to play out these scenarios in my mind to know how I was going to react to make sure they didn’t lose their confidence in me and I wouldn’t lose their

respect... I had to imagine what I was getting into, to think of possibilities, to prepare and be ready to act.

It is apparent that Olivia's experiences growing up with her family on a ranch, being home-schooled, and skiing all influenced how she coached.

### **Christine**

Christine, a women's hockey coach, felt that she grew up with a lot of family support inside and outside of sport. She and her brother were always in friendly competition with one another.

If my brother climbed a tree across the street, I would see if I could do it quicker or further. We always had a bit of a competitive spirit between the two of us. That was a pretty good learning opportunity for me. I have always been determined to try to find a way to get things done.

Christine also watched her mother and aunt's friendly competitive jabbing, and developed a competitive drive to win. However, this competitiveness was always tempered by the importance of effort. Christine noticed that her parents would point out to her how hard other athletes worked and she felt that her parents encouraged her to put effort into what she wanted to accomplish. Thus, as a coach, Christine looked for effort and determination when recruiting players to her team. "That is very much part of how I coach, and I would say I learned that from my parents. It's more about effort than just skill. It has helped me be a better coach." Christine's father was her first coach and was an important role model for her because he gave her the initial idea to become a coach. They watched Hockey Night in Canada together and discussed the plays. He would study the game and read books to find better ways of executing plays. She said, "I thought, 'hey, look at what my Dad likes, that would be a lot of fun to do when I get older.'"

In high school, Christine noted that her school principal seemed to see her interest in helping younger children in sports and created opportunities for her to help the elementary physical education teachers teach their classes during her spare time. Christine admitted that these opportunities gave her confidence and “really fuelled an interest for me to get into teaching and coaching.”

Christine was the only girl who played on her pee-wee hockey team and therefore, she was well-known within her small town and the surrounding communities. She felt the support she received from her family and community helped to build her self-confidence, although in the larger culture of hockey, not everyone was supportive of girls playing hockey. When Christine attended the provincial championships she discovered that she could not play because the sport organization would not recognize her as a player because she was a girl.

Christine's experiences both in being accepted as a hockey player by her family and community, and in being rejected as a hockey player by the organization, helped her learn the importance of fighting for women's place in the sport.

I think that experience was the first opportunity for me to realize that everything in life isn't fair and that if you want something to change, then you have to get involved and be part of the change and part of the solution and not part of the problem... People around me who had supported me through that taught me that it was a good thing to play hockey and that if you want something enough, and you're passionate about it, then you can gain support of people to help you through it. Since then, I've had many great opportunities to play with the women. Now I'm coaching in the women's game. It's about believing there is a way, and sticking with your guns – this is who I am.

These early experiences put Christine on the path to coaching women's hockey and playing an active role in promoting women's sport.

### **Mary**

Mary, a figure skating coach, felt her parents helped her to develop a sense of confidence and independence by allowing her time for active play by herself outside of the family home and at the cottage. Mary could play and learn from her experiences without being controlled: "My parents instilled confidence in me because they allowed me to make errors. By instilling independence in me, I was free to make mistakes and learn from my mistakes." When she was eight years old, her family moved across the city and she was faced with making new friends. She started recreationally figure skating soon after and made friends easily within the club. In this process, she discovered that the bonds with the other skaters were part of her love for skating. Mary started competing in figure skating late, only as a teenager, and she did not have a long competitive career. Additionally, she felt her first coach did not adequately teach her the basics of skating, and as a result Mary thought that she was not very successful as a competitive skater. However, she loved to help the younger skaters and while still an athlete, Mary's coach asked her to help teach the younger club skaters. This enticed Mary into coaching, as she enjoyed this new role very much: "Once I started into the competitive side of skating, I got into helping the younger kids, and I knew I wanted to coach."

As a coach, Mary's primary socialization with her family and secondary socialization in her athletic experiences influenced her coaching approach. Due to her learned confidence and independence from her upbringing, she trusts her own decisions and has confidence in her coaching abilities. This confidence translated to an openness to learn throughout her

coaching career. Consequently, Mary explained that she has improved exponentially as a coach throughout her career and is proud of her development:

Confidence in coaching, I think, is a big part of how I do learn. If you have the confidence, you will challenge yourself to do more. If you don't have confidence in what you are doing, then you are going to stick to the same things that have worked in the past... To be a better coach, you're constantly pushing the borders, and you're constantly trying to find new and better ways of doing things.

Because Mary thought she had received poor coaching, she was determined to ensure that her athletes knew the basics before moving on to harder skills.

I had an absolute passion for the sport, but I never had good coaches who taught me the basics when I was starting out... and I was a late starter, so those two things combined didn't help me... I think that's why I am so into teaching the basics. I want to give my skaters a good foundation. It is so important to me.

Furthermore, Mary had learned the importance of social connections in sport from her own athletic experiences. As a coach, Mary consciously recognizes that friendships help keep the children involved in skating, and that skating is an important social connection between individuals: "With kids, the social aspect of skating is so important. I think that's why you build a love of something, not just for the sport, but the social aspect." She created group training sessions as well as group activities outside of skating for her young athletes. Mary's experiences with her family and friends in skating helped shape who she became as a coach.

### **Samantha**

Samantha is a flat-water canoe/kayak coach. Her father passed away when she was a baby and her mother raised three children alone, including Samantha's brother who had difficult learning disabilities and who therefore never finished high school. Samantha did not

engage in sport as a child because she recognized her mother could not afford the enrolment and equipment fees. Her mother worked full-time as the director of human resources at a hospital, and Samantha remembered seeing how hard her mother worked and how much she cared about the employees. She felt her mother had great leadership skills.

I saw my mom put in the extra time and hours at work. Now, when I coach, I'm on 24/7. I am the athletes' mom, their technician, their teacher... I think I saw my mom working in a leadership position and thought that was pretty cool and thought that if someday I had that opportunity, I'll do it.

Samantha developed a deep care and concern for others even as a young child. From living with her brother who had learning disabilities, Samantha learned to give children chances to succeed in life. She said, "From my brother, I learned patience and that we can all work through things - that has had a big impact on my coaching." Samantha currently works with able-bodied and disabled paddlers to give them opportunities to experience sport.

Some of the information that Samantha was taught in high school seemed quite irrelevant at the time. She explained that she has, since that time, come to understand how applicable some of the information that she learned in school has become to her coaching.

I loved science in high school so that was a good thing, but thinking about it, I never really listened. I learned the Creb's cycle but it never really applied to anything I wanted to do at the time. Now it is relevant to my coaching.

In Samantha's high school social network, she knew her friends were a rough crowd of teenagers who did not engage in any school activities and preferred to smoke and get into trouble. However, a different high school acquaintance encouraged her to try paddling during the summer. When she returned to school in the Fall, Samantha joined many school sports teams and stopped involving herself with her former friends. She determined that because of

her increasing commitment and passion for school sports, she was invited to go to a leadership camp with the school council and she stated that it was the first time that she had a chance to be a leader and she felt it changed her life.

I probably was not really living up to the potential that I had. But I didn't really know I had that potential until the leadership portion came out in high school through sport when I got selected to go to the leadership camp. I thought, "wow, maybe I do have the ability." It was about gaining confidence.

When Samantha started paddling, she was a member at a canoe club founded and run by a couple in the community. She found them to be hardworking, dedicated, and passionate about the sport. As a coach, Samantha noted that others seemed to compare her to the wife in that couple because she has now founded and runs her own club and displays similar values of hard work and dedication.

I watched them work really hard and they were so passionate about what they were doing... I thought about them along the way, subconsciously, because I knew other people had done it before me, so why couldn't I do it?

Samantha was also taught by another coach, where she learned that coaches were honest and caring.

I liked his honesty. He cared. He talked to us and he met with us one on one. He did a lot of work on goals, and as a coach I do a lot of goal setting too... I didn't have goals when I first started paddling, and that was one of my problems.

Samantha thought that this coach helped her to set realistic and attainable goals by being honest with her as to what she could accomplish.

There were quite a few things that he displayed in his coaching that I picked up. As an athlete I tried them out, and as a coach I continue using them with my athletes...

I'm pretty honest with the kids. That's one thing I will not do is lie to them or their parents about where they're at or where they're going.

At a training camp, she met a woman coach and realized that coaching was a possibility for women.

I remember seeing her there with her two kids. I was in awe. I thought, "how can this lady do this? That's kind of cool." When I started coaching, in the back of my mind I had learned that I could do anything even if I had kids. I think some females think that they will have to shut down and stay home when they have kids. But I never had that experience in my life because my Mom was always working, so I never saw anybody do that. Then when I saw this woman coaching, I thought, "this lady is incredible, this can be done."

From her sport experiences, Samantha developed the idea to become a coach, and the values that she had learned as a child from her family upbringing, and that had been reinforced at school and through her coaches, helped her to take on a leadership position as a coach.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the article was to explore how the career choices and the subsequent coaching approaches of five Canadian women coaches have been influenced by their primary and secondary socialization. The results indicate that what the five women coaches learned from their family upbringing and the social context of their childhood and adolescence, including their school and their athletic experiences, influenced their interest in pursuing coaching as a career and the ways they chose to coach. By exploring in depth the primary and secondary socialization of five women coaches and their subsequent coaching approaches, it is apparent that coaches have different socialization experiences not limited to their sport participation from which they learn to coach. For this reason, a one-size-fits-all

approach to coaching education courses may not reach all coaches in a relevant and credible fashion (Duffy et al., 2011; Lyle & Cushion, 2010). Based on these results, we make recommendations for coaching education programs on the importance of including a component of reflection on previous socialization. Such reflection could help coaches become aware of how their own informal experiences in many aspects of their lives have influenced their coaching approaches and they can begin to work with their existing knowledge base.

Each of the coaches in this study had considerably different family. One grew up with a close-knit family in rural Canada where sport was a regular part of her daily life. Another lived on a strict military base in Europe and perceived that she received a great deal of support from her parents to engage in organized sport. A third grew up with a great deal of freedom on a rural ranch where physical activity was a part of her everyday life. A fourth coach was very much city-bound but felt that her parents encouraged her to be physically active and to play. The fifth coach perceived that she had very little family support to engage in sport, and thus only began to participate in sport in high school. Despite these differences, it is apparent that their families did provide each of these coaches with a primary socialization that influenced their early biographies and shaped who they became as coaches. At the time of the interviews, several of these women coaches had not deeply reflected on their early experiences and, in many cases, what they had learned from these experiences. Through the conversations with the primary researcher, they became aware of how they had taken for granted much of the learning attributable to their early years, such as how profoundly Jacqueline's parents had influenced her values, which in turn seemed to influence how she coached. Research exploring maternal-child relationships and parental support in sport participation construes that family is an important primary socialization agent that

continues to contribute to emerging adult behaviour (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; MacPhail & Kirk, 2006; McNamara Barry et al., 2008). Therefore, facilitators in coaching education should be encouraged to ask coaches questions about their family life, what they have learned from their families, and in general on their primary socialization to help them become aware of how they have learned early in life and how this has influenced them personally.

For four out of the five coaches, school experiences seemed to influence their interest in sport participation, pursuing a coaching career and/or their coaching approach, albeit in very different ways. Coakley (2001) argued that high school sport is a tool for positive youth development. Lacroix, Camiré, and Trudel (2008) found that high school coaches believed that school sport activities helped individuals develop positive self-esteem, become engaged in school and feel a sense of belonging, and develop a healthy and active lifestyle. Samantha, who had not played sport as a child, started to play sport in high school and was then invited to attend a school leadership camp. From these school experiences, she developed an interest in sport and a sense of self-confidence. She later reflected on how much school sport and leadership opportunities changed her personally and helped her on the path to becoming a coach. Like Samantha, Christine's school experiences advanced her interest in becoming a coach. Christine's school principal helped her become involved in assisting the physical education teachers, thereby helping her to develop her abilities to teach sport. Research has shown that support and encouragement from teachers and individuals at school help individuals begin participating in sport and continue to foster their sport development (MacPhail & Kirk, 2006).

In contrast, Jacqueline did not easily fit into school social groups that had been formed before she arrived at her Canadian high school and she chose instead to "belong" to

the skating club's social network. In a different way, Jacqueline's school influence pushed her further into her sport of figure skating. For Olivia, since she was mostly home-schooled, she learned to be comfortable being alone, which she attributes as "critical" for the success of women coaches in alpine skiing. Feeling comfortable alone is a belief that she upholds in not "being one of the guys" when she is coaching and not socializing with the male coaches. For Olivia, it was the lack of social experiences in her secondary socialization at school that influenced her coaching approach. These four very different experiences in high school nonetheless greatly influenced the coaches' sport participation, their interest in becoming a coach, and their coaching approaches.

Jarvis (2006) has stated that we may take for granted the experiences that we have had because our cultural upbringing (primary socialization) is shared with others with whom we interact in our secondary socialization. Therefore, it is possible that no particular individual in a secondary socialization situation (i.e., school) stands out as being an important learning source. We may presume that we already know or we may not consider the learning situation (Jarvis, 2006). For example, Mary's school experiences did not seem to influence her. She stated, "I really can't think of a teacher or school coach who influenced me... I was really self-motivated in my pursuit of a coaching career." Instead, in Mary's sport experiences, she learned through experimentation that social bonds, and technical and tactical basics, were important elements in learning to skate, and so she included these elements into her own coaching approach. Through her athletic experiences, this coach became familiar with coaching customs. Therefore, it is important for facilitators to understand that all coaches may not have had meaningful experiences in every learning situation.

Certainly for facilitators in coaching education courses, it is important to acknowledge that coaches will have different perceptions of their experiences, and they should not assume that all coaches enjoyed or learned from their school and/or sport activities. Many coaching education courses are not considered meaningful for coaches' learning, thus coaches often seek out self-directed learning experiences or they rely on their past athletic experiences, their own coaching experiences, or observations and interactions with other coaches (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Gilbert, Coté, & Mallett, 2006; Reade, Rodgers, & Spriggs, 2008; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007). However, if coaching courses provided a venue for coaches to reflect on their own perceptions, experiences, and decisions that they deemed important and significant to their learning, coaches might not resist these educational opportunities and may seek them out because of their integration with context-specific and real life experiences. Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie, and Nevill (2001) found that reflective workshops helped university student-coaches take time to critically reflect on their practice, and that the coaches acknowledged that written reflection and peer discussions were important. However, outside of the courses, such reflection was rare because coaches did not necessarily know how to reflect (Knowles et al., 2001). Therefore, courses in which facilitators display empathy and active listening skills, provide questions and topics on which to reflect, and give the time for coaches to reflect could be considered very useful learning situations (Knowles et al., 2001). We suggest that the starting point for these reflections could be with the coaches' earliest memories in childhood, including their experiences with their families, at school, and in their sport participation. These reflections could then progress to explore how early experiences influenced their current coaching approach, whether or not they want to continue to coach in that manner, and how to proceed in the future based on what they know.

While this study was the first to link childhood experiences outside of sport (i.e., family and school) with learned coaching approaches, the results also concur with a number of findings from other studies on how coaches learn through their athletic experiences (Cushion et al., 2003; Demers, 2004; Lemyre et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2007). Smoll, Smith, and Cumming (2007) found that the behaviors of coaches influence their athletes' attitudes and perceptions towards their coaches, themselves, and their sport experiences. In this study, the participants' coaches influenced their commitment to sport coaching. Olivia, Christine, and Mary credited their coaches with giving them the idea to become coaches. Samantha further stated that her coaches helped teach her values of hard work and honesty among other things that she brought into her own coaching approach. In courses, facilitators could help coaches to remember their own coaches and the influence they had on their sporting experiences. This could allow coaches to become aware of what they value in other coaches, and what they want to include in their own approaches.

Sometimes what was learned in primary socialization contradicted what the coaches learned in secondary socialization. This may especially be the case for women who participate in sport whose primary socialization may be different from the cultural norms in secondary socialization, where gender equity does not exist in many sport programs (Coakley, 2001). Jarvis (2006) stated that we are affected by the way in which our culture regards gender and therefore we do not have perfect freedom to do and learn what we want. However, Jarvis (2006) also stated that we do not need to accept the values that we learn through cultural practices. In this study, it was found that Christine grew up in a family immersed in sports, where she learned that sport, and more specifically ice hockey, was a natural activity for a girl to pursue. However, other social institutions did not have the same views. When she was not allowed to play hockey with the boys, "the first thing I learned was

that 'it doesn't make sense'. I could play and I could shoot. I didn't understand why girls couldn't play." In Christine's case, the values that she perceived her parents held regarding hockey as a sport for girls as well as boys, ran counter to what she learned as she pursued sport competitively. Because of the strong influence of Christine's family through primary socialization, this experience became an opportunity for her to learn about injustice, and drove her later as a coach to provide all the opportunities she could for young women hockey players. In courses, if coaches are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, and if other female coaches (and perhaps male coaches) remember experiences in which they have learned conflicting information, facilitators can foster discussions in which reflections are explored to help coaches determine their beliefs, and to allow them to understand and plan their actions if such experiences would reoccur. This could provide a rich forum for discussion on relevant coaching experiences for all coaches involved in the course.

### **Conclusion**

Trudel and colleagues (2010) noted the importance of including the learner's perspective in coaching education programs by taking a lifelong learning approach. Trudel et al. (2010) suggested that coaches "are the owners of their development" (p. 149) and that "it is important to find ways to recognise the learning that occurs in informal situations" (p. 144). For this reason, including opportunities for individual reflections and group discussions on previous experiences in coaching courses can help coaches understand their knowledge, values, beliefs, and coaching approach. This study demonstrates that the coaches learned from a variety learning situations, different family contexts, different athletic experiences, and different schooling experiences. All these situations 'shaped' who they are as coaches. We have shown that what they learned as a result of primary and secondary socialization in and out of sporting situations, and particularly with significant others such as parents, is

influential. Coach education courses can teach sport specific skills and game strategies in a few hours but this may not be enough time to create changes in coaching philosophies and approaches that originate in coaches' upbringing (Cushion & Lyle, 2010). Coaching course developers and facilitators can understand and respect that it is difficult to change these ingrained approaches and can be supportive in their delivery. The contribution to coach education that we make in this article overall is to help facilitators understand that coaches will come to a course with different biographies influenced by their primary and secondary socialization, and so the strategy should be to create an environment where the coaches are able to critically reflect on their coaching approaches. Gilbert and colleagues (2006) have stated that the coaching context should be considered when examining coach development, and so the aforementioned recommendations for topics in reflections and discussions in coaching courses could help facilitators better explore coach learning and development in a context specific and relevant way. We will never fully understand or be able to explain all human learning because of its complexity (Jarvis, 2006). However, through this article, we urge readers to consider learning to become a coach as a multi-faceted process, unique to each coach, and initiated very early in life.

#### Acknowledgements:

The researchers gratefully acknowledge financial assistance for this project from the following agencies: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and Sport Canada.

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**How meaningful episodic experiences influence the process of becoming an  
experienced coach**

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### **Abstract**

Research on coach learning and development has led to the classification of sources from which coaches learn, and more recently, with the identification of learning being an idiosyncratic process in which there are variations in coaches' learning paths (Werthner and Trudel, 2009). From a constructivist view, Jarvis (2006) perceives learning as a process of becoming: A person engages in social situations throughout life that are transformed cognitively, emotively, and/or practically, and integrated into the person's biography so that the person becomes more experienced. Jarvis (2006) refers to 'episodic experiences', and when they are meaningful to individuals, they may result in considerable change to the way that individuals perceive what they know, and have the potential to influence their perception of future learning (Moon 2004). The purpose of this article is to illustrate how such meaningful episodic experiences can have an important influence on an individual coach's process of becoming an experienced coach. Through the use of non-fictional vignettes, we explore how five Canadian women coaches from various sports learned throughout their long careers in coaching as a result of specific episodic experiences in their lives that they considered meaningful. The five vignettes respectively demonstrate learning from episodic experiences with an athlete, with other coaches, in formal and nonformal education courses, with family, and in taking time out to reflect. Due to their own unique biographies, coaches perceived certain planned and unplanned experiences as meaningful and the learning that occurred as a result ultimately influenced their career paths. This article adds to the emerging body of literature regarding coach learning and highlights the importance of the various meaningful experiences of these female coaches in understanding their development.

**Keywords:** coach, learning, becoming, non-fictional vignette

There is an increasing number of studies on coach learning, education, and development. In the past, studies on coaches' development were sparse and restricted to research on coach education training programs (Gilbert and Trudel 2004). However, current

research on how coaches learn to coach is continually being conducted, with increased attention on classifying coaches' various learning situations (Nelson *et al.* 2006, Mallett *et al.* 2009,). For example, in Wright and colleagues' (2007) study, coaches' learning situations were determined to include formal coach education programs, nonformal clinics and seminars; formal mentoring; face-to-face interactions with coaches; personal experiences related to sport, family, and work; and learning from books/videotapes and the Internet.

Werthner and Trudel (2009), in a study of four female and 11 male Olympic level coaches, found that coaches spoke of learning from five similar learning situations, which included (a) past experiences as an athlete, (b) formal education (schooling), (c) coaching courses, (d) mentoring from other coaches, (e) and "constantly thinking" about coaching. However, there were wide variations in the emphasis placed on each of the learning situations and the authors argued that this was often because of the coaches' previous experiences. The authors suggested that there was a need to take the research on coach learning one step further than simple classifications. They commented,

The identification of these sources of information, such as coaching courses, mentoring, and interacting with other coaches, is certainly an important step in our effort to understand how coaches learn to coach. However, this information is of little use if we do not extend our search to explain the variations or idiosyncrasies that seem to prevail in the coaches' learning paths within different coaching contexts (Werthner and Trudel 2009, p. 436).

Werthner and Trudel's (2009) account for the reason for such idiosyncrasies encourages us to further explore how these variations influence coaches' career paths by understanding the process of becoming an experienced coach. From a constructivist view of learning, Peter Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009) argues that an individual learns in social situations experienced throughout life that are transformed cognitively, emotively, and/or practically,

and integrated into the person's biography. The person is continually becoming a more experienced person because he or she has learned, and thus is changed (Jarvis 2006). Jarvis (2006) notes that, "human beings are always in the process of becoming – we are always incorporating into our own biographies the outcomes of our new learning and thus creating a changed... person" (p. 119). In exploring the process of "becoming", the episodic experiences that occur within learning situations become critical to our understanding. According to Jarvis (2006), experience is "the intersection of the person with the life-world" (p. 27). In episodic experiences, the person senses the world around him or her and has thoughts, feelings, and/or actions from which he or she may learn, so that "learning begins with the transformation of experience" (Jarvis 2006, p. 12). Jarvis (2006) distinguishes experience over a lifetime from an experience in time by referring to the latter as an episodic experience. However, it must also be noted that an individual may not learn from all episodic experiences and not all episodic experiences have a significant impact on the individual (Jarvis 2006). This is because an individual can reject information, can presume he or she already knows the information, or can decide not to consider the information (Jarvis 2006).

Learning may indeed be idiosyncratic because it is the individual who gives meaning to the experiences within her or his lifetime. Jennifer Moon (1999, 2001, 2004) is a learning theorist whose ideas on learning add value to this article by complementing Jarvis' 'episodic experiences', as she emphasizes the meaningfulness of experiences in learning. She also takes a constructivist approach to learning, focusing on the activities of learners making sense of their world. Similar to Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009), her view of learning is about changing one's frame of reference toward what is known at any particular time (Moon 2004). Consequently, we learn in connection to previous experiences, since prior experiences guide our perceptions, responses or interpretations in the present. Therefore, some people may

consider certain learning situations as more meaningful than others and may be more ready to learn and change their approach (Moon 2004).

According to Moon (2004), an experience that is perceived as meaningful is a subjective judgment made by the learner, who takes the new material of learning and relates it to her or his knowledge gained from previous experiences. An individual's perception of the environment, his or her purpose and desired goals for learning, readiness to learn, as well as interest, emotions, level of maturity, abilities, strategies, and learning style are factors that mediate learning (Moon 2001). These factors are learned from experiences throughout an individual's life and will determine the subjective meaningfulness of any new learning opportunity. In an experience that an individual deems meaningful, he or she will likely become more engaged in the learning process and deepen his or her understanding (Moon 2004). Therefore, this meaningful experience may have a great impact on the individual that may significantly change the way that he or she thinks, feels, and acts in subsequent experiences. This may also change choices and decisions that ultimately lead the person to seek out different situations (Moon 1999). Indeed, because of coaches' unique biographies and depending on the situations, they may be more ready to learn from certain planned and unplanned experiences and then to build on this learning. Therefore, we can begin to comprehend how much particular meaningful episodic experiences may change the way in which a coach thinks, feels, and acts in subsequent learning experiences to help further his or her learning over time.

Moon (2004) also writes of the importance of reflection in learning. Moon argues reflection is involved in meaningful learning when the learner evaluates and modifies his or her knowledge. Reflection occurs when there is new material of learning, but is also "often a process of re-organizing knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further

insights” (Moon 2004, p. 82). In this re-organizing process, reflection can be seen as its own learning situation, where the individual develops new ideas to meet the demands of a novel experience (Moon 2004). The learner must devote time to reflecting on previous experiences to help determine a course of action for future experiences. This can be seen in Werthner and Trudel’s (2009) study in which “constantly thinking” about coaching was a learning situation within which the coaches engaged. The coaches in their study spoke of their curiosity and desire to improve that led them to critically reflect on their experiences. This open-mindedness to learning is an important aspect of meaningful learning (Moon 2004). Thus, learning is an outcome of reflection and it is important to explore how we use the understanding gained from reflection to achieve other purposes (Moon 2004).

In sum, the process of becoming an experienced coach can be explored using both Jarvis’ and Moon’s constructivist approaches to learning. Our aim is to develop the body of literature on coach learning. There is a paucity of peer-reviewed empirical research on women coaches’ learning so that there is still a need for research on women’s coaching experiences (Lyle 2002, Gilbert and Trudel 2004, Kerr *et al.* 2006,). Therefore, we turn to the stories of five Canadian women coaches with long careers in coaching, who share how they learned from meaningful episodic experiences within different situations throughout their adult lives, and how this learning developed and changed their coaching careers over time. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how specific episodic experiences, deemed meaningful by each of the coaches, can have an important influence on individual coaches’ processes of becoming experienced coaches.

## **Research Approach**

### **Participants**

The participants in the study were five women coaches. Purposive sampling

(Polkinghorne 2005) was used to identify five case studies. In keeping with the guidelines for purposive sampling as outlined by Patton (1990) and Polkinghorne (2005), we selected female coaches who were actively coaching, had been coaching for a considerable amount of time (17 – 33 years), and had established careers in coaching so that they had many coaching experiences to share.

There were no other specific criteria for inclusion; however, we naturally found certain similarities and differences in their biographies that impacted the types of experiences they had. These are shared below to help the reader develop a better understanding of who these women coaches were. The coaches were all between 40 and 50 years old. For four participants, coaching was their primary occupation, and the fifth coach also taught at a high school. They were all head coaches and/or directors of their sport team/club at the time of the study. All five coaches had completed or were in the process of completing their level 4/5 tasks through the National Coaching Certification Program, which is the highest level of coaching certification in Canada. Two of the coaches were figure skating coaches, one coached in the sport of canoe/kayak, one coached alpine skiing, and one was the coach of an ice hockey team. During the period of time when the interviews were conducted, one coach had coached athletes to national level competitions and was now currently coaching grassroots level athletes, two had coached athletes to international level competitions and were now coaching athletes at a developmental level, one had coached grassroots and college level athletes and was now coaching university level athletes, and one was coaching grassroots to elite level athletes competing at the national and international levels in their sport. Two women were married with children, one woman was married with no children, one woman had a partner and grown step-children, and one woman was divorced and currently had a long-term partner with no children. Two of the women coaches had

university degrees in Physical Education and the other three coaches had completed high school but had no post-secondary education.

### **Data collection and data analysis**

In line with dissertation research guidelines, we received ethical clearance from the University's board of ethics. Thereafter, for each participant, the first author collected data via four semi-structured interviews (Murray 2008) over the course of three months. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim before the next interview with that coach occurred. In the first interview, in order to understand the coaches' biographies, the same questions were asked to all the participants that explored their life experiences (e.g., Were you an athlete? What sports did you play and for how long? Why did you start coaching? Can you tell me about your early coaching experiences and life at that time?). Probing questions were then asked to personalize the interviews based on the specific experiences of the coaches (e.g., Going back to your childhood, you said that no one in your family really skated, so how did you begin skating?). From the transcripts, questions and probes were created for the following interviews that were different for each coach that delved more deeply into their experiences to understand how the coaches learned. This ensured that the first author could explore the coaches' lifelong learning in full detail because informal learning situations are initially difficult to discuss when the participants have never before reflected on them as learning opportunities (Merriam *et al.* 2006). The series of interviews helped the researchers get to the implicit learning experiences. Polkinghorne (2005) and Flowers (2008) also note that rich and in depth quality findings are obtained when interviewing participants more than once. After each interview, the transcripts were sent to the participants for member checking (Spalding and Phillips 2007). The participants had the opportunity to comment on the content and clarify any changes that they wished to make.

Each coach made some changes to her transcripts to clarify her ideas and/or to ensure confidentiality.

Initial data analysis was conducted after the first interview was completed with each participant. Based on the recommendations of Polkinghorne (1995), the first author created a narrative of the temporal flow of events and experiences throughout the participant's life. The narrative was formed by organizing the coach's learning situations into chronological order to develop an understanding of how previous experiences influenced how the coach learned in subsequent experiences. For each participant, the narrative that was created after the first interview was expanded with information provided in the second interview and then expanded again with information provided in the third interview. After the third interview, every transcript was reviewed to ensure that all relevant information regarding lifelong learning was included in the narrative. The narrative was then again restructured to better reflect life stages: Childhood, adolescence, early coaching experiences – approximately the first ten years, and later coaching experiences; as well as five predominant learning situations: Family, formal education, athletic experiences, coaching experiences, and the process of reflection. These situations emerged as a result of the data analysis of the interview transcripts. The narratives were each around 40 pages double-spaced and included extensive quotes from the participants. The narratives were then sent to the participants for member checking. In the fourth interview, the researcher and participants discussed the narrative to ensure that it was an accurate analysis of their lives and learning. Some changes were made to reflect the correct order of certain experiences. All participants said that the narrative was a realistic reconstruction of how they believed they had learned throughout their lives.

For this article, five non-fictional vignettes were created (Sparkes 2002). Non-fictional vignettes are compact sketches that summarize what the researcher finds in his or her work (Ely *et al.* 1997). They are more succinct and easily accessible than interview transcripts and help the reader fully understand the lived experience of a participant (Spalding and Phillips 2007). There is little research in sport using vignettes; however, Blodgett *et al.* (2011) provide a methodological outline of crafting vignettes of sport experiences with Aboriginal community members as a flexible guide for using vignettes as a presentational tool with marginalized groups. The non-fictional vignettes exemplify how the women coaches learned from episodic experiences in their lives. They illustrate the process of becoming an experienced coach for each participant, and demonstrate how each coach changed and developed her coaching career based on her learning situations over time.

Each non-fictional vignette describes episodic experiences in a specific learning situation from one participant over the course of her coaching career. The non-fictional vignette of learning from an athlete was created from the figure skating coach's quotes. The non-fictional vignette of learning from other coaches was created from the hockey coach's quotes. The non-fictional vignette of learning from coaching education courses was created from the canoe-kayak coach's quotes. The non-fictional vignette of learning from family was created from the other figure skating coach's quotes. Finally, the last vignette of learning from the process of reflection on experiences was created from the alpine ski coach's quotes. The non-fictional vignettes are written in the first person. The first person narrative helps to make the stories more personally relatable (Spalding and Phillips 2007). Approximately 80% to 95% of the non-fictional vignettes are direct quotes from the participants. In order to fill in the blanks between quotes, the non-fictional vignettes each include a few sentences that are not direct quotes, but are taken either directly or paraphrased from the narrative analysis of

the interview transcripts. Trustworthiness is ensured because the participants were able to member check their transcripts and the narrative from which these quotes and story lines were taken (Spalding and Phillips 2007).

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of the data indicated five predominant learning situations. Therefore, each non-fictional vignette illustrates how one coach had meaningful episodic experiences within one of these learning situations. Within each vignette, we can see that the episodic experiences influenced the learning that occurred in other experiences throughout the coach's life and so it is possible to see the on-going process of becoming an experienced coach.

#### **Learning from experiences with athletes**

The coaches spoke at length about learning from their athletes over the course of their coaching careers. One coach mentioned learning by watching athletes in different situations to see what they could do in order to determine what she needed to work on with the athletes. One coach spoke of the importance of communicating and listening to her athletes and felt that this helped her develop stronger decision-making skills. Another coach realized that it was important to keep her personal life private from her athletes so that they could focus on themselves. In the following vignette, one of the figure skating coaches aptly illustrates how a specific athlete re-inspired her passion and confidence and helped her learn more about the importance of sport-specific movement progressions, the value of experimentation in finding productive solutions, how to develop mental skills with athletes, and how to seek out new information to help athletes.

**Vignette of “Dawn’s” episodic experiences in working with an athlete.** *I was starting to wonder if I would ever again coach figure skating the way that I liked to and how I had learned from watching my own coaches. For five years, I needed to “sugar coat” my*

*feedback to athletes because that was the trend. It was the generation where the athletes' parents wanted everything positive for their children, so everybody just rode that wave. During that time, I think I got away from my principles of how I wanted my athletes to perform. I gave them more lee-way but yet I still had the same expectations about the outcome. Although I knew the outcome wasn't what I wanted it to be because they hadn't put in the time or the training, I went with it. I never felt good about that. I felt disappointed for the skater. But a lot of times, I felt my hands were tied because I wasn't going to get the support of the parents. It was a different generation. It didn't matter as much to them – it mattered more to me than to them. So, I did that for a few years, and it was not great. At that point, I was emotionally detached from coaching. Then I started coaching "Sophie". We immediately hit it off because she reminded me of myself when I was a teenager. She worked so hard! With Sophie, I felt like I could finally coach the way that I knew how to coach – I could be strict, I could push her to excel, and she loved it! Coaching Sophie reignited my passion for coaching. It gave me the confidence to coach the way that I had been coached and the way that I had learned.*

*Sophie had bad habits in her skating. She was not properly using her body type to spin and jump. I learned to coach athletes using their natural body type and rhythms, and that's probably where I get my most joy as a coach, seeing things that were perhaps taught without using the best technique for that athlete - not using their natural ability. I was so excited to finally be able to coach an athlete on the same basic movements until she perfected them before moving onto harder skills. Sophie relished working hard and perfecting details. This was the first time I was really able to apply this coaching tactic and it worked – she improved dramatically! Sophie was really the first athlete who I had on my own who landed all her jumps – from double jumps to triple lutzers. That was huge for me*

*because as a skater, I hadn't done all those triples. She made me believe in what I was doing. From my coaching education courses, I knew how to teach those jumps, but I had never tried to teach them before and to actually see someone execute that and do them by following the process that I had laid out, really gave me confidence in my coaching.*

*I also had the chance to experience international level competitions with Sophie – I had never made it that far as an athlete. Unfortunately, Sophie worked so hard that she developed injuries and so I brainstormed on how she could still compete without hurting herself further. I had seen my mentor coach teach other skaters to be quicker in the air by doing jumps without skating into them. He had used it as a drill, but I decided to use it as a warm up for Sophie so that she did not need to strain herself before the competition. I could not believe she warmed up that way and then competed and it worked! I learned from Sophie what it meant to be “mentally tough” – you know, open to success or failure, having a go-for-it attitude, not worried about the outcome when they're preparing for the skill, willing to fight for it, not to give up on something that is not as good as it can be, just to dig deep, empty the gas tank, and go deeper. I realized that I could push athletes into learning this “mental toughness.”*

*It was really through trial and error that I discovered this idea to get Sophie to do this type of warm-up because it was the only choice we had! It was out of desperation. Sophie was determined that she was going to the competition and she was tough. So I said, “we need a plan then.” She had executed her skills in her program and the technical aspects of her jumps so many times that it was sound muscle memory. She had executed it in stressful situations. So, I knew I could count on that.*

*Then Sophie developed osteitis pubis (not related to her other injury). This was a new injury to skaters because they were doing more rotations and jumping higher with greater*

*impact on landing, and so hip, groin, and core injuries were starting to develop. I learned as much as possible about her injury and how to recover from it. I asked many other coaches from across the country and we eventually collaborated on gaining knowledge about safer training methods and I even wrote an article for a skate magazine to help other coaches learn to deal with this new issue in skating.*

*Sophie's time with me was fantastic. When I saw all the success that she had because I went back to coaching her the way that felt right to me while also experimenting with new techniques, and because I stuck with the basics and really pushed Sophie to perfect her movements, I felt confident and motivated to continue coaching skaters in this way. I realized that I needed to make this a permanent change in my coaching.*

In summary, Dawn's vignette shows us how episodic experiences with one athlete changed her coaching approach. She initially learned from her experiences with athletes and parents to, as she called it, 'sugar coat' her coaching. Once she started coaching Sophie she found that she could push this athlete to excel and this increased her confidence in her own personal approach. With Sophie, she had the opportunity to work on skills that she had previously been taught in courses. Because of Sophie's success, Dawn had the opportunity to experience international competitions and to learn how to help her athlete execute her programs even under less than ideal conditions (e.g., injuries). Furthermore, since Dawn experienced what it was like to develop training conditions for Sophie with one type of injury, she continued to learn how to deal with Sophie's second injury. We can see how Dawn's opportunities to learn evolved from meaningful episodic experiences with one athlete.

Jarvis (2006) notes that it is possible to learn the 'wrong' things. In other words, in the beginning of her career, Dawn learned from her experiences with athletes to coach

differently than she liked to do and she did not find her coaching effective. Mallett and colleagues (2009) state that learning in informal situations such as in everyday coaching experiences may lack the quality assurance and direction of more formalized learning opportunities. Furthermore, research has shown that the coaching process is dependent on the social interactions of coaches and athletes (Jones *et al.* 2010) so that Dawn's experiences 'sugar coaching' feedback to her athletes was a result of the social nature of learning.

However, Jarvis (2006) also states that rather than uncritically accepting all that we are told, we can learn to respond to learning opportunities in ways that reflect our authenticity. Dawn, through her experiences with Sophie, gained confidence and resolve in her own coaching approach. Dawn's experiences with Sophie highlight how certain episodic experiences are meaningful to coaches and may change the way they make decisions and choices in the future.

### **Learning from other coaches (mentors and peers)**

The coaches discussed how other coaches helped them learn to coach. One coach talked about the support and advice that she received from other coaches throughout her coaching career. Another coach talked about a mentor whom she followed for a number of years and learned both directly and indirectly from his style and approach. A third coach talked about the years of experiences that she had with the network of coaches at her club that contributed to her development of a professional attitude and her expertise. A fourth coach talked about two very different mentors who helped her appreciate the passion and enjoyment of working with developing athletes, and how to manage elite athletes. The hockey coach described how she learned from watching her female coach mentors in different situations and getting advice and input from these mentors.

**Vignette of “Sandy’s” episodic experiences with other coaches.** *I actively sought advice by phoning mentors to discuss problems. For me, through hockey, sport, and in life in general, I’ve had some really great people who said, as they walked away, “If you ever need anything, give me a shout.” So, it’s just taking the time to actually pick up the phone and do that... I can really watch and learn, listen and learn. That is so important. There are so many experts out there and everyone can teach us something. If I’m going to make that phone call, then I want to make it to somebody who can really provide those pretty quick comments and things that I can really reflect on and use.*

*I have called many coaches over my career when I had problems and especially liked it when they explored ideas with me without telling me what to do. “Dan” was like that. He would make me think about the game in different ways. I loved his questioning approach. Any time that I’ve had any concerns about how to deal with an issue, I’ll pick up the phone and he’ll help guide me through it. He doesn’t provide me with the answer. He is somebody who leads me with different questions, leads me to coming up with the answer. He makes me reflect.*

*I often observed other coaches to get ideas on what to do and what not to do. Once, my friend and I watched “Elaine” coach – she was a very outgoing and motivating coach and she had success challenging her athletes. Right away, I knew that this approach would not work for me because I am too introverted. On the other hand, my friend tried to mimic Elaine’s approach, but her athletes only felt threatened, not challenged. Watching her, I was thinking, “why don’t you just try to be yourself instead of trying to be Elaine?” I think that was a great learning experience for me. You see, I could watch others to figure out their mistakes in order to avoid making such errors myself. I watched what happened in situations that Elaine was in. She was a young and inexperienced female coach who was put into a*

*really high-pressure, high profile position. I learned some valuable lessons watching her go through her coaching experiences. I had the opportunity to listen and learn and I found out who can say what, and when to say what you're thinking.*

*I also learned a particular lesson when I was an assistant coach at a camp and "Trina" was my mentor. She was pretty direct in pointing out to me "ok, it's good that you have an opinion, but if it's not being asked for, then don't share." When she said that to me, I started putting together all the pieces and thinking about what happened to lots of other female hockey coaches I knew. Those were good experiences. If you want things to go in your direction, sometimes you have to bite your tongue or figure out to whom you can say things. I've watched some really skilled and talented female coaches head down the wrong track because they didn't realize to whom they could say things and what to say. Sometimes it's good to have the "heads up", so I can limit myself, limit my opportunity to really express myself. It helped me to keep a good reputation and remain in coaching.*

*My experiences networking with women coaches in other sports were also positive. I attended a women's conference led by the Coaching Association of Canada and learned more about how to communicate as a woman in a male-dominated environment. We talked about what happened when there was a lack of communication and how women communicate. That was one of the things that I found very interesting. When you work for managers who are male and you ask for help or their insight on something, at times they think you're asking because you don't know. That has been very useful for me in terms of working within the Hockey Canada environment because it's a mostly male environment. I realized that I had to say: "in your opinion, how do you approach this?" versus saying: "what's your thought here?" Because in the latter, the men are thinking: "she has no clue, I*

*have to tell her.” That’s been a great experience. In listening to some of the women who have walked in those shoes before, I’m able to learn from their experiences.*

In summary, Sandy’s vignette shows us how she learned from experiences talking to and watching other coaches, but what is interesting is that she could combine what she learned from coaches in the different episodic experiences, and apply that knowledge to future episodic experiences (for example, in reflecting on the actions of several other women hockey coaches and determining what she could and could not do and say in certain situations). Jarvis (2006, 2009) states that learning is complex and that individuals may learn by connecting information from different experiences together to gain new knowledge. In Sandy’s case, we can see how becoming an experienced coach, learning, changing, and developing is a complex process that does not necessarily occur in a linear manner. A number of different episodic experiences ultimately impacted the way she perceived subsequent learning opportunities.

Jarvis (2006) and Moon (2004) note that in the process of perceiving a situation, individuals’ own memories of previous learning experiences frame the experience so that they transform through thought, action, and/or emotion, the previous memories and current perceptions into new learned material. This helps to guide their continuing perceptions. In this case, Sandy’s perceptions of situations involving other female coaches helped her avoid a number of mistakes that could have tarnished her reputation and potentially hindered her coaching career. Like Sandy’s description of learning from other coaches, Jones and colleagues (2003) found that the coaches in their study also learned by observing other coaches and either modeling what they did or learning what not to do based on their mistakes. Indeed, this may be a popular way to learn as the coaches in Stephenson and

Jowett's (2009) study spoke of learning from peer observation, conversations, and modeling other coaches.

### **Learning from formal and nonformal education courses**

The coaches discussed the importance of learning in formal and nonformal education courses - whether it was in certification courses and sport specific seminars, or relevant university courses. One coach talked about learning new approaches to coaching from a coaching seminar. Another coach talked about using the information from coaching seminars to try out drills and determine whether they were appropriate for her needs or not. One coach talked about the formal coach certification pathway and her experiences in being involved in restructuring the pathways and manuals, and the impact this work had on her own knowledge of the sport. One coach felt unsupported in her coaching courses. Therefore, she did not have positive episodic experiences in this situation. Nevertheless, she did encourage her athletes to take coaching courses because she valued the information that was taught but she ensured that they did so in groups so that they would have safe experiences in their courses. In particular, the canoe/kayak coach pertinently talked about learning from courses and conferences. Through her experiences, she was able to become more experienced by applying the information from the coach education courses in her daily coaching approach.

**Vignette of “Laura’s” episodic experiences in formal and nonformal education.** *I began coaching without having taken any coaching courses. I thought I didn't need any. I didn't have any formal training. I had no NCCP [National Coaching Certification Program] levels. But then my mentor said, “you know, you really should take your levels.” And he gave the first one that I took, so that helped. I went to that, and I thought, “wow, there's so much more to know”. After attending a few certification courses I realized that in learning from mentors, they did not always explain to me what they were doing because it was automatic*

*for them, while in the courses, all the issues were outlined and discussed. For instance, I learned to design a training program, I learned technical and tactical analysis, and I learned safety procedures.*

*In the NCCP formal courses, the technical information that I learned changed my ideas on paddling. Then, I tried it out myself in a boat and I could see a difference in my own paddling. I started explaining technique more precisely using the terminology that I learned on course. For instance, I learned how to break the stroke down to the phases. I remember one sheet that we filled out in the course was a page for error detection and correction. You had to detect what the error was, and down the next column you had to explain how to correct it. For instance, the arm is bent here, and I could tell them to straighten it but what would that look like and how would it feel? The resources both on paper and the hands-on activities were great.*

*Before taking the course, I would look at the athletes and think: "I can see what they're doing and it looks ok to me." But the technical knowledge that I learned in my courses affected my coaching. Now, when I teach them the phases of the stroke, I say: "when you put the paddle in the water, well that's called the catch." I use the word "catch" with my athletes. As a kid, I don't think I ever heard it that way or understood if I was doing it right or wrong. When I reflect on my athletic experience, I think: "this is how I learned to paddle, but from what I learned in the course, this is what I can do differently to make it better for the athletes that I coach."*

*Because I loved the coaching courses that I took, I decided to pursue my Bachelor's degree in Human Kinetics. I went into these classes with knowledge of how to coach, and so the information was very relevant for my coaching. In high school science class, I had simply memorized information, but going back to university as an adult learner was really neat*

*because at that point I was coaching and thinking, "man, I have so much to learn." I loved learning the science background and the sport psychology background, realizing that I could have so much more information to share with the athletes I was coaching.*

*Later, I learned about the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model for canoe-kayak when I attended a coaching conference. I loved this model and became totally absorbed in it. You see, we are a race-driven organization. We have such a short season in the summer that we try to get in as many races as possible, so kids are racing six or eight races in a day. They're burnt and fried. I thought, "maybe we need to learn a little more here". I looked at the LTAD model. There are things in the document that are not perfect, but certainly for old-timer coaches like me, we can look to the model and ask ourselves: "Are we driving kids out of our sport?" I am one of those people who believes that if we want to keep kids on the edge wanting more, then we need to not be asking so much that they want to quit by the time they're 12 years old.*

*I was excited because I was starting a club where I could create the approach to take with the athletes and at the same time there was this LTAD document that supported my ideas and gave me the tools I needed. It was like a license to try what I believed in. I believe that kids should do as many sports as they can and the LTAD program supports that philosophy. I remember doing that myself when I was in high school. I feel it is always a shame to lose young athletes because we pushed them too fast too soon. At our club, we make a conscious effort not to do that. We want them to have fun and go to regattas, but also to be a team. I do not focus on only the best people. I know I did that when I worked at another club, and I regret it, I wish I hadn't. But that was where the sport was at that time. Now, what I hope to do is develop the athletes to love the sport and develop as a team. That is really my focus at my club.*

In summary, Laura's vignette shows us how the process of becoming a more experienced coach through applying information learned in coaching education courses was more or less a linear process for her, albeit not necessarily planned that way. Her mentor encouraged her to take NCCP courses, and through the experiences in the courses, she realized that she had much to learn. Those episodic experiences gave her the interest in pursuing further courses at the university, in which she gained more knowledge and understanding about coaching. Her learning experiences provided the chance to realize that there were other learning opportunities available to her. Later, in a conference, Laura learned about the LTAD model. She had the opportunity to apply this model to her coaching because she was starting up her own club in which she had the occasion to try out the new model. While this sequence of episodic experiences was not pre-planned, Laura took the opportunity to learn on each of these occasions. Rynne and colleagues (2006) note that while the availability of learning opportunities is important to assist coaches' development, the willingness of coaches to engage in learning plays a great role in determining their learning paths.

Laura's vignette exemplifies the process of becoming experienced by choosing to take courses and effectively applying the information learned in the courses to her coaching practice. It has been proposed that coaching education lacks depth and relevance and therefore plays a relatively small part in coaches' development (Jones *et al.* 2003, Armour 2010). Coaches spend relatively little time engaged in coaching courses compared to other situations so it makes sense that these programs play a marginal role in coach development when compared to other learning situations (Trudel *et al.* 2010). However, the results from this study indicate that these courses can have an influence on subsequent learning situations and thus on coaching practice. Furthermore, the meaningfulness of these courses will differ

according to the coaches' biographies and what they deem important to learn. Trudel and colleagues (2010) propose that coaches' previous knowledge and emotions play an important role in determining what coaches can and will want to learn when participating in coaching education courses. Moon (2001) also indicates that the learner's purpose and desired goals for learning, readiness to learn, interest, and maturity are all variables in perceiving opportunities to learn as meaningful. Laura was ready to learn because of her mentor's advice, and thus engaged in different episodic experiences in formal and nonformal courses that she found beneficial and this helped her make conscious decisions to continue to engage in these learning opportunities.

### **Learning from family**

The coaches mentioned that they learned from their partner and/or children. For two coaches, partners were an especially important source of support over the years and helped them learn to balance their careers and personal lives. For another coach, family (her partner) was best kept private and she tried not to let her family experiences influence her coaching approach. On the other hand, one coach talked about how much her experiences with her own children influenced her career path, from starting her own club to determining her style of coaching. The best example of learning from family were the experiences of one of the figure skating coaches, who talked about how she had learned from her children and how this had changed her coaching philosophy to a more global picture of sport as a tool for developing life skills.

**Vignette of "Sharon's" episodic experiences with her children.** *As a young coach without children, I was strict and result-oriented. When I started out, I was very keen and maybe almost aggressive in the way that I approached coaching. I wanted my athletes to have every opportunity to do well. I used to just lay down the law: "this is how it's going to*

*be, you're going to do it this way, or no way." Now, I'm not like that. I think that's because of my own kids. I think I don't see it now as the be all and end all to be at the top in skating.*

*When my first daughter was born, she was just so special. We loved her to death. My life just changed and everything was about the baby. Within her first year of her life, I lost my father. So these monumental things happened within the course of one year. I do think that in some ways, that was the beginning of my change in coaching. I started to think that I'm putting so much into skating, and my Dad died and he was only 65 years old. It was sort of a reality check in a way. I had always worked seven days a week, but it was shortly after she was born that I thought: "ok, I'm taking a day off, I'm not going to work on Sundays anymore." That was step one. I took a day to myself.*

*Then my second daughter came along three years later, and it was all the same feelings all over again. I don't think at that point I had changed so much, because I was still really into the competitive side of it; I still really wanted my athletes to succeed in competitions. When my daughters started to skate, I think that's when I started changing a lot. First of all, I looked at the parents of my athletes in a different way, because I was a parent and all I wanted for my kids was the best, I wanted them to make errors and learn from them. I didn't want to protect them so much, but I wanted them to be happy. And skating is a happy thing for them. I think that that's where I started looking at the other parents and started thinking, "my God, why are you treating your child that way? It's just skating." It's just skating. All of a sudden, skating ceased being 'the be all and end all' to this life.*

*Both my children had challenges as competitive skaters, whether it was injuries or diabetes that affected performance during competitions. Despite these challenges, I was proud of my children's accomplishments both on and off ice. I learned to see skating as a*

*tool to develop important life skills in my skaters. I try to help my own daughters succeed in everything they choose to pursue. Whether it's something at school or whether it's sport. Really, sport is just a window of life. What do you learn in sport? You're learning life skills. I think that trying to teach my athletes life skills is the most important thing I can do as a coach so that they leave the sport a better person, not just a better skater. I think that's sort of what my husband and I have tried to do with our kids – through sport, they're learning about themselves. That's how I look at it now. I think when I was younger, I was far more result oriented than I am now.*

*I discovered from my children that in coaching sport, I am coaching individuals in one part of their life. I learned that I can impact athletes beyond the skating rink, and realized that this was ultimately what I wanted. My attitude and values changed as a result of my experiences with my children. I became more lenient with my athletes and more of a nurturer. I transitioned out of being the main coach for competitive skaters to working with Learn to Skate recreational skaters. I just like to be involved in the whole process of teaching them how to skate. I really enjoy working with the younger ones when they're just starting out – giving them the basics and watching them develop. That's what I'm most passionate about.*

In summary, Sharon's vignette shows us how over the course of twenty years, she changed her coaching approach because of the experiences that she had with her own children. After her first daughter was born and her father died, she acknowledged that she developed a different perspective on the importance of coaching, and after her second daughter was born, this was reinforced. However, it was only when her daughters started to skate, and she had experiences in helping her daughters as their mother and not as their coach, that she started to change her coaching approach. Eventually, as she came to reflect

on her changed values in coaching, she decided to transition from coaching competitive athletes to grassroots athletes to better represent her interest in developing athletes' love of the sport and help them learn life skills through sport.

In Sharon's vignette, it is apparent that a series of episodic experiences, including the birth of her own two daughters changed her coaching philosophy from one geared towards striving for performance excellence, to one focused more on teaching life skills. Research has shown that some women coaches have made changes in their coaching careers due to lifestyle changes after having children and needing to prioritize their interests (Robertson 2010). Moon (2001) notes that an individual's emotions and interest mediate learning, and this vignette demonstrates how emotions can change a coach's approach due to a new interest in learning about and developing life skills in athletes. Jarvis (2006) discusses how individuals ask themselves who they think they are, what they are doing, and what others think about who they are. This process may occur often throughout different experiences in life, where individuals self-identify, or develop new self-identities, based on the experiences and memories that they have (Jarvis 2006). With Sharon's change in philosophy, she eventually stopped coaching competitive athletes and turned to coaching entry-level programs where the focus was on coaching life skills through sport.

### **Learning from the process of reflection on experiences**

The coaches also learned from the act of engaging in reflections of their own actions. One coach talked about reflecting on the experiences she had with athletes, while another talked about reflecting on the experiences she had watching, listening, and discussing coaching matters with other coaches. One coach talked about reflecting on her own practice – the mistakes and accomplishments in day-to-day activities. One coach talked very little about reflection. The alpine skiing coach described at length how she engaged in reflection.

Her reflections were based on previous experiences and what she learned in those experiences. She took this knowledge and questioned how it could help her in future experiences, thereby learning through reflection.

**Vignette of “Nadine’s” episodic experiences engaging in the process of reflection.**

*I reflect often. Sometimes, my reflections are based on opportunities that I have been offered and have not yet taken. One time, I was offered the job of the Head Coach of a men’s provincial alpine ski team. I drove out to a little part of Georgian Bay and it was really beautiful. I put my kayak in the water and paddled out. I thought about all the things I could bring to the team and I thought about all the things that I would need to really focus on and make into priorities in order for people to buy in to my approach, and I also thought about all the repercussions of what could go wrong. The one thing that kept popping up in my mind was that this was one of the biggest opportunities to really challenge myself to see if I had what it took to survive in a male dominated environment. I took the job.*

*Head coaching the provincial men’s team was probably the most terrific opportunity that I’ve had in terms of challenge every day. I would wake up in the morning and over coffee, I would form a strategy of how I would approach the day depending on with whom I was meeting. I was still experimenting with my approach, my presentation, my effect on the hill, how much I would step forward or step back on a certain day. Depending on the tone of the day – if it was a time trials day, a skills day, a training day - I definitely had different approaches. For instance, on race days, I would back off more and use my voice less and less so that the guys would only hear what they needed to hear and that was it. Forming strategies came more into play when I was coaching the men because it’s easy to lose their trust, so I always had to be thinking one step ahead. A couple times I nearly blew that trust, in disciplining the wrong way – maybe too heavy handed or with not enough humour. But*

*certainly, I had to have a strategy for everything in my back pocket and be ready to go with whatever happened. I had to play out these scenarios in my mind to know how I was going to react to make sure they didn't lose faith in me.*

*I always took time to reflect on situations and question my approach. I would try to think situations through, and try to listen to what my feelings directed me to do. Trial and error was part of it, of course. Was it the right or wrong timing? The right or wrong delivery? Did I consider the environment? Of course there are many instances of "hit and miss" with the delivery of communication and decision-making process. It is all a learning experience. I always took the time to learn about each individual athlete. I think that's really important as a coach, to study people. I'm always observing people. I cannot go wrong by studying the people I'm working with and really paying attention to what is important to them. Everyone has something that I can learn from. Everyone out there – every athlete, every parent, every administrator, every coach, is a teacher, if you're willing to accept that information. Then I tumble it around in my mind and choose what's right for me and what isn't.*

In summary, Nadine's vignette shows us how she created numerous episodic experiences in order to reflect. Nadine learned from thinking of earlier experiences and reflecting on what had occurred to enable her to better understand the new situation. She questioned her actions and deliberated on her decisions. Nadine learned in episodic experiences in engaging in reflection since she created space to think about what happened in previous and upcoming situations. It was not one episodic experience, but a number of episodic experiences over the course of her career in which she set aside time to reflect, learn, and make decisions for upcoming situations. Stephenson and Jowett (2009) refer to such a learning situation as reflective practice, in which the coach evaluates his or her

practice in a routine manner. However, the barriers to reflective practice include a lack of time devoted to effectively reflect and a lack of knowledge about how to reflect (Stephenson and Jowett 2009). It was the experienced coaches in their study that used reflective practice most often (Stephenson and Jowett 2009) and perhaps this is why setting aside time and engaging in reflection was a natural occurrence for Nadine, an experienced coach.

Indeed, Nadine's vignette illustrates her process of "becoming" through her use of reflection. Nadine reflected by re-organizing her knowledge from previous experiences to better understand what to do in upcoming situations, just as Moon (2004) suggests. When coaches' reflection on previous experiences is weighed with rational analysis of the current situation, they form successful decision-making processes (Lyle 2010). Lyle (2010) suggests that deliberate decision making occurs when coaches have "time and space to consider options and weigh the relevant evidence to decide upon the most appropriate course of action" (p. 27). The solutions that form from such reflection are undoubtedly influenced by the coaches' ontological positions on their coaching practice, whether this is implicit or purposefully sought (Cassidy 2010). Nadine engaged in purposeful reflection in which she set aside time to reflect on her actions and upcoming opportunities, which in turn helped her to be more confident in her actions, including stepping into the position of the head coach of a men's team.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the five situations outlined in the non-fictional vignettes (learning from athletes, learning from other coaches, learning from coach education courses, learning from family, and learning from the process of reflecting on experiences) support previous research on coach learning situations (Wright *et al.* 2007, Erickson *et al.* 2008, Werthner and Trudel 2009,) and deepen our understanding of the multitude of experiences that influence how and

what coaches learn. This article demonstrates that when planned and unplanned learning experiences occur and there is a connection between the learner's biography and the information from the situation, the coach may considerably learn and may change her coaching approach because of that situation.

Having five participants in this study was both a strength and limitation of the study. We only explored the process of becoming experienced in each situation with one coach. Blodgett *et al* (2011) noted that in their study vignettes for each participant in their entirety could not be provided due to the space constraints of an article format. Likewise, we could not share in-depth the episodic experiences of each coach in all her learning situations. For example, each participant spoke of a variety of learning situations, such as, experiences with athletes, coaches, their own education courses, their family, and in reflecting on those experiences. However, for each coach we chose to display the episodic experiences in one type of learning situation that was particularly meaningful for her. Jarvis (2006) notes that what is learned in previous experiences influences an individual's perceptions and thus what he or she learns in subsequent experiences. While overlap may exist between what is learned in one situation (i.e. learning from formal and nonformal education courses) and what is perceived and learned in another situation (i.e. learning from athletes), we could not demonstrate this complexity. Indeed, Jones and colleagues (2003) note that developing coaching knowledge is a complex social phenomenon. Furthermore, Jarvis (2006) states that we cannot understand learning in its entirety because of the diverse and multidimensional nature of experiences throughout life.

The strength of the study is that we could provide an in-depth exploration of how the coaches learned from episodic experiences that subsequently influenced what was perceived and learned in new episodic experiences, repeating this sequence indefinitely. In this way,

we were able to show how learning to coach is dependent on so many episodic experiences and situations throughout the lives of the women coaches. Through the non-fictional vignettes, it was possible to document the coaches' meaningful episodic experiences and how these experiences influenced subsequent choices to learn and actions and decisions made by the coaches. Indeed, vignettes create the opportunity for participants' meaningful lived experiences to be directly shared (Blodgett *et al.* 2011).

According to Jarvis (2009), individuals are exposed to and experience many situations throughout life, and learning is a natural part of living. Therefore, coaches experience many situations, but their situations and their experiences within those situations may not be similar. Jarvis (2006) notes that some experiences are more significant for learning than others. Moon (2004) maintains that these meaningful experiences may greatly impact what the learner knows and influence perceptions of subsequent experiences. We have been able to expose, to a degree, the in-depth nature of the process of "becoming" for each coach in different learning situations because of meaningful episodic experiences.

Meaningfulness is a subjective and individual judgment made by the learner; therefore, knowing in advance what might be meaningful situations to other learners is "basically a matter of informed guesswork" (Moon 2004, p. 18). What is meaningful to one person depends on his or her previous experiences, perceptions of the environment, readiness to learn, maturity, and so on (Moon 2001), so that we cannot say with certainty that all coaches must engage in certain situations in order to learn to coach. However, deliberately exploring potential situations that are meaningful to coaches helps to create informed choices on which activities assist coaches in learning to coach, and we can unearth the reasons why it is important to expose coaches to many different learning situations. Future research could

explore meaningful learning experiences and their effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) in relationship to formal coach education, coach performance, and athlete performance.

While coaches may have different experiences that they find meaningful in becoming experienced coaches, in exploring the process of becoming through different related episodic experiences within a given learning situation, we begin to uncover the complex nature of learning from the perceptions of coaches with different background experiences, as we demonstrate why learning to coach is idiosyncratic. Indeed, from this study, we developed a clearer understanding of the idiosyncrasies of coach development by exploring the situations coaches as they learned from various episodic experiences.

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**Exploring Coaching Actions Based on Developed Values:**

**A Case Study of a Female Hockey Coach**

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### **Abstract**

Coaching philosophies are statements of values that direct coaching actions; however, there are few empirical studies that demonstrate how values are developed and how they are linked to coaching actions (Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Chung, 2009). The literature also suggests there can be a discrepancy between the statement of coaches' values and their actual coaching actions (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Lyle, 2002). In order to examine how coaching actions are influenced by values that are developed over a lifetime, the purpose of this article is to first describe a female hockey coach's approach to coaching using five key coaching actions, then identify the underlying values that influenced those actions, and then explore how these values were developed in different experiences throughout her life. A time-oriented network analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was conducted based on four semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the coach. The results present five key coaching actions: (a) organizing coach education programs for athletes, (b) creating groups to help athletes bond, (c) bringing in experts from various domains, (d) asking athletes to reflect on attitudes and goals, and (e) giving athletes playing time based on hard work and effort. We identify the core values guiding these actions as: (a) equity, (b) connectedness, (c) holistic development, (d) respect, and (e) effort. Finally, we present a number of the coach's experiences that demonstrate the complexity of developing these values throughout her life. The importance of reflecting on and discussing coaching actions, experiences, and the underlying values may help coaches create personally relevant coaching philosophies.

*Keywords:* values, coaching actions, lifelong learning, coaching philosophy

A coach's philosophy has been defined as a statement of values and beliefs that guide coaching actions (Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Chung, 2009). Jenkins (2010), as well as Collins and colleagues (2009), argued that coaching philosophies are important because they help coaches understand their behaviors in practice. However, Cassidy, Jones, and Potrac (2009) emphasized that coaches' stated philosophies are not always straightforwardly observable in their actions.

The values that coaches hold are fundamental to their coaching philosophies and play a significant role in understanding what and why individuals act in certain ways (Malloy, Ross, & Zakus, 2003). A value is defined as "an enduring belief that a particular way of behaving or living is personally and socially preferable to other ways of behaving and living. Values are enduring qualities that set out the path of life we follow" (Malloy et al., 2003, p. 56). Coaches learn their values from their experiences as sport participants, as coaches, and through their educational backgrounds and life experiences (Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). Wilcox and Trudel (1998) suggested that researchers should investigate the values that coaches hold since they appear complex and situationally-dependent. This is in large part because coaches may display a wide range of behaviors guided by different values based on the situations in which they need to act (Cassidy et al., 2009; Wilcox & Trudel, 1998).

Lyle (2002), who wrote about coaching concepts, including coaching values, noted that coaching actions may be influenced either consciously or unconsciously by the coach's personal values. However, the coach's personal values may not always be congruent with public or organizational values and situational constraints (Lyle, 2002). Therefore, there is potential for a coach to verbalize a philosophy that aligns with the social situation but not with the coach's own values, in which case the *stated* values in the philosophy are at odds with the *actual* coaching actions guided by the coach's own personal values (Lyle, 2002).

This creates a dilemma in researching the development of coaching values, since coaches may say they hold certain values but may display contradictory values.

Lyle (2002) noted that, “the development of values through early experiences, education, sport involvement, coach education and occupational socialization is... relatively unexplored research territory” (p. 166). From Lyle’s quote, we can surmise that the development of values starts before individuals begin coaching. It appears that values transfer across different types of experiences, from childhood into coaching experiences. The quote suggests a need to investigate the development of coaching values by exploring a coach’s life experiences starting in childhood and progressing to their coaching careers to understand how coaches may develop values through their experiences.

In order to justify one’s actions, decisions, and judgments, Telfer (2010) proposed that it is essential for coaches to examine their own values instead of unquestioningly adopting professional codes of ethics. Indeed, Cushion (2010) stated that coaches’ personal values always underlie their behaviors. Despite this stated link between values and actions, Collins and colleagues (2009) noted that most studies that have explored coaches’ values have not tied these descriptions to coach actions. These authors suggested the need to do longitudinal research to track coaches’ development over time in order to better understand how coaches develop and refine their philosophies as they gain more experience coaching, and to explore how their beliefs and values guide their practice (Collins et al., 2009).

Jarvis (2006, 2009) proposed that our values are developed in our everyday experiences starting early in our lives and through various social situations. This development is linked to human learning throughout the lifespan, which Jarvis (2009) defined as,

The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, meaning, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 25)

Jarvis (2006, 2009) explored lifelong learning from a psychosocial perspective with a focus on the individual. He argued that to develop throughout their lives, individuals begin learning in childhood and continue learning into adulthood, and are therefore perpetually in a process of 'becoming'. This sense of becoming happens over time. For this reason, if values underlie behaviors (Cushion, 2010), then, according to Jarvis' perspective, the values that individuals develop in childhood and throughout various life experiences may influence their actions later in life. However, Jarvis (2006) noted that we may not be fully aware that we have learned values through our experiences until we reflect on or discuss them. In this case, we may learn values pre-consciously (Jarvis, 2006). As part of many coaching education programs, coaches are encouraged to make explicit their coaching philosophies (Collins et al., 2009). However, this may be a difficult task for some coaches, as the values that form these coaching philosophies are often learned implicitly.

The present study is part of a larger dissertation research study that explored the biographies of Canadian women coaches. Jarvis' (2006, 2009) theory of human learning was used as the theoretical framework to better understand the multitude of lifelong experiences that contribute to coaches' learning. Each coach was interviewed four times and they spoke at length about their lifelong learning experiences and their current coaching actions through the in-depth and open-ended nature of the interview process. While we did not ask the

coaches explicitly for their coaching philosophies and values; inductively, it became clear that there were values that influenced their current coaching actions and that the values were developed through numerous life experiences. We chose to do a case study of one of the coaches to illustrate in-depth how values influenced her coaching. More specifically, the purpose of this article is to (a) describe a female hockey coach's approach using five key coaching actions, (b) identify the underlying values based on the coach's explanations of her actions, and (c) explore how the values were developed in different experiences throughout her life. Using this research approach, we can begin to understand how coaches' actions are influenced by their values and how these values are developed through a lifetime of experiences.

### **Methodology**

A case study was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the participant's actions, values, and experiences (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1994). Creswell (2007) suggested that purposive sampling is used in case studies to select a case that helps to highlight the issue being researched. The participant works full-time as the head coach of a woman's university hockey team. At the time of data collection, she was 42 years old with 17 years of coaching experience, and 28 years of experience as a hockey player. She was selected to participate in a larger dissertation research study that included other full time women coaches who had made coaching a career. Collins and colleagues (2009) suggested that experienced coaches are better able to identify and put into action their coaching values. The coach's explicit discussion of her experiences and values was the criteria for selecting her for this case study.

As part of the dissertation study, the coach and first author engaged in four separate interviews that each lasted approximately two hours and were conducted about once per

month. In these semi-structured, open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002), the first author and participant discussed events of the participant's life and how the coach learned from these experiences. The focus in these interviews was on learning from experiences and how this influenced the coach's current approach to coaching. Jarvis' (2006) framework of human learning was used to guide the questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. From the interview transcripts, questions were developed for the next interview to help expand on and further develop an understanding of how the participant learned to coach (Patton, 2002). Repeated interviews enabled the first author and coach to build a close relationship so that the coach felt comfortable sharing personal information with the first author and so that the coach could reflect on and remember events that were not readily recalled in the first interview (Flowers, 2008; Polkinghorne, 2005). Furthermore, repeated interviews helped the first author maximize depth and opportunity to probe (Flowers, 2008). It was potentially because of the depth and amount of data from the multiple interviews that, following the analysis of the data for the dissertation study, the researchers were able to inductively discover that coaching actions were influenced by values and that these values were developed in experiences throughout life.

For this case study on coaching actions and values, the data analysis consisting of three phases was conducted after all interviews had been transcribed and member checked. First, the transcripts were examined to find recent coaching actions that the coach found meaningful in describing her current coaching approach. Five major actions were discovered. Second, the researchers established the values underlying these five actions according to the coach's language in describing the importance of these actions. The coach spoke of the importance of girls' and women's involvement in playing and coaching hockey to explain why she organized the delivery of coach education programs for her athletes, and so the

value of equity was assigned to this action. She spoke of valuing connections to explain why she created groups to help athletes bond, and so the value of connectedness was assigned to this action. She spoke of developing her athletes to be successful in hockey and in life to explain why she brought in experts from various domains, and so the value of holistic development was assigned to this action. She spoke of respecting others to explain why she asks athletes to reflect on attitudes and goals, and so the value of respect was assigned to this action. Finally, she spoke of valuing effort to explain why she gave athletes playing time based on their hard work, and so the value of effort was assigned to this action. Third, all of the transcripts were examined again to code learning experiences that could have contributed to developing those five values (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Based on the writing of Miles and Huberman (1994), a time-ordered network figure was formed with the coaching actions at the top of the figure. Each action was linked to the underlying value assigned by the researchers to the action. Then the coach's lifelong learning experiences in each code were placed in chronological order and connected to the assigned value that was developed in each experience (see Figure 1).

Analytic credibility was established in this case study through member checking (Flowers, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Not only did the coach member check each transcript, but the first author also sent an email to the coach that included a copy of the manuscript of this article so that the coach could approve or change the researchers' analysis of the assigned values that were deemed inherent in her actions and developed in specific experiences. The coach made minor changes to clarify the wording of her actions. She confirmed that the assigned values were ones she considered important to her coaching approach and were displayed in her actions and developed in her experiences as written in the results.

## Results

The results describe the five key actions that illustrate “Kate’s” coaching approach. Since values influence behaviors (Cushion, 2010), a value underlying each action is then presented. Because Jarvis’ (2006, 2009) lifelong learning framework was used to guide the study and interview questions, the results then identify a series of learning experiences starting in Kate’s childhood that contributed to the development of each value. It is not the intention in this article to interpret the coach’s actions and values as “positive” or “negative”, but rather to present a value that guides each of the coach’s five actions and to understand how each value was developed through the coach’s life experiences.

### **The Coaching Action: Organizing the Delivery of Coach Education Programs for Athletes**

As a coach of a university women’s hockey team, Kate sets up coaching certification courses each year for her athletes. She incorporates coaching certification for her players into her seasonal plan as she believes it is an easier transition for them when they finish their playing careers to then step into coaching. Indeed, throughout the season, her athletes are “volun-told” to coach younger level teams, and during the off-season they are encouraged to work at hockey camps and clinics so that they are involved in coaching. Kate feels strongly that this will show other young athletes that it is normal to have women as coaches. She feels that enticing women athletes who are already strong hockey players to get involved in coaching helps develop a strong image of women coaches.

I think we, as established coaches, have a big role to develop young women coaches. I take that part really seriously... Now the young girls who have women coaches, it’s kind of a given for them, as opposed to never seeing women in a coaching role... For

me, the more girls and women we can get into coaching, then the easier it will be for us to continue to have women coaches.

Therefore, in setting up certification courses for her athletes, she ensures that the athletes not only learn more about the sport and about how to coach, but also have the opportunity to take the courses in a friendly and safe environment where they know others, which helps them have a rewarding experience.

Everyone was always saying, “there are not many women signing up for hockey courses”... There are a significant number of women who would take their hockey certification courses but they are afraid to step inside that room, they don't want to sign up and go when they will know no one. So I encourage them to go with their friends, it makes it less intimidating... I take a look at the coaching clinics I set up. When I have all the girls in the room, they laugh and they share stuff... For them, it's not as threatening as sitting in a room with all male coaches who may have had a lot more life experience than them and who may not value their input or opinion.

The underlying value in this action is that of equity. Kate values getting girls and women involved in playing and coaching ice hockey. This action helps certify a greater number of young female coaches, and may keep her athletes involved in the sport after they leave her team. Below are a few experiences that helped Kate develop this value.

**The learning experiences.** As a young girl playing hockey in rural Canada, Kate had a meaningful experience that helped develop her value of equity. Kate played on a boys' team since there were no girls' teams. Many people were supportive of Kate and the small community recognized her as the girl who played hockey and set up “Kate's room” for her to use as a change-room before and after games. However, none of her girl friends played hockey because they told her that their parents would not let them do so. She also often heard

people say, “girls shouldn’t play hockey, girls don’t play hockey.” She explained, “One of the first things I learned was that it doesn’t make sense. I could play and I could shoot. I didn’t understand why others’ said that girls couldn’t play.”

When the team went to play at a provincial level tournament, Kate’s name was not on the roster. The provincial hockey organization would not recognize her as a player because it was a boys’ team and she was a girl. While Kate did not compete in these provincially sanctioned hockey tournaments and games, her coaches ensured that she practiced with the team and kept her on the bench. Indeed, the coaches gave her a young coaching role. They would ask her, “Kate, what do you see?” They were encouraging her to coach, and while Kate did not perhaps understand everything at that point in time, she remembered that, “it had a pretty profound impact on me, in hindsight.” Indeed, without conscious awareness, Kate was encouraged to become a coach.

When Kate was 12 years old, she started to play on a women’s hockey team. The coach had the foresight to understand where women’s hockey was heading, and he set up “learn to play” clinics for women and girls in each town where they would play. The women on the team, Kate included, taught these clinics. Kate’s passion for teaching girls and women to play hockey grew from these experiences. She found it rewarding to teach, and learned to give back to the community.

Kate’s own experiences with coach education courses were mixed. While she said she learned a lot of information pertinent to coaching, she found she was often the only woman in the room. She felt that she did not have a chance to share her thoughts because she was often overlooked. She thought the others in the room were all confident men and she was the “little kid at the dinner table with an adult conversation going on all around me.”

Kate said that despite being a confident woman, in these situations she felt intimidated.

However, she did note that some of the male coaches were supportive, like big brothers.

“Greg” was in the course and would say, “Kate, what do you think?” He realized that I was ignored. I was thankful to him, because otherwise I think that after the first night of the course I would have been thinking about whether I would come back the next day or not.

In the end, this challenging situation was a great learning experience for Kate, and as a result, she wanted to create a different learning environment for young women who might want to be coaches.

When Kate was 25 years old, she began coaching a girls' hockey team. She saw this as an opportunity to give back to the sport, and to help girls grow and learn through sport. She said that the parents' goal was to get their daughters to love the game of hockey. However, once the team started winning, one father in particular, who had played professional level hockey, tried to get Kate to change her coaching style to be more focused on winning.

At the end of the day, it's nice to win the trophy, but it's not what's important because a lot of these girls just love to play. That had to be a discussion. It was a challenge because this father was trying to tell me what to do. It was a learning experience for me because I had to explain what I was doing and why. It was also interesting because it seemed to the fathers that it was ok to tell me how to coach, but I had a male friend who was coaching at the same time, and nobody was telling him what to do, or not in the same way.

From this experience, she felt that some people did not think women could coach as well as men. She realized that to fight these stereotypes, it would be important to get more women involved in coaching.

After founding and coaching a women's college hockey team, and working for Hockey Canada as the manager for female hockey, Kate was hired to coach a University women's hockey team.

I look at Canadian University sport and I think there's such an opportunity for us to develop and deliver high performance programs for female athletes. When I saw this full time coaching position available at the University, it was a great opportunity to be able to take a lot of things that I was working on at Hockey Canada as an administrator and be on the other side of the desk and actually bring it to fruition. I wanted to develop a program at the university; I felt that there was a great opportunity to develop the girls, get them into coaching and officiating, and for us to go out and deliver programs in the community as a university sport, and be there as a high performance program, as well.

Part of this program included certifying the athletes as coaches and getting them to coach young athletes.

From Kate's experiences as a girl who *could* play hockey, who was challenged early on in her life to defy stereotypes and demonstrate her capabilities, she realized early that equity was an important value and put it into action by creating opportunities for young women to enjoy playing hockey and to consider becoming coaches.

### **The Coaching Action: Creating “Pump Up Partners”**

With her university team, each year Kate creates Pump Up Partners (PUPs) in which a veteran and a rookie player are paired up. In this way, the veteran player can act as a mentor and support network for the rookie player.

Throughout the year, each group is responsible for cleaning up the team room or bringing out the water bottles each week. It isn't just a rookie activity, but rather a senior player and rookie are doing those tasks together.

This program provides opportunities to develop team chemistry and connections between players.

The PUPs are about supporting and helping and making sure that everyone is part of the team. The further that an athlete gets to the outside, especially in women's sport, I find, it doesn't matter how good they are, they won't perform with the group because they just don't have that chemistry. The more we can work to bring the group together and have that chemistry, the better we are as a team. I learned that by looking at teams that I've played on and that have been successful, and I asked myself how and why have they been successful? And I really think it is about the chemistry on the team.

The PUPs program was created after reflecting on many coaching experiences. Kate asked herself what she could do to help the team be successful and help the young women to grow as individuals.

Um... I think it was just looking at the dynamics of my team. I thought, “how do we help these people be more successful? How do we help them transition into university life and move them forward? Who in this group can bring support to help them get out of their shells?”... The successful teams that I've been around, they ask, “how can I help you out?” versus, “how can I show that I'm better than you so that I get to

play more often?"

For this reason, Kate creates opportunities for connections and friendships to develop.

Knowing that I value those connections impacts how I coach now. I'm very conscious of how our dressing room interacts and though they may have different values than their teammates, they need to find ways to work together and be together, we need to talk about what we value.

The underlying value in this action is that of connectedness. Kate values building connections between players on the team through the PUPs. Below are a few experiences that helped Kate develop this value.

**The learning experiences.** At a very young age, Kate played with her older brother and attempted to do everything he did. As a result, she started playing ice hockey on the same team as her brother. Her father was the coach. Kate immediately loved the game, and she also loved the friendships that were made through the team. "I can go back to when I was four and five, and think of the friendships that I developed at that time, up to now, and the friends I still have from playing. Those friendships are very important to me."

In high school, she played on both hockey and fastball teams. When her mother died a few years later, the people who were there to support her were all people that she had connected with as an athlete. She realized that the amount of time that she spent with people who were involved in sport and the care that she gave and received from these people was very valuable and gave her perspective on the importance of sport. "It was an eye opening experience to see the people who came to Mom's funeral for me." Kate learned again about the special connection that can develop between people in a sport.

When Kate started coaching the university team, she noticed that she "lost" a few first year players. They chose to be on the team one year, and then chose not to continue in the

next year of university. She asked herself why this was the case and how she could help these athletes. She remembered the support that she had received from her former teammates, and determined that those friendships could help her athletes feel more connected to the team and rely on one another for support when they were having trouble.

Instead of having kids flunk out after the first year, or just realizing that it was too much, I help them out in the first year by linking them up with other teammates to whom they could talk... I look at the kids that have stepped away from hockey as kids that we've lost. If someone had just taken time to bond with them, it could have made all the difference.

Kate formed the PUPs program to help develop connections and relationships on the team. She felt that the team bonded through shared experiences, which helped the athletes develop relationships from the program.

### **The Coaching Action: Bringing in Experts to Help Athletes in Various Domains**

Kate asks many experts from different domains to work with her team. For instance, in addition to herself and five assistant coaches, there are two fitness coaches, an academic coach, an athletic therapist, a mental skills coach, a team physician, a sport nutritionist, a video coach, and a mentor coach.

If you look at our team website, I get the comment all the time that we have the biggest coaching staff on campus, we have more coaches than players... I don't pretend to know more than any of those experts.

She sees her role as head coach to "coach a team that will develop as people" and believes that having a deep coaching staff helps players develop in all domains because they are given many tools and knowledge to grow as people and as athletes. Furthermore, they can connect to different coaches based on their preferences for coaching styles.

When I'm selecting staff, I take a look at what skill sets they bring. For instance, one assistant coach is a young lady who is a couple of years older than the girls and who played for me so she knows how I deliver information. She is close enough to the players that she knows how they're going to take it and will let me know if we need to change the message a bit ... I want the staff and athletes to have a connection so that we can help the athletes achieve excellence whatever that is in their lives. I want to make sure that out of our 25 athletes, each one has every opportunity to be successful on the ice, but also off the ice.

Ultimately, Kate wants her athletes to form links between the information that each expert teaches and how it relates to their athletic endeavors and overall well-being.

The underlying value in this action is that of holistic athlete development. Kate spoke of the importance of developing each athlete from a holistic perspective – caring about them as a hockey player, a student, and an individual. Below are a few experiences that helped Kate develop this value.

**The learning experiences.** Kate played on a young women's fastball team from the age of 16 until 22, and her coach, "Norma", brought in experts to work with the team. For example, she hired a sport psychology consultant and this was the first time that Kate had received this kind of professional support. Kate challenged the importance of this new knowledge. However, as she started to apply the strategies to her personal life, she learned that experts do bring knowledge that boosts individual and team performance. This was a learning experience

because she became aware of how much these experts could help her develop in and out of sport.

Norma gave me the idea that it's ok to bring in the experts. For instance, she brought in a mental training coach. At first I wondered "what is this?" but then as an athlete I started to apply the strategies we learned, and I used them in my personal life too. In particular when my Mom was dying, I used some of the skills that I had learned from our sport psychologist that I was able to use in my personal life to get through grieving. I have a huge respect for that linkage. It's realizing that, hey, the experts can bring a lot.

These elements gave Kate added support as an athlete and as a person and she learned the importance of having experts in different fields related to sport involved on the team.

Furthermore, Norma helped Kate become aware of how different personalities on the coaching staff could be advantageous.

Norma would bring in other coaches who were very different than her. At the time, I thought, "Norma and Bob, why would they coach together?" Bob was such a teddy bear. He was calm, really quiet, and soft-spoken. Norma was really in your face and would challenge you to get better. They were really different. So, depending on what kind of athlete you were, you could either work for Norma or feel comforted by Bob. Therefore, Kate became aware of how different athletes may connect to different coaches.

At 30 years old, Kate took a job as the manager of female hockey for Hockey Canada. As staff at Hockey Canada, she was able to see how the national team programs were run. Again, she noted the importance of having many resources on hand to help athletes.

As a manager of female hockey, I traveled around the country and talked to other coaches and people who were building programs. I asked them how they were building their team, what they were doing, and why. I looked at best practices. Norma planted

that seed of having many experts work with the team, and then the Hockey Canada crew had 30 different coaches on the trip and I got to see all the resources that the athletes were getting.

However, simply bringing in the experts to help her athletes was not enough. Kate learned to check on the athletes to see if they were implementing the information that they were getting from these experts. She learned to do this from her early experiences coaching when she did not check on her athletes, and found several who were burning out or failing school by the end of the first semester.

I've had years where at Christmas time I found out some athletes were not doing well at school. During their first semesters, they were on the phone to their parents every night in tears and wanting to go home. I realized I had failed because I wasn't watching those individuals... Right now, we're into mid-terms, and I see that the athletes are trying to be there, but there are black circles under their eyes. I've learned that we don't have to be practice four days per week, we don't need to put in all the hours that we've been allotted. Let's look at their commitments and find out what's healthy for them. I talk with their academic coach and their mental skills coach to work out a new plan.

Now in coaching her university team, in addition to bringing in the experts, she routinely inquires about the athletes' lives outside of hockey to make sure they are working with the information that these experts provide, such as eating and sleeping well, keeping up with school, and doing activities to relax and recover.

From these experiences, she learned to give athletes access to experts and help them in implementing the information in order to help the athletes' holistic development in the sport,

at school, and in their personal lives.

**The Coaching Action: Asking Athletes to Reflect on Attitudes and Goals**

Kate coaches a group of athletes with varied beliefs, values, and experiences – in short, a group of athletes with very different biographies. Kate is adamant that the athletes reflect on their attitudes and goals and are respectful of each other. She explained,

I look at: How are they competing on the ice? How are they interacting off the ice? Does it affect the team dynamic? We have players with different sexual orientations and religious views. They make assumptions about one another. Then I say, “Have their views or their beliefs hurt you? No. Then are we ok with them thinking what they think? ... How does that impact you as an athlete? It doesn't. Respect them and let them do their thing.”

Kate sets up individual and team meetings to get to the heart of potential problems on the team, encourages her athletes to discuss their attitudes and actions, and clarifies the behaviors that she wants them to demonstrate for the success of the team. “If your private life doesn't affect team, then I will not step in, but the second that it affects team and the team dynamic, then I will step in and we'll see how we can move through it.”

Just as Kate asks the athletes to be respectful of each other and of the team, she has learned to be respectful of the athletes' goals. Kate communicates and questions what the athletes want so that she can be respectful and help them achieve their goals, and not just goals that she imposes on them.

Here's another way I've changed as a coach: If I saw an athlete who had national team potential, that's what I would be pushing that athlete to achieve. I would say, “here's what you're capable of, and we're going to do everything to get you there.” I've learned to find out what are the athlete's goals, where does she want to go? ... If the

athlete is looking to finish her elite experience after playing varsity hockey, then I want to make sure she gets the most out of her experience so that hockey will continue to be part of her long-term athlete development, and maybe she will want to get into coaching.

The underlying value in this action is that of respect. Kate's concern for others, her ability to understand their choices and respect those choices, and ensure that they respect her choices as coach is a key value that continues to guide Kate throughout her coaching career. Below are a few experiences that helped Kate develop this value.

**The learning experiences.** As a youngster, Kate watched many fastball games with her parents. Here, she first saw two women in a relationship.

One day, at the end of a game, I saw two of the women fastball players sitting in their car holding hands, and I still remember choking on my little popcorn twists, because all of a sudden, I was like "what's going on?" ... So, I asked my parents, "These two girls were holding hands, what were they doing?" My mom sat down with me and said, "Kate, sometimes girls like girls, or boys like boys... you don't have to judge them." She learned to respect others' decisions and not judge their actions at a young age from her mother's advice. Kate also learned respect through her own athletic experiences.

One of the things that I'm really thankful for in sport is that it did teach me to be more open and more understanding of people and a little more tolerant of different behaviors, and how to be more respectful of people around you... When I look back, the seasons that I cherish the most and were the most fun are the ones where I could forgive somebody for a little or big mistake; I was able to respect them and move past it.

For instance, when playing on her youth hockey team, one of the players never arrived on time. The coaches did not punish the boy for being late, but instead discussed the issue with the boy and his parents, explaining that it was important to the team that the boy be on time. Kate learned that not all athletes made the same choices in their personal lives and that this was not a problem, as long as the team did not suffer. Therefore, she learned to respect others' life choices but to insist on having the athletes be flexible with their actions when necessary in order to respect coaching choices for the team's success.

As a step-mother, Kate realized that individuals may not always act respectfully when she or other authority figures are absent, and they needed to be held accountable for these disrespectful actions. She learned this life lesson in part through her step-son, Mike. Kate noted that Mike was respectful, polite, and helpful around her. However, during a parent-teacher interview, she found out that he was being disrespectful of women at school. Though she was shocked, she listened to the teacher's account of the events that had led to this accusation.

I had some good life opportunities to learn how to handle that sort of disappointment from a teenager... I still remember one teacher saying to me, "Mike really struggles with respecting women." My first reaction was disbelief... It seemed like she was talking about a different person.

Kate then arranged a meeting between herself, Mike, and his teacher in order to get Mike to explain himself. She used this experience as a learning opportunity to know how to deal with disrespectful athletes.

When I deal with parents of my athletes, it gives me the opportunity to say, "I know what you're going through. Your daughter may be the most respectful person at home. But you need to understand that she isn't being that here. Here's a letter explaining her

actions so that you can decide how respectful that behavior is"... I go back to that lesson in accountability with Mike, it has helped me to be a better coach. Sometimes, if an individual does not get called on disrespectful behavior, he or she will continue to do it.

In this way, Kate was able to help athletes think about respecting each other and her choices as the head coach of the team, and in turn, she was able to better understand their perspectives.

In the beginning of her university coaching career, Kate wanted athletes to work towards the highest level of competition that they were capable of achieving. However, she quickly learned that this was not necessarily respecting their choices and that not all athletes wanted to compete to a higher level.

In my first year coaching at the University, there was a talented young athlete and she was on the watch list for the national team program... I tried to work really hard with her to help her with those little things that would bring her to the next level. She just wasn't interested. There was this opportunity for her, but I had to realize that was a dream that I had, it wasn't a dream that she had... So, I learned to sit down at the start of the season with each athlete and ask, "what are your goals and where do you want to go with them?" It wasn't my way; it was the athlete's way. That was an adjustment for me to make.

Kate learned to respect athletes' personal choices for engaging in hockey. She eventually learned to ask her athletes their personal goals and level of commitment in order to respect their choices in regards to their athletic careers on her team.

From these experiences, Kate learned to listen to what the athletes wanted out of their sporting experiences and in turn ask them to reflect on their attitudes. She learned to respect

others' choices and ensure that they respect her choices as coach.

**The Coaching Action: Giving Playing Time to Athletes who Demonstrate Effort**

Kate coaches her athletes in a way that recognizes effort and hard work, not just skill. She does so by observing which athletes put extra effort into their training sessions and rewards these athletes for their hard work.

Hard working athletes catch my eye, and then after that it's talent as a next step. You know those hard working athletes are going to be better at the end of the year than when they came in. It's a bias I have. When I recruit, it is so obvious. I always look for effort.

Kate chooses which athletes to play during the games based on effort in practice.

Taking a look at our vision, with our three key words that we've been working with this season – effort, excellence, execution – it's always coming back to those pieces... For example, the expectation is that the athletes show up prepared for practice the same way they do for games. They come in and warm up, so that when we hit the ice, they're ready to play. And when the practice is over, there's an expectation that they do a cool down, which is a 10 to 15 minute cycle and then a stretch. So, if they are leaving the dressing room 15 minutes after practice, I ask, "excuse me, how did you do your 10 minute ride, stretch, and take all your gear off? Guess what, you're not done yet. But, if you're done, then we'll make an adjustment to this weekend's line up."

Kate feels that it is important to reward effort and penalize indolence even when this affects the team's competitive performance.

I look at why I'm hired – to coach and to win – 60/40% respectively. I look at all the things I have to do to coach, and realize that ultimately, I'm here to develop people.

We have athletes on the team who are not as skilled but they compete hard and practice hard... I'm not going to play only the more talented kids just so we can win games. It is a philosophical decision on my part.

The underlying value in this action is that of effort. Kate learned the value of effort and understands that this value plays an important role in her coaching philosophy. Below are a few experiences that helped Kate develop this value.

**The learning experiences.** Learning the value of effort began with experiences as a child. As previously mentioned, Kate's parents would take her to watch the local women's fastball games. Her parents would point out to Kate how hard the women practiced and how much effort they put into the game. Kate learned from watching others and from listening to her parents that effort was important.

When Kate tried out for the national hockey team, she was cut three times. Her parents asked about how much effort she had put into the tryouts. Kate noted that because she had worked hard in the tryouts, she was able to feel proud of herself despite not making the team.

Effort in competition, that is far more important than skill. I'll go back to my first experience trying out for the national team, and when I got cut, my mom and dad asked, "Did you have fun? How hard did you work? Are you proud of how hard you worked?" That's always what it came back down to... That is very much part of how I coach, and I would put that back to being an important piece learned from my parents. It's more about effort than just the skill itself. It helped me be a better athlete and a better coach.

Because of her parents' deep-seated value of effort, when Kate started coaching a university team, she immediately started to instill in her athletes a strong work ethic. She told

athletes that depending on the effort they devoted, they could change their starting positions on the team.

One year when we were going through try-outs, one athlete was on the bubble and she needed to show that she had the speed to take the puck to the net if she wanted to make the team. She had never got that message in her life before, but now she got it, and she worked on it, and she made the team. And when she made the team, she said, “ok, where do I fit?” And I said, “right now, you’re in the fourth line. You’ve made it but you have a lot of work to do.” She thought, “ok, I’m fourth line for the season.” But I explained, “Yes, you are currently fourth line but now you need to do the work to be where you want to be and where you can get to on this team.”

Kate valued effort because it gave her the capability to celebrate personal victories.

At the end of the day, it’s important that you put everything into it... There were years that we won silver, and other years that we lost gold. You know? Those are different feelings and life experiences in sport. I have to give a pat on the back to players and coaches who helped to guide me to understand those different concepts in applying effort and a strong work ethic.

From these experiences, Kate learned to give athletes playing time based on effort because her parents had strongly advocated this value and because she realized that athletes who worked hard could greatly improve their abilities and deserved to play more often.

### **Discussion**

As Kate was asked to talk about how she learned to coach, she explained and expanded on her current coaching practice that were analyzed in the form of five key actions. These included organizing the delivery of coach education programs for her athletes, creating Pump Up Partners to help athletes bond and give them social support, bringing in experts from

various domains to help her athletes develop holistically, asking athletes to reflect on their attitudes and goals, and giving athletes playing time based on hard work and effort. From Kate's five key coaching actions, we determined that her values include equity, connectedness, holistic development, respect, and effort. The coach confirmed that these are important values in her coaching practice and that they were learned from the experiences outlined in the results.

Coaching values may be learned in many social situations such as in school, sport participation, coach education courses, and through socialization on the job (Lyle, 2002). Kate's coaching values were developed from experiences that she had throughout her life: learning from her family, from what others' in sport had shown her, what she had personally experienced as an athlete and as a coach, and how she had perceived and reflected on those experiences. It was from a series of experiences that she developed her values, and those values were reinforced, put into action, and reflected upon. Jarvis (2009) noted that learning is lifelong and we learn core values in our early years. Indeed, Kate's early experiences contributed to developing key values which directly influenced her coaching approach. However, she continued to reflect on and refine her values in other learning situations throughout life, so that the importance of lifelong learning, and not simply childhood learning or adult learning is supported.

Jenkins (2010), in a critical review and discussion of the literature on coaching philosophies, noted that philosophies evolve over time and one of the key reasons why this happens appears to be the influence of background and educational experiences, and the coaches' level of self-awareness. We propose that this evolution is explained by understanding how coaches learn over their lifetimes from their experiences.

Some of Kate's values were fairly well established in her youth and seemed to drive her approach from the outset of her coaching career. For example, because she had a supportive environment in which to play hockey as a young girl, she learned that girls could play and coach hockey. However, when she was not allowed to play in some games on her youth hockey team, she felt strongly that this should not occur to other girls. Therefore, she coached girls' and women's teams and worked for Hockey Canada as manager for female hockey to promote the women's game and to help young female athletes love the sport of hockey.

However, some of Kate's values, while perhaps learned pre-consciously before she became a coach, were not apparent in her initial coaching actions. Certain coaching experiences did not sit well with her and upon reflection she changed her approach. Jarvis (2006) noted that individuals learn values pre-consciously and only become aware of how they affect behaviors once experiences are discussed or reflected upon. For example, Kate was not fully aware of the importance of connectedness or holistic development early on in her coaching career, but was concerned when athletes quit or burnt out. She reflected on how she could solve these problems, and recalled her own previous athletic experiences where she was supported by other athletes and by experts. From these experiences, she became aware of how she wanted to run her program as a coach. It is clear from this example that Kate's coaching actions evolved given her reflective nature. Essentially Kate's values did not change, but rather some of Kate's actions changed to align more closely with her values. Lyle (2002) stated that, "values are general conceptions about what individuals find important in their world and, although they can change over time, are quite stable" (p. 165). In this case, we see that many of the experiences that the coach described in learning

throughout her life influenced her coaching actions and there was a close alignment with her own values.

The coach in this study is a strong example of someone acting congruently with her values. Cassidy and colleagues (2009) suggested that coaches' actions and philosophies cannot and do not always match and that coaching philosophies have potential to be insincere statements that may fit the sport context but may be at odds with actual personal values. Lyle (2002) proposed that coaches may discuss values that they deem important in coaching, but that their coaching practices may not necessarily reflect these values. In this case study, Kate's stated coaching actions do align with her values. While we did not start with asking about her values, it is apparent that the coaching actions she spoke of as meaningful for her as a coach are driven by her core values.

Telfer (2010) suggested that there are key ethical principles or values that are fundamental to good coaching practice. These include doing good and not doing harm, autonomy, respect, and justice. In this article, we see that Kate did indeed value respect, justice (through equity and hard work), and doing good or not doing harm (through holistic development). However, she placed greater emphasis on connectedness than autonomy and worked to develop strong team cohesion with the PUPs program, as well as encouraging athletes to develop shared decision-making processes based on respect, and to rely on expert advice in educating themselves holistically. Gilligan's (1982) study on the moral development of women, and Miller's (1976) study on women's psychological states, both seminal research on women's development, maintained that women's identities often hinge on connection and collaboration, while western society focuses on individual achievement and personal autonomy. Women's interests in helping and caring are still predominant thirty

years later (Werthner, Culver, & Mercier, 2010). Perhaps, in a female team environment such as women's hockey, valuing connectedness ought to be prioritized.

Malloy and colleagues (2003) noted that, "sport is only one component in life, along with family, school, work, social relationships, and other leisure-time pursuits" (p. 133). According to these authors, devoting time to all areas of life helps individuals attain self-actualization and have a healthy view of winning and competition (Malloy et al., 2003). Indeed, Kate's actions, based on her values of holistic athlete development, respect, hard work, and connectedness, created an environment for her athletes where they could develop as healthy individuals as well as an effective team.

This study investigated the link between the development of coaching values and coaching actions in a novel way. However, there were limitations to this study. This was a case study involving only one coach. We wanted to develop an in-depth understanding of how one coach developed her values, and one should be careful in generalizing the results to others. Furthermore, the purpose was not to identify all of the coach's actions, but rather to look at what the coach recognized as meaningful coaching actions for her, and then explore what values underlay those actions and how those values were learned. While this inductive analysis was possible due to the extensive interviewing process, perhaps other actions and underlying values would have emerged with further interviewing. We also did not observe the coach to discover her coaching actions, but based this analysis on her stated actions. Finally, we did not ask the coach specifically about her philosophy. We do not know if she would have verbalized her coaching philosophy using these stated values although importantly, the coach did confirm the researchers' stated values to describe her actions and experiences.

## Conclusion

Cushion (2010) noted that the act of coaching cannot be value-free, and coaches' behaviors reflect deep-seated values. These values, Jarvis (2009) proposed, are developed throughout an individual's life. This study has shown that the coach's actions emerged and evolved through a process of developing values from a lifetime of experiences. The coaching actions were ones that she deemed meaningful in describing her current coaching approach.

Nash and colleagues (2008) suggested that developing a formal coaching philosophy may be too complex to include in initial level coach education courses. However, in this article, we demonstrate that the values that guide the coach's actions are values that the coach held as she entered into coaching. These values were reinforced depending on the experiences that the coach had. Therefore, even novice coaches may benefit from becoming aware of and articulating the values that they have already developed. Furthermore, through coaching experiences, coaches may change their philosophies (Jenkins, 2010), so that they should continue to reflect on their actions and discuss their values over time.

It may be difficult to verbalize values without first reflecting on and describing the experiences from which those values were developed and reinforced. Indeed, we are not necessarily conscious of developing specific values, because the process starts in childhood (Jarvis, 2009). Jenkins (2010) noted that an awareness of social expectations and personal values may help novice coaches. We agree and suggest that the contribution this article makes to the existing literature is as follows: If values develop throughout life, then coaches who reflect on their meaningful experiences and determine what they value may be in a better position to develop coaching actions suited for different situations that are guided more explicitly by those values. In order to become aware of their values, coaches should reflect on their actions within their social and coaching situations and begin to articulate the

underlying personal values so that they are not just creating a “tidy wish list or model for coaching” (Cassidy et al., 2009, p. 56), but a personally relevant, flexible philosophy based on real values that guide their actions.

#### Acknowledgements:

The researchers gratefully acknowledge financial assistance for this project from the following agencies: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and Sport Canada.

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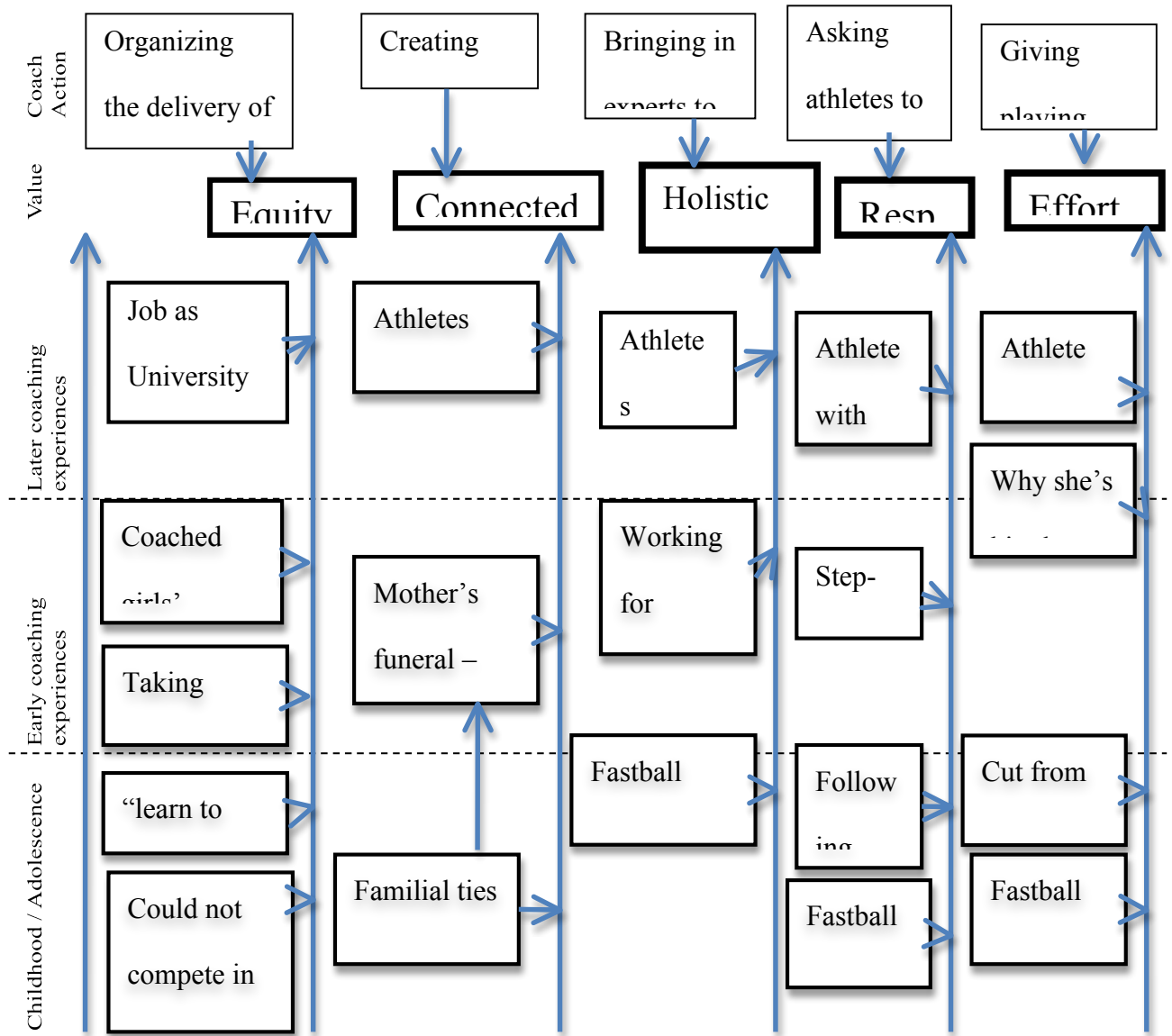


Figure 1. A time-oriented network of developing values.

**The lived experience of a doctoral student: The process of learning and becoming**

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**Abstract**

The PhD experience is often a transition from student to future faculty member, which involves considerable learning and development (Glaze, 2002; Hockey, 2004). Using a lifelong learning perspective (Jarvis, 2009), the purpose of this article is to explore, through a reflective self-study, my process of learning throughout the PhD degree. In this qualitative self-study, I kept a detailed personal, professional, and academic reflective journal over four years and used the journal entries as data to explore the process of learning. The results reveal my 'process of becoming', moving from a beginner PhD student to an aspiring professor and new mother. The results are discussed in light of how I learned during the four years of the PhD, and how my lifetime of previous experiences influenced the learning that occurred.

*Keywords:* learning, reflection, student, mother, coach, experience

The doctoral experience is a period of time when students learn about research, submit a dissertation with a rigorous methodology, and contribute to the literature in the field (Hockey, 2004). However, there is arguably more that is accomplished in this time. Doctoral students' experiences have often been researched in light of their transition into an academic career as a professor. However, not all students have such defined goals within their first year. The first year of the PhD has been described as the stage in which the students begin to identify with a new role (Braxton & Baird, 2001; Hockey, 2004; Viczko & Wright, 2010). Hockey (2004) noted that during the first year, students undergo the most difficulty due to major changes in their educational understandings and status. There are differences in academic demands, peer support, and social interactions with faculty. Some of the changes that have been noted as potentially problematic for doctoral students include: social isolation, time constraints, the need to take individual responsibility for work, the need to feel a sense of intellectual self worth, and the need to have a solid relationship with their supervisor, particularly in terms of mutually shared expectations (Hockey, 2004). While reading about these difficulties may help other doctoral students feel a sense of relief and communion, these issues must all be understood as differing in importance depending on the personal context of the student, which plays a major role in how well the student adjusts to the new status. The level of adjustment is also dependent on the student's biography when entering the PhD process, which, according to Hockey (2004), is idiosyncratic and complex.

Not all students necessarily start their doctorate program with the intent of becoming a professor. Sweitzer (2009) described two types of students. There are those who enter the program knowing that they want to get jobs as professors and publish in top-tier journals. They often describe academic relationships as the only important aspect of success. There are also those students who are more interested in individual development and learning. They

may begin to develop professional identities as future faculty members but do not necessarily fit the typical prototype of a graduate student striving towards becoming a professor by the end of their first year. The latter students identify relationships with faculty, peers, family, friends, and prior business associates as important to their learning and success (Sweitzer, 2009). Other research on doctoral students indicates that social contexts within and outside of the university environment, including relationships with supervisors, peers, family, friends, and business associates, may play an important part in their development (Devenish, Dyer, Jefferson, Lord, Leeuwen, & Fazakerley, 2009; Sweitzer, 2009). Therefore, it appears that students enter their PhD programs with varied expectations, and they develop through their social experiences while in the PhD programs. Indeed, Glaze (2002) suggested that the PhD experience is a period of considerable development and learning. However, it cannot be discounted that students' past experiences as well as their social context influence their development and learning during the PhD.

Jarvis (2006) proposed a theory of human learning as part of lifelong learning where individuals become more experienced as a result of engaging in social situations throughout life, the perceived content of which is integrated into their biographies. Using Jarvis' theory as a conceptual framework can help to understand how the social context and an individual's past experiences over the course of his or her lifetime influence the learning that occurs during the timeframe of the PhD.

The concept of biography is important for Jarvis (2006; 2009) and he defined it as "the outcome of a lifetime" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 73). He further explained that:

We are constructing our own biography whenever we learn – whilst we live our biography is an unfinished product constantly undergoing change and development –

either through experiences that we self-initiate or else through experiences which are initiated by others. (Jarvis, 2009, p. 25)

One's biography influences the way an experience is perceived and what an individual may choose to learn (Jarvis, 2006). We are *becoming* as long as we are learning according to Jarvis (2009) and the experience of starting, engaging in, and completing a doctorate is certainly a process of becoming: learning, changing, and reflecting (Devenish et al., 2009; Glaze, 2002; Sweitzer, 2009). While Jarvis' theory spans birth to death, he explained that mid-life learning is "a time of identity change which reflects both the changes in our lives and the processes of becoming" (p. 193). Throughout life, a person may have several roles (e.g. student, family member, friend, co-worker) but it is the whole person who learns (Jarvis, 2006). Therefore, the connections between the experiences within these different roles influence a person's learning.

Jarvis (2006, 2009) noted that an individual may learn by reflecting on information as it is presented in any given situation. Reflection "implies that we are questioning, in some way, the experience that we have had, whether that be receiving information, witnessing an event, seeking to solve a problem or experiencing some other phenomenon" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 99). Reflection may be analytical when it is a process of logically breaking down ideas and determining connections; it may be creative when it is a synthesis of thoughts that lead to a better understanding of an issue – this includes planning for the future; and it may be evaluative when it is a judgment of the meaning or relevance of an experience (Jarvis, 2009). Reflection invariably leads to a deeper understanding that enables individuals to make meaning of their experiences, change, and become more experienced (Jarvis, 2009; Moon, 1999).

Research involving the first-person reflection of the researcher on various life experiences can be a valuable source of insight into an individual's process of change (Guérin, Arcand, & Durand-Bush, 2010). Glaze (2002) noted the importance of documenting researchers' written reflections in the form of a diary or journal, in order to learn from the daily experiences of engaging in the process of completing a PhD. One way of explaining the process of becoming during the PhD experience is through a reflective study of the self. Lussier-Ley (2010) noted that a self-study provides rich and in-depth, subjectively lived findings on experiences that can enhance our understanding of multidimensional, complex, and social phenomena. The goal of any self-study is on developing awareness of oneself and one's development (Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy, & Stackman, 2003). Reflective self-studies have been reported mostly in teacher education literature through retrospective personal life histories as a means of exploring "who am I?" (Robertson, 2009). As Robertson explained, "The examination of self within a theoretical framework can provide insight into values, beliefs, and biases that underlie personal behaviour and inform individual professional practise and decision making." (p. 156).

Researching reflections written during the PhD program in a longitudinal self study could help to better understand students' processes of learning and becoming as unique due to their own biography, their social interactions and relationships, and the academic and non-academic environment in which they engage (Devenish et al., 2009; Hockey, 2004; Sweitzer, 2009). Shepherd (2004) suggested that reading a reflective journal enables individuals to understand how previous experiences guide what they do next. The purpose of this article is to explore, through a reflective self-study, my process of learning throughout the PhD degree, and how this learning is influenced by my lifetime of experiences to date. This article may serve as a guide for other doctoral students who are still deciding on their career goals

and whose life experiences will play a part in their learning process. It is hoped that this article will help them understand the importance of reflection in determining their courses of action. With this in mind, this article contributes to qualitative inquiry by providing an outline of a reflective self-study, so that future PhD students might use this as a flexible guide for their own learning and development. It is also hoped that the article provides qualitative researchers with a resource for writing self-studies and furthering reflective practice and development.

### **Methodology**

For this self-study, the first author is the participant and the results are displayed in the first person to better understand the analysis of the reflective journals. However, the second and third authors played an important part in creating this article, in solidifying thoughts, reflections, and arguments, and in helping the first author analyze and examine the data. As the experiences of the first author are important in understanding the context of the data, a brief summary of the first author's biography is presented (Jarvis, 2009), including important experiences relevant for this article. Then, the three phases of a self-study according to Louie et al. (2003) are presented in order to situate how the reflections were analyzed within a framework. Finally, the trustworthiness of this study is discussed.

### **Participant**

I am a 29-year old doctoral student in the fourth year of my PhD in Human Kinetics. This self-study spans the time frame of four years – my initial entry into the doctoral program; the four years of immersing myself in the literature on lifelong learning, coach learning, women in coaching, and qualitative methodologies; and collecting and analyzing data on five women coach participants. The doctoral research involved interviewing five coaches four times each, creating a narrative analysis of their lifelong learning from their

retrospective biographical interviews, and completing the data analysis in writing articles for the dissertation. Personally, I am married and gave birth to two children during my PhD.

During this time, I was also coaching alpine skiing, and had been for 13 years.

There were meaningful previous experiences that influenced how I perceived and learned from my experiences in my PhD program. My parents' actions unconsciously taught me numerous values that I carry into the actions and decisions I make as an adult. As avid alpine skiers, they first took me skiing when I was two years old. They enrolled me in the racing program when I was seven years old. They also believed in having well-rounded children, and so I was also enrolled in and encouraged to pursue whatever activities I enjoyed: skating, soccer, piano, gymnastics, swimming, art, and creative writing, to list a few. My parents both worked full time and they praised my scholastic success and my hard work ethic. I have an older sister who was passionate about music, and so I also loved music. I have a younger sister (seven years younger) whom I was always teaching – whether it was sports, school, or life skills. I learned to teach, mentor, and be a role model for her. As a child I always said that I wanted to be a teacher or a psychologist when I grew up. I developed a true passion for sports in high school, where I was on many of the school teams. I began coaching alpine skiing when I was 16 years old. In university, in addition to coaching, I began to teach coaches and facilitate entry-level certification courses. I completed a Bachelor of Science in Human Kinetics, where I learned about many topics related to coaching, and in particular I took an interest in sport psychology. I then completed a Master of Arts in Human Kinetics with a focus in sport psychology, and then I began my PhD in Human Kinetics in 2007. During these years, I learned a great deal that put me on my path in starting my PhD, and these experiences will be described in further detail in the results section.

## **Self-Study**

A reflective self-study (Louie et al., 2003; Lussier-Ley, 2010; Robertson, 2009), anchored by a constructivist paradigm was used to describe the process of becoming and the self-constructed nature of learning within a social context. I, the first author, documented learning from my life experiences in a journal, paying particular attention to changes that occurred within my life during the four years of my doctorate. I explored “who am I” based on what I had learned from my previous experiences when I started my doctorate, I documented experiences throughout the four years, and explored “who am I” at the end of the PhD program, with the understanding that I am not a finished product, but will continue to learn and become more experienced long after I have completed my doctorate.

Under my two advisors' guidance, I followed Louie and colleagues' (2003) three phases of the self-study methodology: The assessment phase, the implementation phase, and the dissemination phase. In the assessment phase, the researcher assesses his or her readiness to engage in an honest critique of him or herself. The researcher must be prepared to document his or her behaviours, cognitions, emotions, and attitudes, as well as contradictions that occur within these aspects (Louie et al., 2003). As well, the researcher must identify the purpose of the self-study and place it within a theoretical framework (Louie et al., 2003). In this case, Jarvis' (2006, 2009) theory of human learning was used to guide the relevance of my reflections in terms of the life experiences that influenced my lifelong learning process and more specifically, my studies.

In the implementation phase, Louie and colleagues (2003) noted that the researcher collects data on him or herself. Depending on the method (usually some form of narrative inquiry, in this case journaling and interviewing), the self-study might explore sensitive issues that are difficult to discover because they require the researcher to question deeply

held beliefs (Louie et al., 2003). The journal became the data for this article, delineating my changes and developments in learning throughout the four years of my PhD. Furthermore, in collecting data, the researcher must articulate beliefs, meanings, and intentions, and continually engage in a process of self-understanding based on new experiences that occur. Trusted colleagues can help the researcher to draw out and critically reflect on what he or she means (Louie et al., 2003). In this case, I kept a detailed journal of my thoughts, emotions, and actions throughout the four years of my PhD, including academic endeavors, such as readings, projects and ongoing discussions with my two advisors, and non-academic endeavors, such as my family life and ski coaching experiences. These reflections were analyzed by choosing the relevant reflections that influenced my learning process and guided me towards becoming an aspiring professor.

Finally, in the dissemination phase, Louie and colleagues (2003) suggested that the researcher articulates the findings of the self-study to others, and clearly identifies how the results contribute to the academic discourse. In this case, this article serves as the dissemination phase of my own learning. At the same time, by including my own experiences in disseminating my research findings, other graduate students may better understand the process, learning, and emotions that encompass the lengthy PhD research process.

### **Trustworthiness**

Through case studies, the researcher can be considered trustworthy in writing results because she becomes personally knowledgeable about the case and the context (Stake, 1994). In a self-study, the researcher herself is in fact the case under study. Therefore it must be noted that my personal meanings are subjectively stated in this article, so that the relativist nature of learning, experience, and meaning must be kept in the forefront of the reader's

understanding of this case (Jarvis, 2006; Stake, 1994). Furthermore, trustworthiness was enhanced by providing descriptive and context-rich reflections of my experiences in the journal entries (Polkinghorne, 1995).

## **Results**

For my dissertation research, I developed a plan to study the biographies of women coaches in order to explore how they learned to coach. This was an area of interest to me because I was a female alpine ski coach. As I was using Jarvis' (2006; 2007; 2009) lifelong learning theory as a framework, in discussions with my advisors, we determined that an autobiographical analysis of my own learning throughout the four years of my doctorate, as a student, coach, and family member, and as influenced by my previous experiences, would be a natural addition to my research on women coaches and their process of learning. Perhaps other graduate students will find relevance in my reflections on the learning process throughout the doctoral degree and understand how they might embark on their own self-reflective process.

### **The Assessment Phase**

Following Louie et al.'s (2003) three phases, I first present results about the assessment phase. I critique my own actions and thoughts according to Jarvis' theory in which one's biography, composed of learned material from previous experiences, influences actions and decisions in subsequent experiences. Three important areas in my life include coaching, school, and my family life. Then, as Louie et al. (2003) suggest, I assess my readiness to engage in a self-study on my process of learning.

**Assessing my biography as I entered the PhD program.** In the years before the start of my doctoral degree, I was at what I now see as the pinnacle of my alpine ski coaching career. I was receiving funding to coach at the World University Games, to

complete my high performance coaching diploma from the National Coaching Institute, to work with the Canadian Alpine Ski Team at several camps, and to study coaching in academia. I had worked with the World Cup team from Argentina in the summer prior to the 2006 Olympic Games, and I was winning awards for coaching at the development level. I had taken a job as a coach for an elite team in the region. At this point, my career goal was to coach high performance athletes in alpine ski racing.

I loved coaching but it was not without difficulties. I encountered jealous coaches; gender-based discrimination and comments from athletes and trainers regarding the need for, but lack of, opportunity and proper support for women in coaching at the national team level. I was aware of the barriers that women coaches faced my own experiences as a woman coach and from reading research on the topic through my studies at the university, and I was aware of the time and focus required to coach from my coaching experiences and from my undergraduate courses in coaching and Human Kinetics.

At the same time as coaching, I completed a master's degree in Human Kinetics, conducting an intervention study in which I acted as a consultant helping a coach to develop awareness of how his athletes wanted to feel to perform well and the strategies that allowed them to feel that way. I had enjoyed the research process and wanted to continue to research coaches' experiences. Because of my own experiences as a woman coach who felt ready to coach at the national level but encountered many difficulties in doing so, I decided to research women coaches who had successfully established careers in coaching.

Finally, on the personal front, in the fall of my first year of my PhD, my husband and I got a puppy and we were in the process of moving into our first home. During the year, I realized that I enjoyed being at home with my family in our new "nest".

**Assessing my readiness to document the process of learning.** In the first semester of my doctorate, I took a PhD course, designed to develop reflective skills, in which I was required to keep a journal of my reflections on the material I was reading to understand more about the topic that I wanted to study. The journal was also meant to help new doctoral students document our journey in the PhD program, develop an understanding of what we wanted to study, and determine how we would go about our research. I read an article on the use of a reflective diary during the PhD process. On 09-12-07, I reflected on the article.

I determined that writing in a journal is a way for the doctoral student to express ideas and emotions coming from whatever she is doing... Through the reading, I thought of ways that I could protect myself from certain things, or grow from others. For instance, I know how to protect myself from being constantly tired... My home life, buying a house, getting it to feel like mine, spending time with my husband, dreaming about the future and the not so distant future, all these things help me to relax. While not necessarily relaxing, they offer a complete release from other activities, and take my thoughts away from all else. This is so important in order to find balance when completing a PhD.

At the same time, I started to read Jarvis' (2006) theory of human learning, a book that my advisors thought could be an appropriate conceptual framework for my dissertation. Of course, in the beginning, I did not have a firm research purpose or question, and so I read a great deal of research on coaching, women coaches, and qualitative methodologies in addition to considering whether Jarvis' theory was in line with my own research interests. As my work evolved and I began to solidify what I would research, with my two supervisors, we began to think that including reflections on my own process of learning could be important.

Although I had only a superficial understanding of Jarvis' theory of human learning, it made sense to me. I immediately agreed with his explanation of how previous experiences influence how one learns in new situations. His theory seemed to me to be quite comprehensive because it included so much of the learning that occurs in informal situations with or without conscious deliberation. While reading the book, I began to reflect back on the many experiences I deemed meaningful in becoming the person I was, including my values of well-roundedness and therefore my interests in pursuing and excelling in not only a coaching career, but also an academic one, as well as a family life.

### **The Implementation Phase**

From Louie et al.'s (2003) recommendations for the implementation phase, I kept an ongoing learning journal throughout four years, reflecting on my experiences in academia, on my on-going coaching, and on my personal life. In my journal, I wrote about experiences and reflections that stemmed from interactions and discussions with fellow students, professors, family, colleagues, and the participants in my dissertation study. My experiences in these situations, perceived through the lens of my own biography, influenced what I learned. Therefore, in the beginning of my PhD, with my coaching career on such a high, I reflected on and questioned my interests in coaching.

**Reflections while becoming aware of my beliefs about pursuing a career in coaching.** As I moved through my first two semesters, I began to question my deeply held beliefs about what pursuing a career in coaching meant to me. I documented those thoughts and feelings in my journal. On 09-17-07, I wrote:

When I coach, I think of nothing else. I wonder why I go to school. But there are so many unknowns in coaching. My job is in large part dependent on others. I don't know if I will ultimately succeed in coaching World Cup because I may get held

back. I know that I am a great coach. My athletes know it too... I feel confident in myself... But, when others don't have confidence in me, despite my own confidence, I doubt myself. At school, my success is dependent on myself. I choose when I complete things, how well they get done, etc. Coaching is different. These unknowns frighten me, worry me, keep me with one hand in the academic pocket. I know I will be safe if I keep a hold on it.

Not only did I feel conflict in thinking about choosing between coaching and school, but I also felt conflicted as a coach and as a wife. I saw that in alpine skiing, the World Cup coaches had a hard time finding balance between their careers and their personal lives. On 09-17-07, I continued to write:

If I coached World Cup, always nagging in my mind is the idea that I would be on the road nine months of the year. Tom (my husband) encourages me to go for this, he knows the time restraints, he wants to travel along. But, it would be difficult... My biggest worry would be that I would miss Tom and I would miss home. Then, I think of an even bigger worry: I want to have children. Yes, I know, I'm young, I have lots of time. But, I don't want time. I want to have children young. I want them to be part of my life while I'm young.

These reflections articulated my concerns. They helped me to realize how I had learned from my experiences as a wife that I wanted the stability of a home life. For me, this explained why I was not pursuing coaching whole-heartedly, but rather continuing to engage in my formal education, which kept me home.

**Reflections while becoming a new PhD student.** In my doctoral classes, I began to think about what theoretical framework I wanted to use. I wrote:

We talked about theories versus conceptual frameworks and I wondered how one goes about finding a theory... I wondered whether it is possible to take a new theoretical framework rather than one that has been already used in coaching research.

Throughout the year, as I read deeper on Jarvis' view of lifelong learning, I began to really appreciate his comprehensive theory of learning and its relationship to the many experiences we have throughout life because I reflected on the interconnectedness of my own experiences in coaching, as a student, and with my family. I was learning about how much these experiences were related in my path to becoming the person I was. Jarvis' theory helped me to reflect on my conflicting feelings of pursuing a career in sport coaching. On 06-12-08, I wrote:

There is something seriously flawed in the coaching system. According to Jarvis (and my own personal view), many interconnected life experiences are part of the process of learning. Therefore, I could argue that family life and the experiences outside of coaching greatly enhance a coach's understanding of the athletes and life in general. However, as I read articles on coaching and reflect on my experiences, I see that the nature of elite coaching jobs is one that does not appreciate the learning one may have from other parts of life, and indeed, it appears that alpine ski coaches must choose to coach at the expense of family, friends, and a normal life.

While I had made the link between the coaching literature and my own coaching experiences, I noted that the literature on the experiences of PhD students also seemed to reflect a narrow account of learning from a variety of life experiences. After reading a report by Golde and Dore (2001) regarding the ever-increasing number of graduate students and their haphazard release onto the job markets, on 09-18-08 I reflected:

I felt satisfied that the article showed that PhD students were not necessarily equipped to go out into the job market because they had few life experiences that readied them for this next step. In fact, this strengthened my belief of the importance of having varied life experiences and jobs that would help doctoral students learn from the “real world” outside of being a student. I think I have learned from many of my life experiences. For instance, I think coaching has helped me learn to teach and lead. I want to continue having varied life experiences throughout my PhD because I know that I need to grow as an entire person, not only to feel the way I want to feel and set myself up in the future, but also do to so for the present. I must keep in mind what I love to do to keep myself happy, and this includes school, coaching, and family life. It means keeping busy, learning, teaching, being stimulated and challenged, and taking time to relax... This enables me to be successful (especially as I define it!).

My assumption of the importance of learning from a variety of experiences in order to coach or teach more effectively was further flushed out in a bracketing interview that I completed before my thesis proposal. Two doctoral students conducted the interview, with my advisor and another professor asking probing questions. This interview helped me to understand my assumptions, my biases, and my emotions around coaching. To me, it became clearer that Jarvis' theory of human learning was an apt framework for me to use in my dissertation because it fit well with a way to explore, in-depth, women coaches learning experiences and also my notion that experiences throughout life influenced coach learning and development. On 11-03-08, I reflected on my bracketing interview that I had just transcribed and noted my bias in researching coach learning:

According to Jarvis, life experiences are important to the way that people learn. But I feel like the coaching community wants me to stifle my broader life experiences in

order to coach, and I question, is that healthy to elite athlete development and is that healthy for me as a coach? In my experience, I do not think so. Perhaps it is what is needed at that level. But I don't know. If I lay groundwork in my research to show that life experiences contribute to how coaches learn, stay in coaching, and improve as a coach thereby helping athletes develop, then this could really change the path for elite coach development. I know this is my biased opinion, but it is just a personal interest of mine as I conduct my research.

I felt good about this reflection because I began to think that my research could be a useful contribution to the field.

Nonetheless, keeping this balance of having and learning from varied life experiences was not always easy when attempting to excel in the doctoral program. In my third semester, I decided to stop coaching at a high performance level and coach instead at the development level, which required less of a time commitment so that I could focus on school. It was the summer, and so I was not currently coaching as I had developing athletes who typically do not go to ski camps in the summer. I was preparing for and taking my comprehensive exams. I felt stressed because I felt as though I was engaged in mainly one type of learning situation to the exclusion of others. On 08-11-08 I wrote:

All I am doing is school related. I feel like I don't have time to do any other activities. I don't have time for all the things that bring me joy and that help me to balance all that I do so that I get the most joy out of each part of my life. Right now, it's school, school, school, so that I no longer am enjoying it, but it's all I can think about. My head hurts.

While I was seemingly not enjoying my PhD experience at that time, I was able to reflect that I felt dissatisfied simply because I was unable to learn from the balance of life experiences that I deemed so important for my own well-being.

**Reflections while becoming a mother.** On 09-21-08, I found myself reflecting on what I wanted in life. I loved coaching, but I wanted more – I wanted a child. I felt that both would not be possible. “When I coach, I am often away... I think that I’m learning what is most important to me at this stage, and it’s not coaching... I’m changing. I’m learning that what I want is to start my family.” As previously mentioned, I did not return to the elite team I was coaching the next year. Instead, I continued my studies, completed my comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal, and became pregnant.

By December 2009, I had a six-month old daughter, I was almost half way through my PhD, and I was still coaching, but simply as a substitute coach at a ski club on the weekends. In becoming a mother, I learned that I could be a mother and a coach, but I was coaching at a different level than before. On 12-03-10, I wrote:

From my perceptions of interactions with other ski coaches, I had learned that truly being a “coach” meant I had to work full time with elite athletes. But now I see that I am still a coach, even if I only coach on some weekends with kids! I used to think that coaches needed to focus only on coaching to be considered successful. I felt stressed because I wanted to have a family, do my PhD, and coach. But in interviewing my participants, I have come to realize that these coaches are successful because they help athletes and live their life, which includes other experiences besides just coaching!

The coaches in my dissertation discussed their life experiences, how they had learned from these experiences, and how the experiences had influenced their approaches to working

with their athletes. On 05-15-10, I reflected on how my participants' stories were contributing to my own learning. One participant told me about how the interviews had helped her develop an awareness of how the different experiences in her life (e.g. coaching athletes; her relationship with her husband, children, and parents; her childhood and athletic experiences) had influenced who she was. I wrote:

I have started to realize that this research is cathartic to me because I am discovering that there are many experiences in one's life that help coaches learn to become coaches and remain in this career. These full time coaches do not just coach but have other things happening in their lives that indeed impact their coaching (often for the better). This includes having children and learning from them!

I realized that I wanted a career where my life experiences, including the experiences on the job, my education, my family life, and all my other experiences were valued in helping me to continue to learn and develop within that career.

**Reflections while becoming an aspiring professor.** By 05-19-10, I had conducted the majority of my interviews with the women coaches from my study. The PhD work had become more and more rewarding because I was fascinated in the data I collected and reveled in the analysis. Additionally, I had created a work/life balance by deciding to coach on a part-time basis with developing athletes and by spending time with my growing family. I reflected on a career change that I was developing because of my interest in research.

I want to be a professor. I can continuously learn, I can teach, I can mentor, I can help others find their dreams, I can make a difference. These are all characteristics that I loved about a coaching job too. However, I am not pursuing coaching at the World Cup level anymore because I no longer want to. I feel that it is too constricting in terms of the types of experiences that I am able to have.

Through the interviews with my participants, my own reflections and journaling, and my discussions with others about my research, I was beginning to personally learn, in greater detail, how priorities and interests played an important role in determining what people chose to learn and the decisions that they made. On 09-21-10, I wrote:

After doing these interviews with my participants and seeing these successful women coaches pursue their careers despite different barriers that they were up against, I can see how much it is dependent on the individual's perceptions of the situations that they are in and the decisions they make.

I noted that my own change in career goals from high performance coach to aspiring professor was in large part due to my own changing interests and priorities.

My change in career goals was still sometimes difficult to accept. On 05-30-10, I reflected:

Last week, in interviewing one of my participants, she explained that she never fully left the sport throughout her life. When she did not coach, she was still paddling as a master's athlete or volunteering. She said, "it's different than you because you left it all together." I said no, but smiled thinking about how I had left high performance coaching, and said yes. I was a bit furious with myself because no, I haven't ever left skiing, nor do I think I will. This winter I still free skied once or twice per week and I was substitute coaching, I gave courses to teach and certify coaches, not to mention the research I'm doing! That's not leaving the sport. I was a bit annoyed at my participant for making that assumption, but I did not show it and shrugged it off, thinking that she did not mean to make me feel bad. But it felt like she punched me.

At other times, becoming a professor instead of a high performance coach seemed like the best idea.

I find genuine pleasure in explaining what I read from various different points of view to my advisors in our bi-weekly meetings, and although it's "geeky", I really enjoy creating power point presentations to better get these points across. I have started to give other students advice on how to prepare for their comprehensive exams and I really like to help edit their papers. I think I will enjoy being a supervisor. I find it rewarding to use the knowledge that I have acquired in helping other students clarify their thoughts.

At this point, I was starting to feel a sincere change in my position as a student from learning as much as possible from others to engaging in debate and teaching others. I learned that I enjoyed the work of being a researcher and a teacher.

In the third year of my PhD, we started weekly meetings with a "Coaching Research Group" and sub-group, comprised of professors and students studying coach learning and development. In these meetings, we would discuss articles in coaching science, read articles that we were preparing for publication, and debate coaching education and learning initiatives. I felt that my comments on the readings were sought out and debated. I always attended the meetings because I felt that there was always more to learn about the topic and I enjoyed reflecting with others on the process of coaching, regardless of the specific topic therein. Furthermore, some of the master's and other PhD students told me that they appreciated reading my manuscripts and asking for my point of view, because, as one master's student wrote in an email to me "(your material) always makes a lot of sense and tends to clarify some things for me!"

In my fourth year, I was given the opportunity to teach an undergraduate course in sport psychology at the university, which played a deciding role in my move toward a career in academia. On 02-26-11, I wrote:

I *love* teaching! I feel the thrill of giving information to one hundred students, of seeing their interest and motivation grow through classes designed to help them become whatever they want, and feel the high level of activation, enthusiasm, and yet harmony of being in front of the class. I perform well. I derive reward and pleasure from doing so. I also love exploring topics through research. Plus, I can pursue this career and have a family life, and continue to coach developing athletes. What could be better?

### **The Dissemination Phase**

From Louie's et al.'s (2003) recommendations for the dissemination of a self-study, I wrote this article. Part of the self-study includes learning from the process of trying to publish my dissertation research and learning from disseminating the findings of this article. In the final year of my doctorate, I wrote articles from my dissertation and began to send them to various journals for review. Finding the topics of the articles and analyzing the data to produce the results section was fun and relatively easy. However, I found the editing process between my advisors and myself was a long process requiring much critical thought. On 06-11-11, I wrote:

I acknowledge that my advisors' comments and suggestions enhance the quality, thoroughness, and coherence of the articles, but it also seems like the articles change so much from the start of the editing process to the end, that they often do not have the same purpose or flavour. That is part of the co-construction process in having co-authors, and it's also the process of letting go of some of my control over my project I suppose... I am very satisfied with the final product that is ready to go to the publishers.

My supervisors played an integral role in helping me throughout the four years in the process of understanding how to go about synthesizing data and co-constructing articles. This was a hard process in the beginning because I was not aware of how many versions would be necessary but ultimately this process also gave me a sound understanding of how to write articles for peer-review. In the articles, I was able to articulate the findings of my research, and advance our understanding of the process of learning. The process in getting the articles published was sometimes long, and often requiring multiple revisions. I did not mind the revision process because it helped me think about what I was really trying to articulate. Furthermore, it was good practice in helping me understand how to accept changes or defend my point, as I will do in my dissertation defense. However, when I sent an article from my dissertation to a peer-reviewed journal, which, after three rounds of revisions was rejected, I felt quite frustrated. On 06-15-11, I reflected:

From my previous publications, I know that it feels so good to (a) finish writing the first draft of an article; then (b) send in the article for review to a journal; and then (c) have the article published. The many versions and edits in between become long, difficult, and often frustrating. When (c) does not happen, well, that's annoying. I see some of the work that gets published and I wonder how on earth mine is rejected! I have done a sound research project and have thoroughly written the article with two well-published individuals (my advisors). However, after seven months of going back and forth with the reviewers, it is not accepted. It feels like a waste of time... Now I need to re-submit somewhere else and start this process all over again.

I learned first-hand the frustrations of the world of publishing, and began to understand the time commitment that such a process entails. To lift my spirits, I thought about how far I had

come in my understanding of the writing process and told myself that it would eventually feel great to get work published.

I also learned to take the process of completing a PhD in stride. The birth of my second daughter in the final period of my PhD became a cause of stress as I anticipated how long it would take for the editing process of the dissertation, and began to worry that I would not finish according to my timeline. I finished writing the entire dissertation, but I was still stressed that the revisions back and forth between my advisors and myself would take too much time. In my last month of pregnancy, I noted spikes in my blood pressure due to my stress. For a couple of weeks, I felt unable to control these spikes, yet I understood that the pressure was self-imposed. Finally, upon reflection, I was able to gain a better perspective of my life. I knew I needed to control my blood pressure for my baby's well-being, and I became aware that I had done what I could do and that I needed to be happy with what I had accomplished. Learning about my stress, my priorities, and my perspective on the PhD, on family, and on life gave me awareness of how my experiences tie together, emotionally, cognitively, and physically, and finding a solution in terms of my own acceptance of my position was a huge sense of relief. I felt a sense of restoration and harmony.

Finally, I gave a draft version of this article to my Coaching Research Group. It was September, and there were several new graduate students in the group. I felt vulnerable discussing this article because of its personal nature. However, the students noted how useful they found this article as new graduate students. They said it was inspiring, and helped them understand how they too could get through the graduate experience successfully. They noted how the article helped them become aware of the importance of reflection on their experiences to glean out lessons learned. I felt gratified because ultimately I wanted to provide others with a lived experience of learning to understand how the doctoral experience,

with all the other life experiences that happen previously and concurrently, effectuate change in an individual. I noted that in general, the research, learning, and teaching process of engaging in a PhD was one that I felt was fulfilling and rewarding in my life, and I looked forward to continuing this process as a faculty member.

### **Discussion**

In the journal entries, it is clear that the research I chose to pursue and what I learned in my PhD experiences was greatly influenced by both my previous experiences before entering the PhD program and my experiences from the various roles I played during the four years, including my roles as a coach, as a student, and as a mother. Over the course of my four years as a PhD student, I moved from a high performance coach and a beginning PhD student to becoming an aspiring professor, a mother, and a part-time coach.

The research on students engaged in a PhD predominantly focuses on their social experiences within the academic environment (Braxton & Baird, 2001; Sweitzer, 2009). Braxton and Baird (2001) contended that PhD students have different demands and different relationships with faculty and other students as they move through three stages of a PhD: the beginning, e.g. the first year; the middle; and the dissertation stage (Braxton & Baird, 2001). My supervisors, my peers, and the Coaching Research Group at my university, played a part in supporting and advising me throughout the four years in which I felt a change from my first year exploring my interests as a coach and developing my role as a PhD student to my final year as a new mother and aspiring professor. As I progressed through these phases, as mentioned by Braxton and Baird, I began to take on a position in which I played a greater role in mentoring and advising other students, much like a professor would do.

In my third year, my understanding of what it meant to be a professor was starting to become clearer as I had the opportunity to mentor other students and as my comprehension

of the research process advanced. Hall (1968) noted that PhD candidates begin to perceive themselves as being more similar to professors in terms of intellectual competence as they progress through the program. However, it was only when I had the experience of teaching a course and being dubbed a part-time professor that my interest in becoming a professor was confirmed. Jarvis (2006), in asking nurses about their learning, found that the nurses could be taught to perform their role, but had to learn to feel like nurses through their experiences. As Jarvis (2009) noted:

We can see that we learn social identities through a combination of processes: there is external ascription and then internal realisation of the way that we perform our roles.

However, we do not identify with our roles until we have learned to combine both the internal and the external. (p. 204)

I learned to feel like a professor when teaching the undergraduate course, and I learned that I very much enjoyed this job. My career path and biography changed based on these experiences within the academic environment.

I not only learned in my scholastic experiences throughout the four years, but I also learned in other roles that influenced my choices, decisions, and learning as a student. Throughout my journal entries, I reflected on learning from connections of life experiences in different roles instead of focusing on learning solely as a student, which reflects Sweitzer's (2009) typology of the student that engages in graduate studies for individual development and who learns from relationships with a number of different individuals in and out of the academic environment. Indeed, the experiences of this type of student are less often studied and not as well understood (Sweitzer, 2009). Family members, such as my husband and daughters played a part in influencing my choices and priorities. While there is a dearth of literature on the combined roles of graduate student and mother (Lynch, 2008),

Pare (2010) noted that student-mothers prioritize motherhood and often experience a lack of support in the family and at the university. There are many institutional and personal factors that may help ease this dual role (Lynch, 2008), but that discussion is beyond the scope of this article. Indeed, in my experience, I was blessed with a great family and scholarly support system. Suffice it to say that I prioritized motherhood to the extent of declining high performance coaching positions in which the travel schedule would be hectic, and this helped to push me in the direction of engaging more fully as a student. From there, I developed an interest in becoming a university professor.

Clearly, I learned in different experiences throughout the four years of my doctorate, and not only in academic experiences. However, while the timeframe for the journal entries was limited to four years, what was learned in all these situations was influenced by my previous experiences prior to starting the PhD program. As previously mentioned, I learned to feel like a professor by teaching my first undergraduate course, but my comfort level and enjoyment of teaching the course can only be explained by considering my previous experiences. I believe that my experiences teaching my sister when I was younger, coaching high performance athletes, and learning and applying the concepts in sport psychology through my master's intervention research project enabled me to feel confident and ready to teach this course. Research has shown that new faculty members making the transition from learner to teacher may experience an "imposter syndrome" due to feeling like a fraud or feeling incompetent in teaching undergraduate students (Cohen, Morgan, DiLillo, & Flores, 2003); however, I did not feel like an imposter when I finally taught the course in sport psychology because I had many previous experiences that gave me the knowledge and understanding of how to teach and guide a group of young adults.

## Conclusion

This research is informed by Jarvis' (2006; 2009) theory of lifelong learning, which denotes the importance of learning throughout the lifespan. The process of learning throughout life was explored with the participants of my doctoral research study, but was also highlighted in my own reflections. Jarvis (2006) noted that an individual perceives a situation in a particular manner based on what he or she has learned in previous experiences, and so one must look deeper than simply what was learned in the PhD program to understand the transition from student to aspiring professor. The time in undertaking a PhD has been described as a transition period from student to professor (Hall, 1968; Sweitzer, 2009), and it is an important time for reflection on change, development, and identity creation (Glaze, 2002). However, this reflection should arguably cover more than academic experiences over four years. Since my interest in becoming a professor started during my PhD program, one could argue that my academic experiences during the PhD are the reason for my career path choice, but this is not the case – my movement towards becoming an aspiring professor was influenced by many life-long and life-wide experiences. Indeed, it may be problematic for students to limit their reflections to their academic experiences in exploring their process of learning to become aspiring professors or other professionals. We argue that if doctorate students focus their reflections only on academic experiences, then they may not fully understand their career aspirations. Instead, the use of journaling on different life experiences that occur concurrently throughout the years in which one is engaged in a PhD, along with reflections of past experiences could be important. Such a journal may be a warranted inclusion in any researchers' methodological and development toolkit.

Moon (2006) noted that learning journals have been used in many higher education institutions as ways of helping students reflect on their learning experiences in relation to

future planning and career development. Indeed, in writing reflections throughout the four years, and in particular, in analyzing those reflections while writing this self-study, I have gained an awareness and learned just how much my previous experiences, from the time I was a child, and my more current experiences in these past four years, have influenced my chosen career path, as well as how career paths change over time due to life experiences. Moon suggested that individuals can further learn by going back over their written reflections and expanding on ideas or seeing linkages. In the process of writing this self-study, links between my experiences were recognized and made explicit through the compilation of journal entries so that the process of learning from my various experiences was clarified for myself and for others. The students in the Coaching Research Group were also able to relate the article to their own experiences and note how important reflection is in the process of engaging in graduate studies, which can have such a profound influence on an individual. With this in mind, we urge graduate students to keep a journal of reflections within and outside of academia, and to review these reflections to deepen their learning process.

In this self-study, I explored my process of learning throughout the PhD degree, and how this learning was influenced by my lifetime of experiences in previous situations and in various roles. I was able to critically reflect on my process of learning and becoming as a result of a mix of experiences in life, including the academic environment, family, and coaching. Jarvis (2009) explained that reflecting on oneself and on one's actions is a way of knowing about oneself, of articulating intentions, and asserting oneself. "The wider our experience of life and the more we learn to reflect on it and not take it for granted, the more we learn and the more we become whole people" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 50). Indeed, through

writing personal reflections on my life experiences, I learned about my interests, my priorities, my career aspirations, and myself. In doing so, my biography changed.

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**RESEARCH NOTE**

**ETHICAL ISSUES IN NARRATIVE RESEARCH**

### **Research Note: Ethical Issues in Narrative Research**

This research note was created based on the information garnered in talking to my participants about their transcripts and about the analysis of the data that was structured into a narrative. In the member checking process, the participants talked about specific issues relevant to constructivist and narrative research that I deemed important to add to the results section of this dissertation. Creswell (2007) noted that narrative research can be challenging since important questions arise in the data collection and analysis, including “who owns the story?” and “who can change it?” Indeed, researchers must acknowledge the constructive contributions that they make, and note that the narrative is a result of interactions between the researcher and participant (Polkinghorne, 1995). The purpose of this research note is to describe three ethical questions that were considered in collecting and analyzing the data from my five participants. The questions include: Did I create results? Are the narratives a realistic representation of the participants' life experiences? Who is the author of the narratives? In the following quotes, it is possible to see the exchange of ideas between the participants and myself, as the researcher, so that my own place in the research is further clarified.

#### **Did I create results?**

Polkinghorne (2005) noted, “The presence and variety of questions posed by the researcher affect a participant's recall, and thus, the produced account is sometimes referred to as a cocreation.” (p. 143). In this case, the questions that I asked may have guided the participants to reflect on their learning experiences throughout life as being interconnected. For example, in the third interview with Sheilagh, I was excited by “perfect” quotes that were in alignment with my own views of coaching and with Jarvis' framework of human learning. Sheilagh said:

Reading our transcripts has been really good for me to reflect. Last night I sat down to read through our last interview. You think of your life in parts – there's your family life, there's your childhood, there's your coaching. You think of them in sections, but they're really not. Everything is one whole thing that makes you.

Reading through and talking about when I skated, my relationship with my father, my sisters, my kids, my husband, coaching, it just sort of made me realize that it's all me. All these things that are really separate, they all make up my life. It's been interesting for me to think about it that way... All these parts are integrated... It's a pretty good life... You've helped me reflect on that, and that's been really nice. Thank you!

I wanted to ensure I was properly writing someone else's story, being transparent with my own assumptions, and not imposing them on the participants' stories. I started to wonder if I was asking Sheilagh questions that led her to tell me what I wanted to hear. In my journal entry on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010, I wrote:

The first article that I am working on is about learning situations experienced in childhood and how these experiences affect how these women coaches coached. Because of my framework, I asked questions about their lives outside of or before they started coaching, and now I am writing that I found that what is learned outside of coaching or before they started coaching affects their coaching approach... Did I "create" this information by asking the certain questions? I suppose they always could have said "no, I did not learn anything applicable from my parents."

These fears were allayed when I emailed Sheilagh while writing my article to determine why I did not have information about her schooling experiences. She wrote back that no particular schooling experiences stood out as important. It was then that I realized that in our series of four in-depth interviews, the participants and I discussed experiences that the participants'

found relevant, significant, and meaningful to their learning. Therefore, it was the participants who chose what learning experiences to share, and I helped them bring these stories to the forefront based on my questions and probes.

**Are the narratives a realistic representation of the participants' life experiences?**

Researchers must be careful to clearly convey the participants' intentions and they need to be sensitive about any alternative interpretations that might be perceived through their writing (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). The participants are vulnerable when they divulge their stories, and must develop a sense of trust that the researcher respects them and treats them fairly in the presentation (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). All five participants agreed that the narratives were proper interpretations of their learning experiences throughout life. The comments from each participant regarding the narratives are described below. In my fourth interview with Sheilagh, we discussed whether the narrative analysis was a realistic representation of her learning. She said:

The narrative is very good. It's interesting to sit and read it. I think you really hit my progressions and how things evolved for me as a coach. It's pretty accurate. I look back at when I was younger and realize what I was like and how I've evolved into a different coach over the years. In some ways I've changed, and in other ways I'm the same... I love how you use the terminology and put it back into different parts of my life. It's really interesting for me to read that... We talked about so many things, and the things that you pulled out really are key points. I think that makes it for me, the fact that you were able to pull those key points out from the many things that we discussed is perceptive on your part.

Likewise, in Shelley's fourth interview, she also said that her narrative was a sound reconstruction of her lifelong learning.

Shelley- There are some really interesting pieces now that I look back and see it in print. Some pieces about sport and my parents. It is like a diary in a sense – but written in the third person. It was a good learning experience. Another experience for me to reflect on who I am and what I do.

Bettina- When you say that it's like a diary – for me, in presenting this to you and in writing this, I was trying to put myself in your shoes to see what it would be like to read something like this written about me. I want to make sure that I capture it properly and that it's the way that you learned throughout your life... To be able to connect those dots was really cool and I hope I did it properly.

Shelley- Yeah. I think you've done a great job in pulling the pieces together to say: "this happened when Shelley was five and it impacted these other experiences. This is where Shelley told me that it was a learned behaviour, or at least something that happened that had enough of an impact to talk about it." That's another thing, when I read through the narrative, I thought, "oh wow, that did have an impact." Sometimes I didn't think about it again after we spoke, but then reading it, it really did have an impact.

In Darlene's final interview, she elaborated on some of her experiences that I had written in her narrative. However, she said the narrative was "pretty much bang on. I didn't really find anything wrong."

In my 4<sup>th</sup> interview with Lesley Ann, she told me that the narrative was realistic of her perceptions and helped her reflect on her coaching.

It was very cool to read about your life in a biography... It was awesome. Sometimes I over analyze things and I was trying to figure out where they came from and how I became who I am... I reflected with amazement, wondering how I got through all

that... I was just thinking about how at any point in time I could have gone in a number of different directions, but I didn't... I've always been aware of myself, but since you've done all these interviews with me, now I'm reflecting even more...

That's probably what this exercise (the interviews) has done for me the most, Bettina, is that it's made me think about things more... You know, all those things that we talked about, like coaches reflecting on their practice? I'm good at that, but I noticed I wasn't doing enough of it lately... The reflections made me more aware about how we speak, how we deliver, what we expect, goal setting and how important that is... Now I reflect daily.

In Nancy's fourth interview, we also discussed whether the narrative was realistic. She had made changes to the transcripts and narrative to ensure confidentiality. Based on our discussion of the narrative with her changes, she said, "I don't have anything else to add. As long as it was what you were looking for, it's been great."

Allowing the participants to member check the transcripts and analysis helped to create a realistic interpretation because they could alter any of the data before and after the analysis to reveal their meanings.

### **Who is the author of the narratives?**

As a co-created process, researchers writing narratives must consider the relationships with their participants (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Throughout the interviews with each participant, I tried to develop a "conversation" to help the women coaches feel at ease to help them reflect on their lives and learning. However, I found that in being conversational, my own assumptions did surface. In my second interview with Nancy, I made assumptions, but was quick to check if they were correct.

Bettina- You told me that there was a coach who was more supportive of you going to university and getting a “normal” job rather than coach. He mentioned that you would find coaching lonely and you would have to make sacrifices. You said you saw it as a challenge, but do you think you also took that as a warning as to what was to come?

Nancy- Absolutely....

Bettina- I was told something similar... I had one of the coaches who told me that me wanting to coach at the highest level would be akin to him wanting to be a supermodel. In other words, it was never going to happen.

Nancy- You're kidding.

Bettina- When I heard what you said, I thought, what did I take from my comment like that, and in hindsight I think that I did really listen to that a lot more than I would have wanted to listen to that. So, for me, it's interesting to hear you say that you took it as a challenge.

Nancy- For sure it is a challenge. It's like being a national team coach has always been for men only. I've been over in Europe and the number of times I've had to explain: “No, I'm not a physiotherapist. I'm not one of the coaches' girlfriends. I'm here coaching.” You can't imagine how many times I've had to explain this over the past 28 years.

When the participants tell stories that researchers turn into narratives, questions arise as to who is the author of the stories. Once told, to whom does the narrative belong? The narrative exists independently of the person and it is accessible to others' interpretations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). Nancy's interview data seemed somehow different than the

other coaches. Unlike the other participants who made very few changes to their transcripts, Nancy often heavily edited the transcripts. In my journal entry on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2010, I wrote:

I was thinking about my interviews with Nancy and they feel very different than the other coaches' interviews. It feels like I have only scratched the surface so far with Nancy and haven't really gotten to the real meat. This could be for several reasons:

- 1) I knew Nancy before starting this study and so I am not probing as well with her as with the others;
- 2) I know the sport and so I am not probing as well with her as with the others;
- 3) Nancy is very private and won't share everything. She has to edit the transcripts and stay away from certain topics because of the lawsuit in which she is currently engaged;
- 4) It is a phone interview and not face-to-face like the other participants' interviews;
- 5) Nancy knows that I know the sport and the people involved and so she doesn't want to divulge too much.

I believe that it would have been very difficult to get the same richness that I got in my data collection with these five coaches if I had only interviewed ski coaches.

These differences in Nancy's interviews and member checking compared to the other participants' interviews made me reflect on the idea of authorship of stories. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010, I wrote:

I was thinking about my positionality, transparency, and bias in the last little while. Nancy is helping me to reflect on this, because she does such a thorough job editing the transcripts from our interviews. Then, she changed quite a bit from my narrative. All the other coaches simply had a couple of things to change, but Nancy changed

even small grammatical errors in her quotes. I started wondering when these quotes become my material to play with in articles, versus staying the participant's material. Like the other participants before her, I sent Nancy the narrative to read so that we could discuss it in the fourth interview. She revised the narrative and sent it back to me so that we discussed this revised version in the fourth interview. I asked her about what she thought of the idea of ownership of words.

Bettina - You were very involved in editing and reading through the narrative and making sure that everything was clarified... It helped me a lot because it made my job easier and made me make sure that what I had written was really clear. It also made me think about ownership of words and the idea that these are your words and your story, but I'm writing it. It was really important to me that you gave me the ok on everything because they are your words and your story. It made me think a little bit more in detail about using quotes in articles that I'll be writing and making sure that it's always true to what you are saying and what your meaning is.

Nancy- It is funny how much one word can change the tone or the meaning. I've never interviewed anyone in my life, but I understand that it would be difficult to get the context from who you are interviewing. They are saying the words while in their minds they are thinking of the context and not explaining it. It would be a challenge to get the context without the person being misunderstood. Good on you for getting it!

Bettina- Well, I think often it (*ownership of words*) goes unnoticed. You've really helped me notice it and make sure that I'm taking everyone's perspective into account.

Involving the participants in the revisions of the data analysis can muddy the water in terms of determining authorship of the narrative. It is best to call this interviewing process a “co-creation” of stories and the resulting narrative that I wrote is based on the participants' stories and my interpretation. The participants were not privy to the details of the theoretical framework in which the narratives were framed. It is clear that the experiences written and interpreted by the researcher are based on the perceptions and stories of the participants as these emerged from the interview questions and finally verified by the participants.

### **Conclusion**

While narratives describe the participants' stories, it is the researcher who decides how to translate the stories, what stories to include, and how to edit and organize the final product (Chase, 2005). There is no one true representation of narratives, because the participant chooses what to say and the researcher chooses what to relay (Riessman, 1993). In this dissertation, having the participants each member-check their four transcripts and the narrative analysis of the transcripts helped to ensure that the participants and I were satisfied with the written interpretation of the learning experiences. From this perspective, I took measures to guarantee that the ethical considerations were dealt with to the best of my ability as the researcher.

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## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

## Discussion

The main points of each article in this dissertation are as follows: (a) In the first article, the women coaches spoke about learning experiences in childhood and adolescence that influenced their approaches to coaching; (b) in the second article the women coaches spoke about specific meaningful learning experiences that helped them develop and become experienced as coaches; (c) in the third article one coach spoke about the development of her values and how those values influenced her coaching actions; (d) in the fourth article, as the researcher, I explored my own process of learning throughout the PhD degree, and how this learning was influenced by my lifetime of experiences to date; and (e) a brief research note is added to highlight how the research process was a co-creation between the researcher and the participants.

Lyle (2002) noted that there is a lack of conceptual and theoretical development on coaches' practice and behaviour. He called for research to develop a better understanding of the issues that underpin coaching practice that could help form the basis of coach education and training (Lyle, 2002). For this reason, the purpose of this discussion is to elaborate on the main findings from the articles and narratives in terms of the lifelong learning of coaches. Specifically, I discuss how this research helped to uncover (a) how the coaches' biographies determined what kinds of learning opportunities they each found meaningful, (b) the importance of social connections in learning to coach, and (c) the importance of reflection in understanding the interconnections of learning from life experiences. I will address some of the limitations of this dissertation research study as well as outline areas for future research. Finally, I conclude with the theoretical and practical implications of this dissertation study.

Jarvis (2006) emphasized the importance of an individual's biography and its influence on learning and argued that opportunities to learn are based on a person's position in society,

which changes throughout life. Indeed, Jarvis (2009) noted that we learn throughout our whole lives.

There are certain points at which learning is most likely to occur in a conscious manner when we can no longer behave in a habitual and taken-for-granted manner, and so we have to learn how to do or think things differently... as we age and have more similar experiences, so our concepts and values change – time and experience within it underlie much of our learning. Both the body and the mind change with lifetime experiences. (Jarvis, 2009, p. 187)

Life transitions are often times of great learning as individuals reconnect with the world in a different way from what they are used to (Jarvis, 2009). Darlene learned a great deal that she later applied to her coaching approach as she moved between Germany and Canada, and as she changed from athlete, to performer, to coach. Sheilagh changed her coaching approach when her daughters started figure skating and she realized, as their mother, that she wanted them to learn life skills from the sport along with progressions as skaters. Nancy's first transition was in moving to a ranch with her parents, which greatly shaped who she became, and later her work with both women and men's teams helped her evaluate her coaching approach. These examples indicate the importance of understanding coaches' varied biographies and multitude of experiences in order to understand what learning opportunities they found meaningful. Indeed, due to one's past experiences and biography, each person perceives and thus experiences social situations slightly differently (Jarvis, 2006), so that what two people learn in the same situation may be different due to their differing upbringings, cultural understandings, and genetic makeup. In my analysis of the literature, I found that more research is needed to understand how women become experienced and develop as coaches, that is, how they learn throughout their experiences in life, not only in

hitting career barriers, but in all their experiences, and how this translates into their coaching careers. In this research, I have explored how women coaches learn and develop and how this, in turn, influences their coaching careers. The answer is not a simple one: these women coaches, who all created careers in coaching, all learned from many different experiences that shaped their biographies and, as a result, influenced their perceptions of their various coaching situations.

Jarvis (2006) noted that the whole person learns, and so thought, emotion, and action are all part of learning within a social context. We know that sport is a politicized social context (Mercier & Marshall, 2010). With fewer women coaches than men, women's sense of connection with others may be able to help them share information (Gilligan, 1982). Through a social network, Mercier and Marshall (2010) suggested that women coaches can empower each other through positive and critical feedback, celebration of accomplishments, respectful treatment, successful conflict resolution ideas and skills, and mutually beneficial relationships. All the women coaches in this study discussed the importance of learning from other coaches. For example, Sheilagh and Darlene, who coach at the same club, both spoke extensively about the support that they received from the other coaches at their club, how they learned from one another in working together to help the athletes perform, and how they relied on one another for specific expertise and knowledge in developing their athletes. In this club, the coaches worked together with elements of a Community of Practice (CoP) emerging, where the coaches shared a passion for skating and a concern for their athletes' development, while interacting on an ongoing basis to deepen their knowledge and expertise on how to help their athletes. Culver, Trudel, and Werthner (2009) noted that a CoP is formed when there is a "sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (p. 366). However, they are rare in sport settings because of the competitive nature of sport where coaches are hesitant to

share their knowledge with other coaches (Culver et al., 2009). Sheilagh purposefully brought in new coaches who were former athletes from her club and who had become used to seeing the coaches interact in such communal learning. This ensured that coaches starting at the club were not hesitant to share information because they had learned that this was the normal way for their coaches to interact.

Wright and colleagues (2007) noted that coaches learn from other coaches through formal mentoring or simply face-to-face interactions. Kilty (2006) suggested that strategies such as co-head coaching positions, encouraging coaches to observe and reflect on each others' practice, providing guidance and role modeling through mentoring, and networking with other coaches help develop social relationships. Indeed, the five women coaches in this study each engaged in these types of social relationships and in turn spoke about how these relationships helped them learn as coaches. For example, Shelley spoke of how networking with other coaches helped her learn what to do and not do. Additionally, Lesley Ann spoke at length about her relationship with her mentor and how he encouraged her to take NCCP coach education courses, which she had not previously considered. This guidance helped her learn a great deal more about coaching from a formal perspective. Therefore, we note the importance of social connections between coaches in the process of developing as a coach.

However, the coaches not only learned from being in social relationships with other coaches, but also in social relationships with athletes and others, including family members and teachers. Indeed, in the study by Wright and colleagues (2007), the youth hockey coaches also discussed learning from family members. In this study, the coaches spoke of many relationships that helped them learn and develop their coaching approach. For example, Darlene spoke about learning from experiences with her athletes, and Sheilagh spoke about learning from her experiences as a mother. Jarvis (2006) noted that, "it is

virtually impossible to specify the wide variety of social factors that contribute to the social context of our learning” (p. 52). Therefore, this study explored, with each of the women coaches, many of the aspects of their lives that undoubtedly influenced their learning.

Cushion (2010) stated that coaches need to critically reflect on their actions to make meaningful judgments of their specific situations. Indeed, reflection helped the coaches in this study understand the influence of their primary and secondary socialization and meaningful experiences therein, as well as helping them to reach athletes in their own authentic way. “Critical reflection on their socialization experiences and the culturally accepted coaching behaviours of their sport, puts coaches in a strong position to transcend ‘traditional’ coach behaviour and develop their own informed approach” (Cushion, 2010, p. 52).

Moon (1999) discussed reflection in depth and her theory helps expand our understanding of reflection used by the coaches in this dissertation study. Moon’s theory is commensurate with Jarvis’ (2006) theoretical framework due to similar constructivist underpinnings. As reviewed in chapter two of this dissertation, Moon suggested that reflection is utilized in more sophisticated learning processes to deepen one’s understanding and create meaning, work with meaning, or reorganize one’s interpretation of the meaning associated with a situation, as in transformative learning. The women coaches did indeed engage in reflection throughout their lives to further understand, plan for, and direct their learning in different situations. Moon suggested that learning may be relatively unconnected to previous knowledge until the learner engages in reflection, which enables a connection to then be made between what was learned in one situation and what was learned in another situation. From our results, the women coaches spoke of experiences throughout their lives

that were meaningful, and how reflection played a role in the realization of that meaning, and therefore how those meaningful experiences influenced their subsequent coaching approach.

Research has shown that reflection increased coaches' self-awareness and self-regulation (Callary & Durand-Bush, 2009; Knowles et al., 2001). Furthermore, discussion groups, pre-training coach assessment tools, local coaching resource centers and educational partnerships, coaching consultant programs, and coaching environments that value reflection, among other ideas, were suggested as ways to facilitate coach development (Gilbert & Trudel, 2005). However, not all coaches embraced opportunities to reflect, often due to lack of time to reflect and lack of procedural knowledge regarding the application of the reflected material (Stephenson & Jowett, 2009). Therefore, reflections must be relevant to coaches, and time must be provided for coaches to reflect in order to offset these barriers.

Reflection on lifelong learning experiences apart from and including coaching experiences was pertinent to the women coaches in understanding how they became and developed as coaches because of the interconnectedness of their many life experiences. Indeed, these interconnections were difficult to describe in linear dissertation articles, as Hodkinson and colleagues (2007) explained,

In attempting to integrate an individual learner with the learning culture through which s/he learns we face a linguistic and textual problem. In a linear script we have to start with one or the other: the individual or the learning culture. (p. 37)

Cushion and Lyle (2010) further elaborated that,

It is easy to overlook the degree to which the inter-relatedness and interconnectedness of coaching sustains the process... Consequently it becomes (and has become) easy to take an asocial, linear view of coaching. This, in turn, leads to immature or limited

understanding that hides meaning but gives the illusion of a more complete understanding. (p. 3)

In this qualitative research, taking a narrative methodology, the data set was extensive and “muddy” in that there was often overlap between what a coach learned in one social situation and in another. Jarvis’ framework, with its emphasis on becoming through lifelong learning, allowed us to view coach learning and development from a broad perspective. For this reason, I could explore pre-conscious learning experiences in childhood and adolescence that contributed to coaching approaches later in life, and I could explore meaningful learning experiences in which the coaches reflected on and changed their approaches, including their actions to align with their values. Using Jarvis’ framework, it was even possible to explore my own changes as a student, coach, and mother.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Hodkinson, Biesta, and James (2007) noted that studies on learning tend to omit certain key points, for example that (a) individual learning is embodied and social, (b) individual learning cannot be decontextualized from the situation in which the learning occurs, (c) the wider social and institutional structures should be incorporated in understanding learning, and (d) the significance of power in learning is ever-present. The authors suggested that there are two issues that create these omissions: the lack of holistic and comprehensive studies of learning and the problem of the scale of the research (Hodkinson et al., 2007). In using Jarvis’ comprehensive theory on human learning, I was able to explore how individual learning occurs within a social context and I could place the learning within specific situations. However, a limitation of this research was the focus on the individual. I chose a predominantly psychological approach, while not forgetting the importance of the social context. Hodkinson and colleagues (2007) noted,

If the scale is the individual, the tendency is to overlook the social, and to privilege agency over structure. Similarly, if the scale is drawn around a local site, there is a tendency to focus on the social, but to bracket off wider issues of social structure, and background individuals and individual agency. If smaller scales still are used, we tend to get studies of activity systems, of structural inequalities in access to learning and in qualification achievement, so that individual agency and individual learning are nowhere to be seen. (p. 33)

I acknowledge that these are different scales of the same learning process and that, while Jarvis (2007) did discuss a global and structural understanding of learning from a more sociological perspective (that complemented more fully the policy related perspective of lifelong learning discussed in chapter two), this was beyond the scope of this dissertation. For this reason, I did not explore more in-depth, for example, Bourdieu's (1985) notions of *fields* and *habitus* that investigate the cultural reproduction of learning, power relations, and the relationships between individuals as the main focus. Jarvis (2006, 2009) did not define the specific fields that an individual is part of, but did define how experiences in life influence current learning.

Due to the framework that I used in this dissertation, the questions that I asked the participants regarded their individual learning experiences, which I cannot say with certainty were caused by their gender or social positions within the power structure of institutions or culture. I can only surmise that the coaches who were immersed in male dominated environments (such as hockey, alpine ski, and at times, canoe-kayak) had a greater number of learning experiences that were influenced by their gender while the figure skating coaches, who were immersed in a primarily women dominated environment, had fewer such power conflict experiences.

Furthermore, in exploring how women coaches learned, I assumed that my participants were learning and that this was one of the reasons they are still in the coaching profession. I acknowledge that it is possible to be a coach and not learn year after year, but the interview questions drew out meaningful experiences for the women coaches that helped to explore their learning.

### **Future Research**

Now that we know more about how these women coaches learned to coach through their life experiences, my future research endeavors could focus on how coaches implement what they learned from their lifelong experiences to attempt to facilitate positive sport experiences for their athletes. For instance, if values are developed throughout life and are inherent in coaching actions, how do these values translate to the coaches' athletes? Are coaching approaches, learned earlier in life than previously documented, appreciated by the athletes whom these coaches coach? Do coaches create meaningful experiences for their athletes to learn based on experiences they found meaningful as athletes? Gould and Carson (2008) defined life skills as “those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings” (p. 60). These skills are not automatically learned by the athlete or taught by the coach, but must be intentionally taught and fostered. Life skills may be learned within the sport context and coaches have a great influence on whether or not these skills are developed (Gould & Carson, 2008). Future research could explore the relationships created between coach and athlete based on the coach's and athlete's biographies. I could explore how this relationship enhances or diminishes a positive influence in sport participation and the development of life skills.

## Conclusion

This dissertation study has theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it adds to our understanding of coach learning by providing a lifelong learning approach to exploring how coaches learn to coach. More specifically, it adds to our understanding of how women coaches develop as coaches through a number of meaningful learning situations throughout their lifetimes. Furthermore, this research adds to our understanding of Jarvis' (2006, 2009) theory of lifelong learning, in expanding on the importance of reflection in learning. While Jarvis (2006) noted that studying lifelong learning, beginning with an examination of the early years, can demonstrate how reflection develops, this was not fully explored in his theoretical analysis of learning. In this study, reflection on meaningful learning experiences was shown to help coaches learn their approaches.

The women coaches in this study were open to learning and sought out many opportunities to learn throughout their lives that influenced their coaching approach. Practically, it is hoped that this research encourages others to understand the importance of being open to learning opportunities. The way that the women coaches in this study spoke about their learning was influenced by their particular biographies, social contexts, and their reflective nature. Hodkinson and colleagues (2007) noted that all individuals are unique, but do share characteristics with others who are in similar social positions, have similar experiences, or share similar backgrounds. Therefore, this research can be used in two ways: (a) to help women coaches reflect on learning experiences in coaching and life and (b) to create recommendations for coaching education initiatives. These points are described in more detail below.

Gilbert, Gallimore, and Trudel (2009) suggested documenting issues that coaches deal with in order to create a compilation of "problem resolution summaries" to serve as

motivation for problem-solving activities. They stressed that this should not be viewed as *the* solution to problems, but more as an exercise in holding coaches accountable for their learning while giving them responsibility to help other coaches learn from evidence-based guidance in experiences that many coaches regularly encounter (Gilbert et al., 2009). The authors stated,

The archive of learning reports provide real solutions created by real coaches working in real settings with real athletes just like the ones other coaches in similar settings will be working with. We wouldn't expect other coaches to simply take the solutions and apply them to their setting. We firmly believe that this public record of 'what works' based on systematic evidence has great potential to short-circuit the messy experiential learning process that coaches so heavily rely on for learning how to coach. (Gilbert et al., 2009, p. 15)

Certainly, learning to coach is a lifelong process in which coaches can use resources at their disposal to help them deal with the issues that they encounter. In effect, this dissertation provides stories of real women coaches, in real settings, with real athletes, in real learning situations. It is hoped that the narratives and articles act as motivators to other women coaches who can find some similarities in the experiences and can reflect on and develop solutions to their own issues based on the understanding that they are not alone in what they are experiencing.

Finally, Jones, Bowes, and Kingston (2010) noted that coaching research is important because

Viewing and researching coaching as a series of noteworthy, although often non-linear, events has obvious ramifications for how we teach and facilitate the activity. Indeed, the principal significance of the approach... lies in its potential to inform more credible

coach education programmes, grounded in the messy reality of everyday practice...

Doing so could give coaches more definitive, realistic pegs on which to hand their contextually laden reflections and thoughts about how they coach as they do and how they can do so better. (p. 23)

While these authors were referring to their own theory, I believe this can be applied to my research as well. In concluding this dissertation, I explore the practical implications this research has for coaching education initiatives. My recommendations are as follows:

- Provide coaches with the opportunity to have a multitude of coaching experience
- Provide coaches with the opportunity to tell stories about those experiences (to other coaches, facilitators, peers, mentors)
- Provide coaches with the opportunity to have their stories told back to them as food for reflection
- Provide coaches with the opportunity to learn how to reflect on their experiences, values, actions, and decisions to develop future goals and directions (to not only reflect on coaching experiences, but also other relevant experiences that may influence their coaching approach)
- Provide coaches with the opportunity to work in collaborative ways with one another so that they develop strong and professional relationships with individuals from whom they can learn

These recommendations align well with other researchers' suggestions for coach development (see Lyle, 2010).

Indeed, Roy, Beaudoin, and Spallanzani (2010), in their study on a formal education stream within the NCCP, found that even though the content of coaching courses was uniform and coaches were seemingly in similar coaching positions, one could not assume

that all coaches were learning the same information because they all came with their own biographies to the course. Instead, Nash & Sproule (2009) suggested that connecting student interests to the material of learning helps to make it contextually relevant. In this way, the coaching education courses can help promote women's learning opportunities by providing them with opportunities to reflect on personally and contextually relevant situations. By doing so, coaches may be in a better position to understand how previous experiences influence their potential to learn new information in any new learning situation.

## **STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLLABORATORS**

I would like to thank my advisors, Penny Werthner and Pierre Trudel, for their effort and contribution to this dissertation. In the following paragraphs, I will clearly distinguish my own work from the contributions of all collaborators.

I, Bettina Callary, wrote all parts of this dissertation. Penny Werthner and Pierre Trudel edited every part of this dissertation – introduction, theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, results including the four articles and research note, discussion and conclusion, and appendixes.

Penny Werthner, Diane Culver, Shaunna Taylor, and Nicole Dubuc conducted the bracketing interview that I analyzed to determine my assumptions prior to conducting the research.

I conducted all interviews with my participants. Penny Werthner and Pierre Trudel collaborated with me on creating the semi-structured interview guide used for these interviews. Furthermore, my advisors reviewed the interview transcripts, and helped me to come up with further questions for the following interviews, highlight important data to be used in the analysis of the data, and restructure the data analysis (narratives) to be succinct.

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## **APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A

Table 1.

Biographical information on participants' coach learning situations

Coach	Years of coaching experience	Sport	Level of athletes coached	Coach Training	Formal Education	Athletic experience	Family life (partner / children)	Other jobs
Darlene	24	Figure Skating	Club to International Level Competitions	NCCP 3 (currently almost finished 4)	High School grade 12	Club team	Husband	Yes – director of skating club
Sheilagh	32	Figure skating	Club to National Level Competitions	NCCP 3 (currently working on tasks for level 4)	High School grade 13	Club team	Husband; two children aged 18 and 21	Yes – director of Can Skate program at club
Shelley	17	Hockey	Club, College, Varsity	NCCP 3 (currently working on tasks for level 4)	Bachelor in Education specializing in Physical Education	Provincial level	Common law Partner (female)	No
Lesley Ann	30	Canoe/Kayak	Club to international level competitions	NCCP 3	Bachelor in Human Kinetics	International	Husband; two children aged 12 and 15	Yes – high school teacher; Founder and director of Canoe/Kayak club
Nancy	30	Alpine ski	Club to National level competitions	NCCP 4	High school diploma	Club team / high school team	Divorced; Common law partner (male)	No

## Appendix B

### Interview Guide

#### First Interview.

Intro: This study is about your life and your coaching and how you have learned throughout your life to coach the way that you do. I hope that you keep this in mind as we go through the interview.

1) Tell me about yourself.

(Where and when were you born? What is your family background (parents/siblings)? Where did you go to primary school/secondary school? What were your interests and favourite subjects? What were your hobbies? Did you enjoy sports? Tell me about your sporting experiences? Tell me about the culture in which you grew up? Did you attend college or university? Have you done any other formal education for coaching or for another topic? If so, what have you done? Do you have a life partner? How long have you been together? How did you meet? What do you love about this person? Do you have children? If so, tell me about them.)

2) How did you start coaching?

(Were you an athlete? What sports did you play and for how long? Why did you start coaching? Which coaching jobs did you particularly like, and why? Which ones did you

particularly dislike, and why? Can you tell me about your early coaching experiences and life at that time? Would you say that you have improved as a coach since you started? How? How did you learn that?)

3) Tell me about your current coaching experiences and life?

(How and what have you learned from your previous experiences that applies to your coaching? Looking back, what stands out for you over the past years? What things have been important to you in your life over the past years? What experiences stay with you? Is the way you see yourself now different than the way you saw yourself in the past?)

4) What are some important things that have helped you learn to be where you are today in coaching? How have you developed your knowledge as a coach?

- Formal, nonformal, informal situations
- How did you learn that/learn to do that?
- What did you learn from that experience?
- Can you give me an example?
- Do any experiences stand out in particular?
- How would you describe your relationships with important people in your life? What do you learn from them?
- Tell me more about that... How did that come to be?

5) What does coaching mean to you? How has this evolved over time?

(What is it like being a woman coach? Has your sense of yourself as a woman and as a woman coach been changing? What do you think will stay with you about your experiences as a coach? Is there anything that you feel that you have gained as a result of coaching? If so, what? Is there anything that you feel you have missed as a result of coaching? If so, what? What choices have you had to make in your coaching career? What barriers did you face in your coaching career, if any? Have you had any mentors/ role models in coaching?)

6) What is important about life and learning from your point of view?

(How do you learn? Tell me about a time in your life that you had to make a tough decision. What did you learn? Did you change as a result? How? Can you think of other experiences where you learned and changed as a result of the experience? What caused these changes? What do you foresee in your future?)

7) Looking back on your life to date, can you tell me about a powerful learning experience that you have had that has impacted your coaching, either in or out of your coaching experiences?

8) Is there anything that stands out for you now about how you have learned to coach or stayed in the coaching profession?

### **Second and Third Interviews.**

Questions specific to each participant regarding:

- childhood experiences (ask about new experiences and/or expand from last interview)
- athletic experiences
- coach education courses
- coaching career experiences (including mentor coaches)
- experiences outside of coaching (i.e. family, other jobs)
- technological advances in sport or in society (i.e. email, video analysis)
- how the coach reflects

Can you explain what you meant and/or what you learned when you said in the last interview that...

These experiences you talked about in the last interview, can we talk about how you learned from them and how it affected other experiences?

#### **Fourth Interview.**

Participants read their narrative and have a copy in front of them

Is there anything in this story that you want to explain, change, or explore in more detail?

Looking at this story, are there any other powerful learning experiences that you have had that have impacted your coaching that I did not write about?

From reading this story, did you reflect on or learn anything else about yourself?

Is there anything that stands out for you now about how you have learned to coach or stayed in the coaching profession?

What is important about life and learning from your point of view?

How do you see yourself as a coach today?

If you have any other thoughts about other experiences that you think are pertinent to this topic, can you jot them down and send me an email?

## Appendix C

### Narratives of each Participant

**Narrative C1: Darlene (also named Jacqueline and Dawn in the articles of this dissertation).**

***Childhood – strict and driven.***

Darlene's family is composed of one older brother and her parents. Her father was in the military and the family lived in a small German village for most of Darlene's childhood period: two until six years old, and 10 until 14 years old. She described these as key developmental years, and described the way that she learned from this cultural upbringing.

German culture prides itself on excellence – it's always very clean and tidy, everything in its place... Everywhere I went, I had to have ID and the gates would open and people were there with machine guns. It was a very strict upbringing. Everyone abided by the law, of course, and we were very aware of rules and standards because that's the way it was on those military bases, where we shopped, did our sports, it was all inside those gates. That is a big part of who I am.

The strictness that for Darlene characterizes German culture was also present in Darlene's house. Her parents encouraged both her and her brother to be involved in sport but required that they remain on the honour roll at school or they could not pursue sports. Regarding her involvement in sport, her father maintained that she work hard, skate, go to the gym, and do her mental training while her mother, as a nurse, always emphasized eating and sleeping well. She acknowledged that her parents and the culture in which she lived had a huge impact on who she has become:

I realized that my parents have a huge role and influence on me and the decisions that I make – what are my values and views. We had a very strict military upbringing. I carry that over into my expectations of my athletes – I'm clear and precise, and I think that's because my parents were like that with me and my coaches were like that with me. I like that and I think it works.

In Ottawa, at the age of seven years old, Darlene took up skating at the Gloucester skating club. She would follow her brother to his hockey games on Sunday mornings at the rink and her parents encouraged her to take the skating classes that ran at the same time in

the same location. At the age of 11, back in the small German village, Darlene and her friend, Jeanne, were the top skaters at their club but they did not have a coach who had advanced enough knowledge to help them learn. They decided to coach each other, and learned through nonformal and informal learning situations to do the dances and patterns through reading rule books and watching videos and TV. In this way, Darlene had her first coaching apprenticeship very early, which is congruent with the fact that even before she started skating, she wanted to be a school teacher so that she could help people learn. Once she started skating at age seven, she knew that she wanted to be a skating coach:

I remember my Mom saying to me, “you have to decide between (another activity) and skating, you don’t have time to do both.” So I chose figure skating. It was something I loved, and I was doing well at it. My parents knew that... I always said to them that I wanted to be a school teacher, and once I started to skate, I always said that I wanted to coach.

Her parents, seeing her motivation and passion for skating did not hesitate to invest time and money. For example, they paid the expenses related to the summer skating lessons. Between the ages of 11 and 14, Darlene and Jeanne traveled from Germany to Ottawa in the summers for eight-week periods, to live with Canadian families and train at the Gloucester skating club, where she could get the coaching that she needed and she could take the required tests. While living so far away from their families would have been a difficult disjuncture, Darlene and Jeanne helped each other to cope with the occasional lonesomeness by acting as a support system for each other. What was learned during the summer was practiced later during the year in Germany since the small village had few other activities and skating took up the bulk of her time.

Through our conversations about Darlene as a child, one attribute that she learned was to be *driven*.

I had to skate by myself a lot. I saw kids that couldn’t do that, who couldn’t work on their own. They would just hang around the boards and drink their water bottles, and leave early. I loved what I was doing and I knew I had to work hard to improve. The only way to do that was to be internally motivated. I was not aware of external motivation at all because there was none. I was the best skater at the skating club,

and... there was no one there to motivate me. I was motivated by what I watched on TV or read in a book. It was very internal.

It is with this biography that Darlene moved progressively in the adolescent period.

***Adolescence – control and respect.***

At the age of 15, Darlene came back to Canada and one disjuncture was starting grade 10 in a large public school. In her previous biography, she had attended the military school in Germany with only 600 students. Every year, one third of the students were new because families would rotate in and out of Germany. This had an impact on how the kids behaved: “the military kids really welcome you because they’ve been that new kid before. It’s really easy to fit in and make new friends.” She became used to this lifestyle of making friends and took for granted that her schoolmates would welcome her. It was different in the school setting in Canada because the students had all attended school together for years and so she found it difficult to find friends. They had formed “cliques”, they were already involved in school team sports, and many were unwilling to be open to new friendships. Additionally, the freedom and many options available at the high school were overwhelming. In this disjuncture, while she naturally ended up having friends at school, she was closer with her friends at the skating rink as they had similar strict training regimes, they spent considerable time at the rink, and they were all involved in the same experiences on ice. This experience reinforced Darlene’s interest to absorb herself in skating.

Darlene was invited to join the competitive skating group at the Gloucester Skating Club, and was able to train alongside one of the best skaters in the world – Elizabeth Manley, who would later go on to win silver at the 1988 Olympics. She enjoyed training and competing with Elizabeth at the rink because she was able to see what the best skater could do:

I liked to always know what my competition could do. If we showed up to competitions where I didn’t know what the other skaters could do, I didn’t like that – there was an unknown factor. Those things always rattled me a little bit. But for many years, Elizabeth and I competed against each other, so my competition was right there, and she was at the top of the competition and I wasn’t. So, I knew what I had to strive for.

It is apparent that Darlene learned best when the disjuncture did not involve situations in which everything was new. When she had some control over her situation, that is, when something was familiar in her environment, then she was able to make the most of the learning experience.

In skating, Darlene loved the compulsory figures because she could practice them for countless hours in quiet precision, attempting to perfect her movements. She learned from her informal skating situations that effort and perfection were rewarded, since her coach, Bill, never let her or the other skaters give up when practicing their programs. Her coaches made the athletes do many repetitions of their programs. "I had to skate my program all the time and track it. There was no flopping out of anything. I could not delete a spin just because I was tired. That was not acceptable." Doing these repetitions was a way of learning. Darlene felt that repetition was key to success in competition because she had practiced her program so many times with so many different distractions and complications, that she was in control and prepared for all situations in competition. As a coach, Darlene puts into effect what she learned pre-consciously as an athlete and continues to adhere to this strict preparation:

I always say, 'when the music comes on in practice, it's a performance, it's how you want to compete. So, if you start your program, and you get to a jump and you decide to skate through it instead of jumping, would you do that at competition? No, of course not, you'd try it. So, why don't you try it now?' Things happen in practice, your lace comes undone, the lights go out, and those are all opportunities for you to become a better competitor because you will have had some experience in that situation. Only when you work through that in practice will you have the confidence to do that in competition.

Darlene's coaches were fair with all the skaters, despite their varying levels of talent and ability, and she never felt slighted by them. However, in these informal learning situations, Darlene learned that fairness did not mean equal time spent with each athlete. Since Elizabeth had a longer season (as she would advance to international competitions), she required more time from the coaches.

I think Bill's plan that he set up for us was always based on our competitive season.

Elizabeth's was longer than ours because she would do Internationals, but if we were

expected to do double program run-throughs, then she was expected to do double program run-throughs. The standard was the same.

Her coaches were compassionate and understood that personal issues impacted her skating but that personal differences were not bad. Her parents reinforced this learning. Her experiences with her coaches taught her much about how personal lives affect skating careers and jobs. Darlene's coach, Bill, was gay, and although she believes that in the 1980's her father would have had trouble working alongside a gay man in the military, she noted that he was accepting of Bill as her coach because Bill was good at what he did. Incidentally, Darlene learned from this experience so that later in life, when she coached a young gay man, Mike, she was better able to understand his life world. Bill's personal life affected Darlene's skating career and life as he became very sick with hepatitis and HIV and he moved to France to be near the epicenter of AIDS research. Therefore, she was left with no coach at the Gloucester Skating Club. Another coach, Phil, soon took over. However, Darlene moved to Toronto to pursue her skating career at the Granite Skating Club. Darlene was 18 years old and was competing at the senior level.

***Being a young adult – freedom and independence.***

In Toronto, Darlene learned independence. This time in her life, as an 18 year-old young adult, was a time of self-discovery and self-learning. She had traveled to Ottawa as a child in the summers and had learned a foundation responsibility in the informal learning situation of living with families that were not her own, but in Toronto this was reinforced because she had to take care of herself for the first time. She got a part time job, she had to pay rent, and cook meals for herself. This new-found independence gave Darlene a sense of awakening – she felt she had freedom and was not being supervised. We can only imagine that growing up in military bases with ID tags, followed by strict training regimens in competitive skating, would be very different than this lifestyle where Darlene could choose everything herself. She embraced a new life world that was different than her former experiences, but at the same time, somewhat similar to her biography of travel and skating.

Living on my own was an awakening and it gave me freedom – there was a lack of supervision. I probably did some things I shouldn't have done. But I was in a new city, a bigger city, at a bigger club, and exposed to people I didn't know, and saw things I had never seen before in my life.

Darlene met many elite skaters but decided to stop competing – the Canadian champion was 13 years old, and Darlene critically thought about her career in performing as she reflected on her strengths and weaknesses. She doubted her ability as a competitor, she wanted to coach, and felt that she was finishing her competitive career.

Her coach convinced her to try out for the Ice show. She was chosen as an understudy for a principle role and chorus skater, but she was not sure of her decision because she knew that she wanted to coach. However, Darlene was learning about living on her own and taking responsibility for herself, she was enjoying her freedom and the Ice show gave her this freedom within a structured job environment. The current choices she had made in her biography had exposed her to a new life world and she decided to try out the job with the Ice show.

Darlene remained in the Ice show for four years, traveling the world. Here, she learned to perform. She had a strong technical background in training that was mostly self-taught, but she had lacked the ability to perform. She acknowledged that her former choreographer, Amelia, had encouraged her to create stories of her programs, but that she had always been too restrained and had not appreciated Amelia's creativity enough. In the Ice show, Darlene had to use a problem-solving approach to become creative:

I had to perform, even if I wasn't feeling well or didn't want to perform, I had to get out there and smile and look like I was loving it! I had to be on stage... When I was in the show, I let go and let myself perform a little bit and that was applauded. I had to do in-show auditions where the vice-president would come to see what he wanted for next year's show. So, if I did something that was a little bit different, and they thought that was really good, then they would include it in the show the following year. So, that helped me to balance being so technically oriented in my competitive career. From that, I could understand what made an audience happy and what performance was all about... (This experience) did help in the creative and performance aspect of coaching. When I started coaching, I did most of my skaters' choreography and that came from my experience in the Ice show.

Her ability to perform in the Ice show taught Darlene to later encourage her own athletes to perform more often in practice so that they had the confidence to perform when in competition.

Off ice, Darlene learned about relationships. "I learned how to live with people, in the hotels or on the bus, that I wouldn't normally have encountered in my life because they were from all different walks in life." Darlene said that she grew up in this time. She was learning by doing, thinking, and feeling about what kind of person she was.

I learned about how to have relationships, personal relationships. I went out with someone for awhile on the road, and it was a good relationship on the road because it's not really the reality of what life is – you don't live in hotels for your whole life where the maid comes in to make your bed. You don't get to go to opening night parties every week. It was a fun life, but it was almost like I was living someone else's life – I knew it wasn't forever. I knew that the relationship I was in wasn't going to work outside of that environment. There would be too many other stressors that would get in the way... I knew from my upbringing that this was not the way to live life because I had never had life that way before. Once the novelty of it wore off, then I knew it was time to get off the road.

During this time, Darlene was learning about what she felt in harmony doing – that is, where she wanted to be. She felt that the experience of the Ice show was becoming "frivolous and irrelevant" and wanted something more normal where she could feel this harmony. She had run into her future husband who had been her high school sweetheart, and had begun seeing him more regularly whenever she came back to Ottawa.

I was tired. I had saved some money. I knew that I wanted to coach. I enjoyed performing, that was probably what I missed the most, but I didn't enjoy the travel anymore... I just thought, "Ok, I've seen that. I'm just ready to settle down." The last time I came home, I knew that it was a little different with my future husband. We were seeing each other, and I didn't want to go back on the road and leave him. I realized it was not for me anymore. Once I detached myself and had a relationship outside of that environment, it was really hard because people just want to go party all the time. I just didn't want to do that; I wanted to go home. I learned a lot there. I learned a lot about people. I didn't have a lot of time before in my life to have those kinds of relationships, and I learned what worked for me and what were healthy relationships and what were unhealthy relationships to be in, what were healthy

lifestyles and what weren't. Every time I came home, I enjoyed being home better than going back.

The Ice Show experience, while disjuncturally exciting and novel, was draining. She called these years "my freedom years: They were fun. I did lots of silly and crazy things, and had no responsibility, but in the end I knew it was over. I wanted to be responsible. I wanted to get a car and have a job and have some responsibility and some accountability."

*A young coach – life transition.*

After four years on the road, Darlene was ready to come home and get married to her high school sweetheart, Cory. "I wanted to get married. Now... It was the end of my youth and the beginning of my new life, which was being a coach, being responsible for athletes, to the skating club, and being responsible in a relationship." Darlene's husband had a job with regular work hours. She settled into a life that was more stable and harmonious for her, like her own upbringing had been.

From the beginning, Cory was a vital support for her in her coaching career. Throughout their lives together, it was difficult for Darlene to balance out the demands of her coaching job with her interest in spending time with Cory, but he seemed to understand her coaching responsibilities.

He has a lot of the same qualities that I do – he's really hard working, he's very committed. He understands my drive and encourages it. When I'm busy at the rink, he never feels that it takes away from our personal time. He knows that eventually there are times that we will do our thing together.

He was, and continues to be, interested in her job, he attends competitions, and asks about her skaters. He has a calming influence on her, and is able to help her see the other point of view when she is upset. In hind sight, Darlene realized that many of her professional successes came at times when she was having personal challenges – when she and her husband were traveling so much that they rarely saw one another, when they were buying or selling their home, or when they were trying to conceive. She also admitted that her personal life took precedence when she was not enjoying success as a coach. Darlene explained that this was because she had to focus on either her personal life or her career at the expense of the other and had had trouble finding the balance between the two. Darlene would feel guilty

leaving the rink to see her husband, but now understands that taking a break from coaching enabled her to return with more energy and enthusiasm.

Darlene never had children and realized that this afforded her more free time than other coaches who had obligations towards caring for their children. For Darlene and Cory, their financial stability, along with no obligations towards dependents, afforded a break in barriers that are often encountered by women coaches.

Darlene started coaching because there was an opening at the Gloucester Skating Club. "It was April of 1988. The club was on a major high because Elizabeth had just won the silver medal at the Olympics and the club was just booming." Phil, the club's director, and his wife, Stephanie, gave Darlene a few athletes to work with over the summer. Other coaches did the same. Darlene was intentionally able to learn to train these athletes without the pressure of seeing them through competitions and tests. In addition, Chrissy, who had left on maternity leave and for whom Darlene was substitute coaching, had given Darlene a plan to work with her athletes, and so she was able to learn to coach athletes by carrying out Chrissy's plan.

As a new coach, Darlene knew that she needed to familiarize herself with coaching the competitive stream, and she proceeded to purposefully learn as much as she could in taking her formal certification levels and through other nonformal seminars and workshops, as well as learning from informal situations in sitting in on other coaches' lessons and asking them to share their knowledge with her. As Darlene said,

The other coaches and my coaching education had a huge impact on my career because I know that I started on the right track rather than doing something and having to come back and clean up my mess. I was set right from the beginning. Some of that was timing – I happened to come at the right time and the club was busy and I ended up with a few good kids. I also made a decision at that point in time that I had to educate myself. I had to learn a lot, really fast. That was big. That had the biggest impact.

Darlene continued to upgrade her learning after she had attained her formal levels by going to nonformal learning situations. As she said,

I wanted to be a technical coach, so I would go to technical seminars, conferences in the States or national coaching conferences to try to learn more. Some people asked

me, "Why do you do that? You have your level three already, why bother?" But I would say, "Yeah, but ... I've got to go out and find out what's happening. Why do they have so many good skaters? What are they doing?" I am driven that way.

Sometimes it costs a lot of money to do stuff like that, but it's an investment in my career. If I decided that I was going to do the same old thing every day, then I would not be doing anything to help my athletes. They deserve more than that.

Darlene appreciated the many opportunities to coach other coaches' athletes, and over time, she developed a group of athletes of her own. At this point, Darlene really knew that she wanted to be a full time coach. "Being a full time coach was the route that I had chosen and that I wanted to do and I was going to do everything I could to make that happen."

Darlene had a good eye for watching the skaters and she quickly remembered how she had trained as an athlete when she watched another coach, Sheilagh, coach her athletes.

I had really good basics and fundamentals and always knew what I liked to see visually with a skater. I was always very picky and a perfectionist that way. I was a little too picky sometimes! ... Sheilagh had a bunch of really good young skaters and she was coaching them like I had been coached. So that cued back into my brain "oh yeah, that's what we did." She would say, "it's double program run-throughs today." I thought, "Oh my God, nothing has really changed in four or five years!" But it is what works!

Darlene began to apply what she had learned pre-consciously from her experiences with her former coach, Bill. It was only when she started coaching that she realized that she was doing the same things that he had done with her.

When I was skating, it wasn't always fun to do all those repetitions. Mind you, by the third time, it was always my best. I appreciated the fact that Bill would reward effort and when the lesson was over he would tell us what we needed to work on. He was very direct in his feedback... But, I didn't really appreciate that I would take that into my coaching. Then, when I went to the Ice show, I was pretty removed from that. I was exposed to all these different skaters from different countries and you hear about what their coaches did with them and hear stories about that. Then when I came back, a couple of the coaches, Sheilagh and Chrissy, who had been coaching with Bill when

I was still skating, were doing a lot of the things that Bill had done. It was just an easy thing to fall into.

Darlene understood that what she learned by choosing to sit in on other coaches' lessons or on seminars and workshops did not always work for her. She had to adapt what she learned to work for her based on the athletes and her own biography. For example, some coaches liked to teach skills the same way to all athletes. However, Darlene's coaches had taught each skater differently based on their body type and natural rhythm.

Bill, and Phil and Stephanie too, taught me to think of different body types and the natural rhythms that each individual skater had. Technically, there are certain things that have to happen in every skill, but different bodies need different setups. You need to work with that. If they are tall or short, or have long legs, or don't have the flexibility or range of motion, then you have to adapt and find exercises that work for every body type.

Indeed, she elaborated on how she had learned pre-consciously to look for natural rhythms when she was competing and starting to coach by looking at how the coaches dealt with the athletes.

Both Bill and Phil were very open to skaters who would set jumps up in different ways. Neither one of them had a pattern that all skaters had to do. It kind of became a trend in the late '80s and early '90s, that you could go to a big school of skating in Canada, that you knew skaters who came from there because they set up their jumps all the same way. But neither Bill nor Phil coached like that – some skaters would go forward, others backward – they adapted really well to each athlete and both had a really good eye to know the strengths and weaknesses of their athletes.

It was difficult to be aware of how such skills were learned and then applied to one's coaching.

Um, I think I just kind of saw that it worked and thought, "that's good!" I know that Amelia, our choreographer, she was really good at that. She always added steps. I always just thought that was choreography. No one ever said "you have to add those steps because you get too tense or too stiff if you're just setting your jump." It was just weaved in to enhance the program. It was cleverly done without us ever really knowing about it.

But, when Darlene started coaching, she realized she was applying what she had learned.

Later on, Phil trained a world champion from Japan. She lived here in the summer and trained with Phil for a few summers. And, over the course of a few years, I had become good at putting steps in front of jumps and giving kids movements to put in front of jumps – without really realizing that. So, Phil said to me one day, “could you take some time with my Japanese athlete and create some steps in her program because she’s really having trouble landing her jumps consistently. I think that if she has some connecting steps in front of that, then it will help her”... I thought, “Oh my God, I get to work with a world champion!” That instilled confidence in me.

This episodic experience brought awareness to Darlene that she had learned this skill without realizing it, and had, in fact, become quite good at it.

***Disjuncture – different attitudes.***

In her early years of coaching, Darlene would coach the athletes at the rink and return home late at night to ten messages on her answering machine from parents of her athletes. Her husband was incredulous. He wondered why the parents would call Darlene on her time off. Darlene acknowledged that at that time, she needed to build a reputation for herself and needed to build her clientele. Also, being a new coach, she had not learned how to communicate with the parents in such a way that they would not call her at home. Darlene’s own parents had never acted this way towards her coaches and this created a disjuncture: She did not know how to deal with these parents. Through this experience, Darlene learned to treat her coaching career like a business.

Now, I let them know that it’s a business, I get paid for my time with the athletes on the ice. I give a lot of volunteer hours, that’s just part of sport, but there are times when I have to say, “if you want me to go dress fitting, there’s a charge.” I tend to run it more like a business now that I’ve established myself – I’m not worried that I’m not going to have enough of an income to support myself.

Over the next five years, Darlene found a new generation of skaters: athletes who were talented but who lacked the drive and work ethic needed to succeed to the highest levels. Their parents created more problems – they did not want their children to fail, and so they would “hover”: they would help them in everything the children did and make excuses for their children’s failures. Darlene had a major disjuncture in these informal learning

situations, because she had never been like this as an athlete, nor had her parents been like those parents. Darlene had to adapt her coaching that was based on her knowledge from her biography in order to understand the athletes and their biographies.

It's a generation where their parents didn't always follow through on everything with them. When I skated, I would never stop part way through a spin. Bill would be on my case! And with my parents, if I had to go make my bed, I would go make my bed. I couldn't negotiate. There were no options in my house or on the rink when I skated. Now, it's different.

At first, Darlene would go home and try to think of ways to help her athletes, but she eventually found this to be a waste of her time because she was unable to think of knowledge from her biography that was similar to this challenge. During these years, as she coached her athletes, they had fun and were successful, but she felt they could have been more successful. Darlene was not content with her coaching because she had had to change in ways that were not in harmony with her real self. She did not feel she was being authentic because she was not being true to her past and coaching in ways that she knew worked.

I think I removed myself emotionally from coaching. It became more of a job rather than a passion that I always wanted to do... During that five-year period, I did my work, but I only gave what the athletes would give back to me. I felt in conflict. I thought I would just spend more time with my husband. It was a point when we were trying to start a family. There were other things that kept me interested in other aspects of my life... I tried not to spend my time away from the rink wondering how I could make things better because I thought, "I can't right now." It wasn't good. It didn't help the situation at all. But, it was just a phase in my life. All my friends were having children, so then I thought that was what I should be doing. But then that didn't work out.

Darlene found the athletes were frustrating because she needed to change the way that she coached to "sugar-coat" all her technical feedback so that it was always positive, even if their skating was not great. Darlene said,

That was the generation that their parents wanted everything positive for them, so everybody just rode that wave. During that time, I think I got away from my principles of how I wanted my athletes to perform, I gave them more lee-way, but yet

I still had the same expectations about the outcome. I knew the outcome was not what I wanted it to be because they had not put in the time or the training. I never felt good about that. I felt disappointed for the skater. But a lot of times, I felt my hands were tied because I was not going to get the support of the parents. Their training seemed to matter more to me than to them. So, you do that for a few years, and it's not great. Darlene found tricks to deal with these skaters. She used ideas from her coaches, for instance, from her choreography coach, Amelia.

I always tell my little ones, that the program is like a story. There's the beginning and the plot where there is the actual skill, and then there's the ending. The little girls can relate to that. So, whatever you start, you finish, there has to be an end to the story. Don't just give up in the middle. But, it's almost like there was a generation who didn't finish. Like if they just gave up, someone else could finish for them.

She tried to teach her athletes to develop a work ethic even when she was not with them. Her lessons were 15 or 20 minutes long, and the athletes who could warm up and do a run-through of their programs before the lesson were able to accomplish twice as much in the lesson as those that could not do so on their own. She continually strove to point out to those athletes how much more they could accomplish if they worked on their own.

At this turbulent time in her career, Darlene learned to be less strict and more positive and encouraging. She had started to take for granted that this was how the new generation of skaters had to be coached, but then she realized that she needed to change her approach because she was not being true to herself. Darlene observed athletes working by themselves on the rink, and looked for athletes who were driven. She found athletes who were passionate and independent, and noticed that their parents gave them the freedom to work on their own.

***Episodic experiences - learning socially from athletes.***

*Sophie – doing as a way of learning.*

Darlene started coaching Sophie at a time when she was emotionally detached from coaching and feeling pressure about not being able to have a baby. Sophie was like Darlene had been as an athlete – driven and hard working. With Sophie, Darlene went back to the way she had learned to coach from her experiences as an athlete. Being authentic “reignited her passion” and gave her confidence to coach the way she originally learned.

As previously mentioned, Darlene had learned to coach athletes using their natural body type and rhythms. “That’s probably where I get my most joy as a coach, seeing things that... maybe were taught not using the best technique for that athlete - not using their natural ability.” She was able to apply this skill to coaching Sophie. Darlene had also learned to coach athletes by perfecting the basics before moving onto harder skills. With Sophie, Darlene was able to apply this knowledge because Sophie relished in working hard and perfecting details of her performance before trying harder elements. While presenters at conferences and workshops would often teach a *gimmick* – a new way of teaching a skill that allowed the athlete to acquire the skill faster, Darlene found that these gimmicks were often only a “quick fix” that led to problems later on. With Sophie, she could see that working hard on the basics did pay off.

Indeed, Darlene not only reinforced what she had previously learned but also furthered her learning. She coached Sophie to do skills that Darlene had not been done as an athlete.

Sophie was really the first athlete that I had on my own who landed all her jumps – from double jumps to triple lutzers. That was huge for me because as a skater, I hadn’t done all those triples... It gave me a lot of confidence in my abilities... She made me believe in what I was doing. I knew how to teach those jumps, but to actually see someone execute that and do them by following the process that I had laid out, really gave me confidence in my coaching.

Darlene had the chance to experience international level competitions with Sophie. Here, she learned how she could push athletes to be “mentally tough.” Sophie worked so hard that she developed injuries and so Darlene needed to alter Sophie’s training and warm up before her competitions so that she could compete despite her injuries. Sophie needed to warm up and practice doing “stand still jumps” without skating. Darlene had learned this technique from Phil who had used it to teach students to be quicker in the air, but it had not been used as a warm up before competitions (especially in international competitions). From Sophie, Darlene learned that being “mentally tough” was being,

Open to success or failure, go-for-it attitude, not worried about the outcome when they’re preparing for the skill, willing to fight for it, not to give up on something that is not as good as it can be... Just to dig deep, empty the gas tank, and go deeper.

Darlene had never pushed an athlete into learning “mental toughness” until she coached Sophie. Once again, it is difficult to be aware of how one develops knowledge to teach such a skill, but Darlene learned to do so because,

It was the only choice we had! It was out of desperation. Sophie was determined that she was going to the competition and she was tough. So then I said “we need a plan.” She had executed her skills in her program and the technical aspects of her jumps so many times that it was sound muscle memory. She had executed it in stressful situations. So, I knew I could count on that, and I knew that she was mentally tough. So, once she tried it, I saw that it worked. But, I never did that while I was a skater. I was one of those skaters who either did it or I wouldn't try it.

When Darlene had no choice, she used trial and error to learn how to coach her athletes. In this case, she had to trust that it would work based on Sophie's track record of “mental toughness.”

Sophie developed osteitis pubis. This was a new injury to skaters because they were doing more rotations and jumping higher with greater impact on landing, and so hip, groin, and core injuries were starting to develop. In Darlene's interest to help Sophie recover from this injury, she learned as much as possible about this injury and how to recover from it by teaming up with other coaches from across the country to collaborate on information to develop safer training methods. She wrote an article for Skate Canada about the recovery process. Darlene said that she was never afraid to ask questions and seek out information that would help her athletes because she accepted that she did not know everything and that this was the way to get better.

From this episodic experience, Darlene was motivated by Sophie's success based on her changed coaching style. Therefore, Darlene felt confident in going “back to the basics” of how she learned to skate and to coach from her experiences as an athlete with her coaches and parents and apply this to all her athletes. She began to make better choices in regards to the athletes and their parents that she accepted on as students.

It got to a point where I decided this is what I'm going to do: This is the yearly plan; I'm going to meet with the parents and state that these are my objectives and what I think are realistic goals. I need the athlete to do that too, and then we'll have another meeting, sit down and plan this out. I became better at planning and periodization for

them. Once I started making that change, then the results started to change. So it was positive reinforcement that I was on the right track with what I was doing.

She understood that the financial investment that parents made meant that they wanted to know about their child's progress, and so she spent considerable time giving feedback and information to the parents. She no longer accepted being micromanaged by parents and became more selective with what athletes she would take as students.

*Mike – feeling as a way of learning.*

Mike was a young and talented teenage skater who was on the verge of quitting because he had no confidence in himself. He came from a military family and his father and previous coach were very hard on him. Darlene said that she had to “put him back together again.” Mike was gay. Darlene said,

It's hard when someone comes to you at 14 or 15 years old and tells you that he's made a decision about who he is as a person and how he wants to live his life. As soon as he made that decision, I told him that I had no problems with that, I was accepting, and asked if he needed anyone to support him, and if he wanted me to sit down with him and his parents. He said, “I'll tell my parents myself”, then his whole world changed. That was really neat to see, once he was able to come out of his shell.

He used to be afraid of his coach and afraid of his father.

As a skater, Darlene's coaches were respectful and honest, and she had learned to be this way too so that she had a very respectful and honest relationship with Mike. He felt comfortable sharing his personal life with her. Darlene's coaches taught her to be aware of personal issues that athletes have that impact their skating. She said that she did not always skate to her ability. However, her coaches were always compassionate – they tried to discover what was wrong both with her skating and in her personal life that may affect her skating. She described how, as a coach, she was often times a sounding board for her athletes and how she learned to listen and be flexible so that she could help her athletes.

Sometimes they think that you're the only one they can talk to, as their coach.

Sometimes I talk to them more than their parents do ... I understand that things don't always work out the way that you plan them. I have to be flexible, they are people, they are young kids that want to be successful. They all want to be good. Lots of times, they come with so many issues, that I think “wow, it's amazing that you can

even skate with all the things that are going on in your life.” So, then I take the time to understand and listen to them. Listening is so important. I’m providing support for them. I try to give them guidance and solutions. I try to find them people to help them with their situation if that’s what they need – whether it’s a nutritionist or guidance counsellor. As soon as they get that guidance and support, then they can come back and train properly. I have compassion. I feel for them. Sometimes I have to let them get away from the rink and figure it out. I think I got that from my Mom, because she was compassionate that way. My coaches were like that too.

Darlene used her feelings and emotions as a way of learning to deal with her athletes. In coaching Mike, the disjuncture that she experienced made her aware of all athletes’ personal issues. She explained,

I don’t have kids of my own so sometimes I’m not as aware of those issues because I don’t have a child that comes home at the end of the day and tells me that someone bullied them... The athletes taught me to be more aware and have some flexibility and sensitivity to those issues that they come in with.

*Brian – thinking as a way of learning.*

Darlene chose athletes who were hard working and passionate, and sometimes they were a real challenge for her. Brian was an atypical skater, six foot two, unable to do a double axel. He had been working on it for two years with his previous coach but had learned bad technique that prevented him from doing the jump properly. For seventeen months, Darlene gave Brian every exercise that she could think of to help him get the double axel. Still, he was unable.

There was no way he was going to get further without the double axel, so this was really important. He worked diligently on every exercise. Deep down, I knew that he could do it, but after a while, I started really doubting myself... He skated at a competition and did well, but didn’t have the double axel, so he came in third while the boys in first and second place had a double axels in their programs. So, then he told me that he needed to get new skates. And I thought “oh geez, now we’re going to go back to square one.”... So he came into the rink with his new skates, and everyone was thinking, here we go, starting over again. Three days later, he landed it!...

Finally, he was doing things correctly, and he had a very strong desire to do it and be good and successful... It reignited him.

Darlene was reaffirmed in her understanding of teaching the basics, just as she had done with Sophie, and knew that she was correct in continuing to work on these basic skills using different exercises. She learned that achieving goals helped athletes grow up.

I could see that he changed as an athlete and as a person. The next day when he came in, his head was high and his shoulders were back, and he went from being a teenage boy to being a man! That was really cool. His Mom even saw that he was a different person. The weight of the world was taken off my shoulders because it was so important to him. That's really rewarding for me.

***A mature coach.***

*Global changes.*

Figure skating changed over the years and Darlene needed to adjust her coaching. When figures were taken out of skating, athletes did not spend as much time on the ice.

I had to adapt my expectations about how quickly they could learn more advanced skills, because they are not putting the hours in and the miles on their blades that it takes to really understand balance and control and being able to use their bodies, rotate both sides... It's had an impact on how I coach because now I have to teach the athletes about the history of the sport – they don't really know the history or the language anymore... When we were doing figures you would learn the terms and they would be qualified with their names and then you know that a skill is called a "rocker" because that's who invented it. It's the same with the jumps – the guy who invented the axel was Axel Paulsson. They learned it a lot younger when they did figures. But, about 10 years ago, Skate Canada, our national governing body, decided that they would try to take the figure skating terminology out of our learn to skate programs to take any derogatory words out... Everything that had a figure skating name to it, they changed it... It took away the history and language of our sport. So, now they're trying to bring it all back.

Darlene explained how globally, skating changed and Canadian skaters and coaches had to adapt due to what the rest of the world was doing. This affected the way that she had to

coach. She said that ten to 15 years ago, skaters started doing more jumps and skills younger and earlier.

Canada was falling behind in the international scene. Our skaters were going to international events and they didn't have the skills to compete. It wasn't that they didn't have the ability. We were just very stuck in doing all the single jumps before learning the doubles, before learning the triples. And we always had to teach them in the same sequence.

Then, the association changed its rules so that coaches could teach the skaters' best skills first, so that they could compete internationally. Darlene had to adjust her coaching to teaching a different order. She said, "I just had to be a little bit more open... I just had to change my thinking a little."

Even more importantly, this created the need to have skaters specialize in the sport earlier so that they could compete internationally. Darlene explained how the generation of athletes and their "hovercraft" parents clashed in comparison to the culture of figure skating in which athletes had to be driven and choose to figure skate exclusively at a young age.

Many parents do not want their child to commit to one sport, they don't want them to specialize so early. But if you never specialize and are involved in so many sports, then you're very average at everything... They want them to be the best soccer player on the team, the best basketball player, the best figure skater at the club, and they want everyone to work really hard to make them the best, but they don't spend enough hours applying themselves to that particular thing to be capable of being the best, even if they could be.

Darlene noted that in our Canadian culture we learn diverse skills in many sports in order to be well-rounded individuals. Therefore, the cultures collide and create difficulties for coaches who need to coach Canadian athletes who want to be engaged in many sports, but who are also figure skaters and want to excel in this domain. Darlene explained that the way she learned to cope with these competing demands was to coach athletes based on her own experiences of what seemed to work best for skaters.

My kids don't always learn the quickest because I'm a real stickler for teaching the skills properly and perfectly early on. My kids may take longer to get the skills, but then I don't have to go back and fix them when they start doing doubles and triples.

Some coaches get them through really quick, and then have to go back and fix them. I always feel that I waste a lot less time in that second stage when I do it right the first time... If they're losing points because of poor technique, I won't let them do doubles or triples... It's slow and steady for me... I learned to do it this way because early on in coaching, I had some kids that had really bad habits that weren't fixed. So they were able to get to a certain point quickly, but then hit a road block. Sophie was like that, Brian was like that, Mike was like that. I like the process of breaking it down and fixing it. Those skaters didn't mind that either. You need skaters to understand that. Over time, I thought, "It's just not worth it." My kids, when they're young, they're not super stars. They have good basics, good fundamentals... It's worked. That's my game plan. My younger ones, I don't have them compete much, they train more. The ratio is about 75% training to 25% competitions.

Indeed, Darlene did not always learn to change her coaching when new developments occurred. Over the past ten years, the use of video and video analysis tools had become widespread. Darlene explained that technology cannot replace the ability to coach well, and she thought it may impede the ability to coach well.

We have that Dartfish thing. But, as a coach, I need to be able to identify the error. I need to have a good eye. And be able to correct it, and then I have to come up with an exercise to fix it. Once I identify the error, I have to be able to help them fix it. So, I'll use video and Dartfish when a skater is really close to acquiring a skill and they just need a little extra... But sometimes you can analyze things so much in video that you end up paralyzing them. They try to do it like they see another person doing it and you end up killing their natural rhythm because it doesn't work for them... I don't spend much time video taping athletes... I taught skating without it just fine. But, the kids love it and the parents love to see videos of their kids. If they didn't love it, I wouldn't use it – other than as a resource tool... I just find that I'm not coaching skating when I do that – you know, the basic fundamentals on ice. I'm just not good enough on the computer to do it, and video taping it... It's a lot of time.

Often the parents and athletes dictated the need for Darlene to use (and learn to use) technology. The changes in other people's lifestyles precipitated her learning to use cell phones and the Internet to communicate. However, Darlene changed as little as possible

while staying current with the new technologies. She learned to do this because she felt disjuncture when she wasted valuable coaching time on communicating with parents. For example, with email, the parents assumed that she was accessible all the time and she learned that email was time consuming because she needed to check email often and respond to several emails from the same person asking further questions. Darlene learned to manage this change by limiting her use of email: "I try to be very brief with my email, even if they send a very detailed message. Sometimes, I think too that if I'm not very accessible, then they'll think twice about trying to reach me." Furthermore, she did not give out her cell phone number so that parents could not access her at all hours of the day and use these modern technologies to easily reach her and disrupt her way of coaching.

Darlene described an episodic experience that illustrated her point and that also showed how email, cell phones and other such technologies have helped "hovercraft" parents to be more protective of their children:

This one young girl that I had, her mom is a very nice person, and she's well-intentioned, but her mother is a hovercraft. She's always hovering!... I just had to tell her that she had to let her daughter be, she's 13 years old, she can do it herself... Let her make mistakes... She's a very good athlete. She's never had to work very hard to get where she is. But now she's at a level where everyone is very good and if she wants to be better than them then she's got to train harder... Her mom emails me so often. So eventually, I had to write to her, "this is normal." Now, she's had to double her training load and her mother keeps emailing me that she's exhausted. I've had to explain how much time it will take her to get to the next level and that it will be really, really tiring... This morning she sent me an email to tell me that her daughter has a sore tailbone. She doesn't want anything to be off with her daughter, no discomforts. My standard line to her is "it's very normal what she's going through. It's part of her growth and development."

Here, it is apparent that what could be said during a greeting at the rink was instead being communicated through numerous emails at times when Darlene was not coaching the athlete.

***The working environment.***

In 1997, Phil left the club and Darlene was asked to take over as director. This new role left her with many responsibilities for a large 1100 member club that she had not done

before as a coach: administration, ice allocation, program development, coach development, community development, budgeting etc. She needed to meet with other clubs and city officials. She needed to be the representative for the coaches at the board meetings, and she needed to plan schedules, seminars, and workshops. The job took approximately 30-40 hours per week. However, Darlene continued to coach full-time. She said that she could not do both roles if she had children, and that while the directorship position would allow her to be at home in the evenings, she would give it up before giving up coaching – her first love, passion, and responsibility. She learned what was required in this role from a member of the board who was retiring and gave her all the templates and connected her with the right people. Darlene discussed the importance of the support from the board in allowing the coaches to coach and carry on their good and hard work. Darlene believed that the strong continuity in the club with the members, skaters, and coaches, contributed to a strong support system that enabled the coaches to do their jobs well. As the director, Darlene was the superior of the other coaches; however, she shared power with the group.

We'll have coaches meetings and if we identify the need to hire a new coach, we'll all sit down as a group and discuss it... I would take our recommendation to the board... And we also have Debbie as the coaches' representative on the board. Let's say someone had a conflict with me, and they don't feel like they can go further with me, they could go to Debbie. So, that... takes away some of the pressure that the coaches have to deal with their superior. I'm not their boss, I don't tell them what they have to teach or how they charge their athletes or anything, they're self-employed. But it's my job to talk to them about the standards and the code of conduct and proper etiquette and what their role is as a coach with the club.

Many of the coaches at the club skated together as athletes and continued on as coaches. They had known one another for 30 years. They were supportive, although they had different personalities and ways of working with their athletes. For this reason, Darlene was able to learn to allow others to do their jobs, knowing that they will do a good job. The social cohesion between the coaches helped Darlene get rooted in coaching at the Gloucester Skating Club and she noted that it was fun to coach there and that all the coaches had developed personal friendships. Of course, disagreements arose, but the friendships that had been built helped to dissuade problems.

Sometimes, someone might not like the decision we made as coaches, they might bite their tongue, or they might speak out and clear the air and then it's done. In that way, it's lucky, but in some ways it's not so good because people don't want to speak out and say what they feel because they don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Most of the time, we respect each other's friendship and professionalism because it's taken a long time to build and there's a lot at stake. It's not like they're going to go to another club in Ottawa and have it this good.

As coaches, they work together. That is, there is a main coach for each athlete, then the main coach hires a choreographer to work on the music and a resource coach to work on specific technical areas with the athlete. The coaches must communicate often when working with the athletes. Because of this dynamic, Darlene did not have to learn everything because she could rely on other coaches. For instance, Darlene mentioned that there was another coach who seemed to motivate the athletes, while Darlene did the "daily grind" of repetitive practice.

In working with the other coaches, Darlene had the opportunity to problem-solve on specific issues. Darlene liked the rewarding feeling when finding solutions. In general, Darlene liked to troubleshoot about issues in advance so that she knew how to deal with them when they arose.

I learn from my mistakes... I think that I could have done something differently or proceeded in a different manner or taught that a different way, but most of the time I think a lot about what I want to do before I do it. I try to minimize mistakes or if they are mistakes then they have a bigger impact on me than on my athletes.

In pre-determining solutions, Darlene could solidify her coaching philosophy and ensure that she stuck to her decisions.

I look at my athletes and think about what have we done this month? Are we where we want to be? What are my goals and their goals? Every quarter I sit down with them and talk about it... Once I made up my mind, I stick to it. I don't like to say "well, if this happens then we might do this" because then there's no direction to what we are doing.

This was exemplified in an episodic experience when Darlene was working with another coach and athlete.

Nina is the main coach for this athlete, Diana. Diana has this double lutz that she always does wrong... So Nina asked me to work on Diana's double lutz. I said ok... For many weeks, that's what we worked on, and we went back to the single lutz too. A couple of weeks before the competition, Nina said to me, "I think you should just leave the double lutz."... You see, once I started to break down the skill, the double started to get worse as the timing was off. I think Nina started to get worried... I said to Nina "I have a different philosophy on that. I think we should change her program so that instead of two double lutzes, she does one single lutz and one double lutz. I think you should still let her try it. The double lutz is in the process of being corrected. If you take it away all together, then she'll never get it... Encourage her to continue to fix it." That was a long process... There's a situation where the skill wasn't taught properly and I have to go back and fix it. A lot of people might find that boring, but I like that. To me, I will be really successful when I fix that – or when she fixes that. I have real pleasure watching that.

On the other hand, some coaches have the same philosophies and it is easy for Darlene to work with them as a team. "Sheilagh, Kristine and I work really well together. We have many athletes together. We all see the same bigger picture. Nobody steps on anyone's toes."

Darlene acknowledged that she is "lucky" in her coaching position. Other coaches may not feel they can coach full time because leading changes in global economies and trends, such as the growing need to attend university and the want and need for jobs that include health and dental benefits, may make coaches think twice about becoming and staying full time coaches. Darlene believed it would become increasingly more difficult to be a full time coach since more people are going to university and coaching is a "huge level of commitment and it's a hard job to do part-time because of the phone calls and emails and amount of certification that you have to do – it's huge and it costs a lot of money... and there are no benefits." This would ultimately lead to fewer coaches. Darlene foresaw that National high performance sport centres would become more common, but she was not sure if they would be good for the sport. She explained:

We're talking about having high performance centres, but that's a touchy topic because do we want them to go all to one place? Is that how Canada produces it's athletes? Or can you come from Newfoundland, Alberta, BC, rural Ontario? Right

now, you can. But if the numbers drop in coaching, then you'll probably see those centres cropping up.

***Learning from courses as a mature coach.***

Darlene learned to coach from a mixture of the experiences that she had coaching athletes, working with other coaches, and attending formal and nonformal courses. She followed the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model that she learned about in courses given by the Coaches Association of Canada and also by sitting on the committee for developing the LTAD model in skating. She developed the model in figure skating with other people who were similar ages and backgrounds. They developed the model to mirror what they had done as athletes 25 years earlier. Despite developing the model based on previous experiences, working on the committee was a major disjuncture for Darlene:

When I first started, we were at this big summit and there were 70 or 80 of us at it and I was like “how are we going to do this?” It just seemed so foreign. We had to remove all the normal names that we had, like preliminary, junior, senior bronze – how we categorized athletes. When you do that you think “that’s the only thing I’ve ever known.” They you realize, “oh ok, they are the learning to skate phase, learning to compete, learning to win”... I figured this out over the course of 4 days, with all these formal workshops. We subdivided ourselves into which committee and what stage we would like to be on. Once we were in smaller groups, it was easier. It was when I was trying to look at the big picture, from three years old to active for life, that I thought, how does the skating club do all that? It was interesting to see the final document.

This work allowed Darlene to create formal knowledge for skating coaches based on her informal experiences. She was able to develop the knowledge because she explored what athletes were doing in their experiences at a specific level and identified their strengths and weaknesses. This, combined with the new knowledge she gained when talking to specialists in the medical and sport sciences fields, allowed her to understand what are the common injuries, what the coaches must do to train without creating those injuries, and how to retain athletes in that phase, remove barriers for them, and help them feel successful. This spring, Darlene had the chance to pilot the changes to the program based on the LTAD principles.

We piloted it in our “Learn to skate” CanSkate competition this spring. Rather than trying to get all these little kids doing solo programs, they had all these stations they had to go to... Then they got gold, silver, or bronze standards... They didn't get placed, they just got a standard. That is a completely new idea in skating... It went over really well, the kids loved it and so many of them left with gold certificates. It was a different way of thinking of competition.

Darlene learned that these changes helped skaters feel good about themselves and this may keep skaters in the sport longer.

The changes made through the model were based on the experiences of former athletes and current coaches. They suggested their best practices be included in the model. Darlene said, “The coaches who have been successful and consistently produced good work, they are doing what they've always done.”

Likewise, from her biography, Darlene chose what had proven to work best to apply this knowledge to coaching her athletes. As previously discussed, Darlene attended nonformal workshops and seminars where she learned current information. Darlene liked to attend seminars given by a coach from Colorado Springs who had many of the top skaters in North America. The exercises he would teach were always helpful to her athletes.

I've been to four of his seminars. He does really good stuff – it's all about the basics. I learned it the same way, but he has great development exercises and repetition. Each year when I see him, I take his exercises and they have worked really, really well... His line is “you're not always going to come to the rink and feel 100%, so if you come to the rink and feel 80% good, then I want you to give me 100% of that 80%. I don't want 60% of that 80%. And I'll always reward effort.” And I do too. I always reward effort. Effort is part of the process of training. He is very consistent in his manner of training and his technical feedback. He never has gimmicks, just great exercises with great progressions for teaching.

In this episodic experience, Darlene used her past experiences to choose the information that she learned and she changed her coaching tactics based on these past experiences:

I pick and choose. Everyone has their strengths. The coach from Colorado Springs is very good at the repetition and training of his athletes. His athletes are so consistent. That is one of the most important things in our sport: for athletes to perform, practice,

and execute consistently. He has this thing that he calls “the gamer on the main.” I use it and my kids love it. The “gamer” is someone like in basketball, who can get a three-pointer successfully when down to the last seconds on the shot clock. So, there’s a session going on, and he’ll call out someone’s name and say “So and so, you’re on the main” and that means that they have the main stage, and they’ve got to execute. Can they do that? Are they gamers or not? The kids love it. They work themselves right up. It’s a little competition, and it makes them decide. Some crumble and think that they can’t do that in front of everybody. Then you know that they’ve got some mental work to do. Lots of them love to be called out: “are you a gamer?”

Her past experience as a performer in the Ice show helped Darlene understand the importance of performing and executing skills under pressure, and so, this game was something that she used to change her coaching based on what she learned in the seminar she attended.

***Final learning experiences.***

Sandra was a young athlete of Darlene’s who wanted to be champion. This year, she skated her program perfectly for months. She won every competition all year. Darlene knew that this would be a problem at some point. Sandra did not learn how to fail or what to do when she made a mistake. Sandra attended junior nationals and she skated her program. However, she fell in her program and was devastated with herself. Darlene realized that she had never had such an experience with an athlete. “She is probably the only athlete that I have ever had at that age to have such a strong desire to win and be a champion.” Even as such an experienced coach, Darlene had not learned how to deal with such a setback with such an athlete. She talked to Sandra. However, Sandra continued to feel terrible until she talked to a former world champion skater who was able to give her perspective. Darlene learned the importance of athlete-athlete interaction.

This summer, Sandra had Osgood-Schlatters Disease. Her knee was so sore that she could not do any jumps. Darlene explained how she coached Sandra to walk through all her jumps and visualize them instead. Darlene had learned to do this when she was coaching Sophie, and now she transferred the knowledge into coaching other athletes. Darlene became

aware that these informal experiences engrained in part of her daily living had contributed to her knowledge as a coach. Darlene expressed how much she learned from her athletes:

My athletes encourage and empower me to go further. They've had a huge impact on me. I often wonder if Sophie (or Mike, Brian, or Sandra) hadn't come through my door, or come and met me on the ice, would things be different? I'm always learning everyday. I love that part of it. I love going to workshops and seminars. I always think there's more to learn. I don't know it all, that's for sure. I want to help my students succeed and achieve their goals.

Indeed, her athletes had a great influence on her. In understanding their impact, she described the emotional ties and reward that were major factors in continuing to coach.

I've just been blessed with having a bunch of great kids along the years that have a huge impact on me. There's nothing greater than when I come home at night and kids I coached 15 years ago... call me up and say "happy birthday."... That's special... There's a lot of trust and respect and experiences that we've shared that will always be part of our lives and are part of who we are... When you're appreciated, it goes a long way to making what you do be very enjoyable. If you respect your athletes and they respect you, then it's a win-win for everybody. If they come to the rink ready to go, and you come to the rink ready to go, motivated and eager to teach, then it's good.

As an established coach, Darlene could make choices about her job. These choices included the ability to change how much and when she wanted to work and who she wanted to work with.

Ten years ago, I couldn't tell people that I didn't want to work with them anymore, unless there was some drastic disagreement. It's at a point now where I can decide. I always feel bad when it's not the athlete but the parent that I can't work with. I had to make that decision about two years ago, when I had to say to a parent that her daughter is great, but "you as a parent, I really don't want to work for you. I'm self employed, and I can choose who I want to be employed by, and I choose not to be employed by you... I have told you many times about the concerns and issues that I have with how you do things, and you never follow through, so it's over." In my first years coaching, I never did those things, because people would have said "geez, who

does she think she is?" But, I have standards and I am a lot more confident, clear, and concise with my expectations for my athletes and parents and I am very honest about that. I am consistent and then they know what to expect and I know what to expect from them. That makes it a lot easier. When I go home, the phone is no longer ringing. That's a lot more enjoyable.

Darlene's experiences with different people in her life – her husband, her friends, her athletes, and her colleagues, all helped Darlene to learn, and ultimately, to be happy:

When I think about what the athletes bring to me as a coach, so many times I think of myself giving so much to them, but really it's one big circle where they come back and can give me so much more. They teach me not only about working with future skaters, but also about perseverance and staying the path and being positive and understanding how different they can all be. When I thought about how certain skaters had affected me, I thought ok, there are a few others who were like them. Maybe their stories were not as big, but all of them had a definite impact on how I go about my daily teaching and coaching... I think it's the people in your life that you come across that help enrich your life and help you figure out what kind of relationships you want to have and how you're going to go about ensuring that those relationships last and are meaningful, and continue to exist.

**Narrative C2: Sheilagh (also named Mary and Sharon in the articles in this dissertation).**

***Childhood and adolescence: self-learning.***

Sheilagh was born in 1959, the youngest of three girls. At a young age, she was not greatly influenced by her academically minded sisters because they were much older, and she was interested in sports. Her parents encouraged her in sports because they thought that this was a good way to have her incidentally learn independence while still supporting her.

My parents instilled confidence in me. By instilling independence in me, I was free to make mistakes and learn from my mistakes... I think I'm a pretty easy-going person most of the time, and I think it's because of that.

This independence came from playing by herself outside her home and also at the family's cottage where she felt free to relax. She was left to her own devices which helped her learn from her experiences without feeling controlled, and instilled in her a sense of confidence.

When Sheilagh was eight years old, her family moved across the city. Sheilagh needed to make new friends and quickly learned that being involved in sport helped her to make connections with others, especially ones that were most like her. She got involved in skating because her friend asked her to join. She was 11 years old, and "old" compared to other beginner skaters.

My father... was never that involved in my skating, but when I was in Learn to Skate, he came and watched me one day and went home and told my mother "I think we need to put her into private lessons, she's pretty good." Of course, I was older, so it wasn't that hard to be pretty good. But, he loved to tell that story, like it was his foresight to put me into skating.

Sheilagh joined the competitive stream at 13 years old, but she did not compete often and especially liked training. Here, she learned to be disciplined, driven, and set goals that she could achieve.

I was not a great competitor. But, I enjoyed just the preparation part of it. You know, just the routine of it all. I enjoyed doing tests for the same reason... I didn't get a lot of lessons. It was time that I had to myself. I think I learned a lot about myself through skating, just because I did have that time... I guess I enjoyed the discipline of it, most days I was at the rink for a couple of hours by myself, and I enjoyed that... I

learned that I was really hard on myself. I expected a lot from myself. I also learned that if I set my mind to something, then I could achieve things. I learned to organize my life, that's for sure, because I didn't have anyone doing it for me. I had to do it myself, and I had to have a plan.

Her life-world helped to determine the opportunities she had to learn – she could not compete much (because of her advanced age), but she did love the sport. So, when Sheilagh's coach asked her to help out the younger skaters, Sheilagh learned pre-consciously that coaching allowed her to stay heavily involved in the sport she liked best and felt passionate about. Sheilagh knew immediately that she wanted to make coaching a profession but it was hard to describe how she knew that. She naturally helped others out and this was perhaps why her coach asked her to do so. She believed that perhaps her coach could see that she was drawn to it and it was in her personality – independent, easy-going, and confident.

Sheilagh's fondest memories as a teenager are at the rink and with her skating friends. She formed bonding relationships with the other skaters and learned pre-consciously that these bonds were very important to loving the sport.

I remember when I used to skate in the summer... We would skate, and then we'd walk down to the Dairy Queen, then we'd go back and play cards. We were having fun. We were just hanging out. That's why I made those friendships. Because we would hang out at the rink.

Sheilagh became passionate about skating because it was fun, social, and fulfilling in her life.

#### **First years as a coach: life transitions and disjuncture.**

Sheilagh started coaching in 1977 at 18 years old. While she was offered a job in Germany, she turned it down and chose to continue living with her parents, seeing her boyfriend, and coaching in an environment that was familiar and safe. To make ends meet, Sheilagh coached at three different clubs, seven days per week. Sheilagh wanted to set her roots in order to develop her coaching career. She worked with competitive skaters right away – the same level that she had been as an athlete. Perhaps she needed the harmony of coaching athletes similar to herself in a similar environment in order to learn from the disjuncture of going from the competitive athlete to the novice coach.

Her father had concerns about Sheilagh going straight from high school into coaching. He did not understand how she could make a career of coaching. However, he

never spoke to her about his worries because he wanted Sheilagh to be independent, and Sheilagh's confidence in herself prevailed. Sheilagh's mother supported her decision and helped her by making sweaters and dresses for Sheilagh's students, going to their competitions, and talking about them with Sheilagh. In the encouraging and supportive environment in which she had been raised, Sheilagh had no experiences in her biography to deal with pushy parents. However, in working as a coach for competitive athletes, she soon had such an experience.

I had one girl, Tessa. She was a very good skater... I knew her mother was very aggressive and tough. Tessa looked to me as a second mom because she did not have a good relationship with her mother. Her mother was a yeller. I knew that it was not a happy home, but unless you witness anything, there's nothing you can do. One year, we were at sectionals and she skated her short program and did not skate well... So, we were back at the hotel that night, and Tessa phoned me from her hotel room and she was just bawling her eyes out. (Her mother) was screaming, it was unbelievable. I wasn't very old, I wasn't married yet. I took Tessa out of the room and took her back to our room and calmed her down, but she had to go back. I talked to the mother and said "you cannot do that, she has to skate tomorrow, and she needs your support." Then I went back to my room and broke down. I just bawled, because I had never experienced that. My parents had never, ever raised their voices at me. It was very traumatic. The worst thing of all is that the next day she skated great and it reinforced to the parent that it was ok.

Sheilagh felt disjuncture because she did not know how to deal with this situation. So, she visited a sport psychology consultant to help her understand the situation.

He gave me good advice, at that time... Tessa kept skating right until she was 18 and I still have a relationship with her. And her mother realizes now that her behaviour was inappropriate. They have a better relationship than they ever had in her childhood. But at that time, that was the closest I ever came in getting involved in a family, trying to get into their personal family life. To me, she was suffering as a person, because of skating. I'm sure there are probably all sorts of stories about athletes who go through that. But, at the time, I thought, "this is difficult." But it's not my place, as

a coach, to interfere. Unless I see someone who is being abused, I really can't do anything.

Sheilagh learned how to deal with this situation, and understood that she would not get involved unless she legally should do so.

Sheilagh had good success with her skaters from the beginning. She had learned as an athlete to think about what she was doing and watch for technical errors, and she had confidence in herself and this translated into her early coaching.

I wasn't ever really a great skater so things didn't come that easily to me. I didn't have as many lessons as other kids so I had to figure things out a lot of time by myself and I think that helped me. I think also that I had a good eye right from the beginning, which is so much of coaching, the ability to identify what needs to be done. And I stuck to the basics. I had a belief in what I was doing, and I stuck to the basics and knew that this is how it has to be done before moving on to harder things. I was tougher than I am now!... I was bound and determined that they were going to do something, and so I wouldn't give up until they did.

Her own drive to succeed and passion for the sport made her a strict coach and she wanted her students to be the best they could be. She reflected on her own athletic experience and decided to teach her students the basics in technique because she had not properly learned these basics and felt it had hindered her progress.

I had an absolute passion for the sport. I loved skating, it is just in my blood. And, I never had good coaches who taught me the basics when I was starting out... I didn't get good basics, and I was a late starter, so those two combined didn't help me... I think that's why I was so into teaching the basics. I wanted to give my skaters a good foundation. It was so important to me, it still is.

Sheilagh was strict with her athletes in order to drive them to success. One episodic experience that illustrated this was when she coached a teenager named Kristine. Kristine was the best athlete that Sheilagh had worked with at that time. She lived with Sheilagh in the summer because her family lived too far away to get her to her morning practices on time, and so, the two young women knew each other outside of skating as well. They would clash at times, because both women were stubborn, but Sheilagh had a plan for Kristine and would not let her stray. Kristine and her friend, Nina, were on "patch", doing figure eights.

Skaters had a little patch of ice and stayed on that patch for 45 minutes... As a coach, I would spend 15 minutes working with an athlete on their patch, then I would move to the next patch and work 15 minutes with the next athlete. Kristine and Nina were down the ice from me and they didn't think I saw what was going on, but I did – they were rolling skittles down the ice to each other. I was pretty tough on them, I kicked them off the ice. But then later they told me they were so happy I kicked them off the ice because they just went into the room and ate their skittles! But, I guess I wanted them to do what I was asking of them all the time, and they didn't always do that, but that's kids, right? You have to expect that. And Kristine... I was tough on her because I saw all this talent and ability in her and she could have been a much better athlete than she ended up being, because, in sport, there's talent and there's drive... Kristine was one of the ones who had talent, but didn't necessarily have the drive.

Sheilagh was tough on Kristine because she wanted Kristine to achieve what Sheilagh saw as her potential – she felt that she had the talent, but lacked the drive, whereas Sheilagh had had the drive as an athlete, but had lacked the experience to have the necessary talent. As a new coach who had mostly her own athletic experiences to guide her, she did not have the knowledge to deal with an athletes' lack of drive.

Soon, Sheilagh developed more coaching experiences. She was able to work full time at the Gloucester Skating Club. There, she met coach Bill and his professional partner, Amelia who became her mentors. In working in collaboration with these coaches towards helping all the athletes, Sheilagh learned many things. In particular, she learned a strong edge development progression from Amelia's program, Amelia's Edges, that helped skaters learn to skate. From Bill, she learned emotional and cognitive skills needed to coach such as checking for understanding, being positive, and encouraging Sheilagh to work with him as a team.

Bill was just this person who had a very kind soul. He just took me in and was very generous in sharing with me how he taught and included me in his coaching, so sometimes I taught his kids and listened to him while he was coaching. He was a really, really good coach. I think the reason he was a really good coach was because he focused on the basics of skating and made sure that the athletes didn't move on until they had grasped the skill. Everything was a building block. He would teach

them properly from day one, before they could move on to another skill. I was really influenced by his approach to coaching. He was calm, positive, he was a fabulous coach.

She and Bill had similar teaching approaches, and so it was easy for Sheilagh to learn from Bill because what he did made sense to her.

Bill would give me the opportunity to work with his kids in a group format. I was just starting, so I had this huge respect for him that he had the trust in me to let me work with some of his top skaters. He would guide me “this is what I would like you to do.” He would let me know, but yet not tell me specifically what to do. And he would share – we would quite often go out to lunch and he would share his experiences as a coach. It was a very natural experience with Bill. It just fit. It was like a glove. It just fit. It was very easy.

Sheilagh attributes Bill and Amelia's trust in her to her interest in becoming a very good coach.

I think they could see in me that I had a desire to be a very good coach and I was very dedicated to the sport. I was keen to learn. I wanted to be a good coach and I wanted to learn from them. I think I was pretty easy to work with. I think they trusted me that I could work with them without threatening them in any way. And it worked well.

She trusted him, and his trust in her gave her the opportunity to have confidence in her coaching, be open to learning, and be capable of becoming the best coach she could be.

Sheilagh felt she was in the right place at the right time. “I was lucky when I started teaching, that I was teaching with Bill and Amelia. I learned so much from the two of them. I think they shaped my coaching.”

In 1983, Bill left the club because of personal health issues and Amelia followed him. Sheilagh had a very hard time without them, and especially Bill because so much of her coaching was attached to him.

I think I just felt, maybe lost. My support system was gone... So I had to step it up a little bit at that time... It was a different club after that... You grow with every situation. At the time, it was devastating, because I really loved Bill. But I grew. I became a better coach, I became more independent at that point. I decided to move forward.

In this life transition, Sheilagh's disjuncture made her realize her need to change. To replace Bill and Amelia, the club hired Phil and Stephanie. They were well known and respected skating coaches. Soon she started working with Phil and he became her mentor.

It was a combination of Bill and Phil that helped me define the role, not only of the teacher, but of the manager side of it too... I look at my coaching as a lot of it being luck in some ways, that I managed to get into a club that had good mentors for me. Both Bill and Phil took me under their wings and helped me in my first 10 years of coaching.

These two very different mentors helped to shape how she coached. They taught her knowledge, beliefs, and values that became part of her biography, that impacted her perceptions and actions in other experiences throughout her coaching career.

Phil was different. Bill was not a businessman at all. He was in skating because he loved skating. He was an artist. Bill taught Elizabeth (Manley), and Phil managed her. He put her together and made her understand how to compete more than anything. I learned another whole side of things with Phil and Stephanie. It was very much a business for Phil.

Sheilagh found that working with Phil presented more disjuncture than with Bill. She and Bill had had similar coaching styles, and so she had easily slipped into coaching, taking for granted that this was only one way to coach. She was able to learn from Phil because he was so different from herself.

We didn't always see eye-to-eye. We didn't work together the same way that Bill and I did. With Bill it was very free-flowing... I learned a lot from (Phil), but a totally different side. It was like how you build an athlete, more than how you teach an athlete. (I learned) based on watching him. At the time, I didn't appreciate it. It was so different than with Bill that I didn't always agree with what he was doing. When I look back on it now, I understand it. I think my style of coaching is more along side of Bill, I'm a nurturer more than a manager. I think I didn't understand Phil all that well because... I didn't understand his purpose and what he was doing, but yet he always somehow got them to skate at the right times. I always found it hard because it didn't make sense.

Sheilagh learned that managing athletes was also important. This was illustrated in this episodic experience:

I can remember so clearly watching (Elizabeth Manley) skate her long program at the Olympics and wondering “where did that come from? How did she do that?” She never really had done that before. In training, her performances were not consistent. Afterwards, when they got back, I said to Phil “how did she do that?” He said that when they went to the Olympics, she wanted to go to the opening ceremonies. So they flew out and went to the opening ceremonies, then they came back because the ladies are always the last event. So she had a week of training here at home before she went back to start again at the Olympics. And she was sick. But Phil managed it. He was on top of it. He made sure that she was following their schedule, that she went to bed at the right time, that she was eating properly. He managed how much she did at practices. He did what you have to do with a competitive athlete... He was really organized. He knew how to get her to skate at the right time. And, he always had 100% confidence that she could do it. Even though she hadn't really ever done it in training, he knew that she could do it. So, I guess that in a way, his influence on me was that you need to have a plan for your athletes... Back in the '70s and '80s there wasn't as much information as there is now. Now, all the (formal and nonformal courses) that we do, it's all there and laid out about how to train your athletes. Back then, there was some, but it wasn't all laid out like it is now. I learned that you really just have to set your yearly plan and make sure you hit those points.

However, she also learned from Phil based on what she did not want to do. Phil had mood swings. Sheilagh remembered an episodic experience where an athlete tried to give him a Christmas present, but he was in a foul mood and so he threw the present back at her. That changed his relationship with that skater, and Sheilagh felt it unnecessary and mean.

However, she did not talk to Phil about the situation. Instead, she learned through reflecting on the situation that she valued the skater as a person and that she believed it was important for her as a coach to treat skaters well, and not let her problems or stress levels affect her skaters.

Sheilagh's mentors helped her take information she learned in her coaching education and certification courses and apply it in her coaching. She learned in those courses to plan

out athletes' training, but it often felt unrealistic to plan out each athlete's training to the degree that was required on course. In her actual coaching, she modified the training plans according to the athlete. She also paid close attention to the facilitator's explanations on organizational skills because in her biography, Sheilagh had had to be organized and so she understood the importance of this skill. "You learn those skills (organization and management) as a skater. As a competitive skater, you have to be organized, you have to have an idea of what you're doing everyday. As a skater, I did not have many lessons, so I did that for myself. It naturally went into my coaching." The courses were useful. Sheilagh also learned new information that she readily included into her coaching repertoire such as physically training the different energy systems to help the athletes' chances of success. She also learned about Long Term Athlete Development, and included the windows of opportunity into her coaching.

At nonformal courses and seminars she also learned new skating techniques.

At the provincial skating camps... I always learn different things and bring it home. If it works, keep it, if it doesn't, well we tried it... Sometimes there's a new technique in the process of teaching it that you incorporate into your coaching... Even, this fall, I taught some CanSkate seminars, and even there I learn, because I'm interacting with other skaters and coaches and I get ideas. I came back from that with all sorts of ideas about how to make my skaters better. It's an exchange of ideas, it's the best thing you can do as coaches, really.

It was clear that Sheilagh learned from the people who are involved in the courses, from the information that they present, and from the exchange that takes place.

***Changes on the personal front: family life.***

In 1986, Sheilagh married her highschool boyfriend, Jack. He was a hockey player and so they had an understanding about the importance of sport. Jack supported Sheilagh throughout her career.

I don't make a lot of money coaching skating, and there were times when (Jack) would joke that I don't make more than minimum wage, because there's all that time that you have to put into coaching that you don't get paid for. He would joke, but I think he sometimes actually thought that. Sometimes he wondered why I would

coach, but he never said “give it up”, or “find something else to do.” He understood my passion for the sport.

He listened and helped her see work problems in another way. She called him the “voice of reason.”

In 1988, Sheilagh gave birth to her first daughter and in 1991, to her second daughter. They planned their wedding around her skating schedule, but the babies' births were not so easily planned. She explained how it was difficult as a coach:

I had made all these arrangements for someone to come in and coach for me for the second half of the summer and then all of a sudden I had Kaitlyn (one month early) and so I quickly had to work that out. It's different than when you're in a job where you get a year off with maternity leave. When you're a coach, if you don't work, you don't get paid. So that summer, because I had complications in delivery, I took a full month off before I went back to work. It was a bit of a challenge. We were still young and we didn't have a lot of money. Then, when I had my second daughter, she was born in September, and I took one week off and then I was back on the ice, because a competition was coming! Maybe I had a bit of a cut back schedule, but I was back on the ice right away.

Jack was a fire-fighter, and so he worked shift work. This meant that he was available during the day when he was not on shift, and therefore, Sheilagh perceived that she and her daughters were able to spend a lot of time with him.

The (girls) actually spent a lot of time with their dad when they were little because he was home during the day when they were babies... it worked out well. For me too, because we would see each other during the day... For a lot of coaches, it's hard on their marriage because (their partners) are working all day, and then in the evening (their partners) come home and off the coaches go to the rink until 9 or 10 at night. The (coaches) work on Saturday and Sunday – they never see each other. Whereas we saw each other a lot.

Nonetheless, it was not always easy.

When my kids were little, I taught six days per week. It's hard when you're walking out the door and your baby is crying in a babysitter's arms. But, I think all women go through that, anyone who works has that feeling. I think for me, in many ways, it was

easier because my husband was around a lot more than other husbands and he could spend a lot of time with the kids. The kids think it's fortunate that they had that time with both of us. I wasn't teaching during the day and so they had that time with me where they weren't in a daycare.

Sheilagh also was supported by her mother who lived close by and would babysit the children. During the summer of 1988, Sheilagh had an especially hard time coping with the demands of her family. Her father had cancer and died in October. She learned after his passing that she had relied on his advice more than she realized.

It's really interesting because if you were to ask me growing up, who I was closer to, it was my mother. But when he died, it really bothered me. It was very upsetting. My oldest daughter Kaitlyn, was not even a year old when he was diagnosed with cancer... he went really quickly. He was diagnosed in May, and actually it's 20 years tomorrow... I think there were a couple of things that really bothered me. My mother just shut down. My father had always been the figure head of our family, and when he was gone, she just couldn't function. She had to take over, and she couldn't, so I had to. I was trying to coach, and throughout that summer I was in and out of the hospital, I was working, I had a child who was not even a year old, Jack was working. We did our best, but it was tough... Still today, twenty years later, thinking about it upsets me because he was only 65 years old. I guess I realized after he was gone that I was a lot closer to him than I thought. After he had gone, I realized that when I had problems or when I needed someone to talk to, I would go to him. When he was gone, I realized that I didn't have that anymore.

This episodic experience reinforced the importance of family support, but also illustrated the difficulty of having a young family, aging parents, and a blossoming career. In another episodic experience, Sheilagh explained how she coped with these competing demands:

One year, I had to go to Canadians, and it was Kaitlyn's very first skating competition that she ever did, and I wasn't there for it. That was hard. I would have liked to have been there, but I had to go with my skaters. She was fine, she didn't need me. There are always things that you do where your heart is in one place, but you have to be somewhere else, you've made that commitment to be at the competition or seminar. That's probably one of the hardest things, that I think back

and know that I missed important family events because I had to be at Canadians or wherever... But, you know, I have to work, we rely on two incomes in our house. At that point in time, when they were younger, we couldn't afford for me not to coach, and I didn't want to give it up... I think they both ended up skating because I dragged them to the rink with me. In competitions, I would often bring them along with me. They would come to the events, right from when they were very young. They were around the rink from a very young age and all my students took them in and made them part of the family. I had them skate because I wanted them with me. I didn't want to leave them at home. Sometimes my mother would come with me. One year, we were at Canadians in Hamilton, and I didn't want to leave Kaitlyn at home, she was maybe two or three. So my Mom came and she took care of Kaitlyn when we had practices or competitions. It was nice. I'm lucky that I could bring them along. Sheilagh was able to make accommodations in order to continue coaching and raising her children.

***Technological and societal influences to lifelong learning.***

Sheilagh had to make other adaptations to her coaching based on changes in the sport. When she skated and when she started coaching, the athletes would spend four to six hours at the rink on any given day. This was because they had to practice their school figures. However, the International Skating Union removed figures from skating in 1996. This move came because of technological impacts on the sport. Sheilagh said: "It's interesting how sport is controlled by the media and the perception that TV creates and the way the audience impacts the sport." Television and the media were the main form of skating promotion, but it was soon discovered that the general public could not understand how skating was judged because figures were never televised in competitions, and so their performance and scores were not seen or understood. In order to allow the general public to better follow the sport on TV, figures were removed. This drastically changed the entire sport because athletes no longer needed to spend hours perfecting these technical skills and so they no longer needed to spend as much time at the rink. The social dimension of skating changed forever.

As a coach, Sheilagh did not like this change because she felt that teaching figures was her strength in coaching, and so she felt personally hit. Furthermore, figures had been removed not for the development of the sport, but for the media perception. The athletes

were not able to develop their technical skills as thoroughly. Finally, it was harder to develop relationships with the skaters as they did not spend as much time skating.

Sheilagh needed to have a larger group of athletes to have the same number of hours as she had had before. To adapt to this change, Sheilagh grew her student base and she taught the skills in the shorter time span. She said: "It's more of a challenge to teach kids now because I have less time and I still have to teach all those things that they used to learn from figures, like turning, control, edge, balance, and I have to teach these at the same time as jumps and spins and all the rest." She was quick to adapt to the change because she had to be.

I think that I changed pretty much right away because all of a sudden we had to change how we even scheduled our sessions. So, when that happened I thought "ok, how am I going to do this so I can maximize my time with the skaters and get the most out of them?"... It was not this first generation that was tough to adapt to. This generation of skaters had done figures. It was five years later, it was more of a challenge at that point. Even today, we struggle because skaters don't have the base figures provided anymore.

Sheilagh also adapted her coaching to develop athlete relationships in a different way. She implemented more group sessions and created a team atmosphere by having activities for the skaters outside of the rink so that they had the chance to form social bonds and "build a feeling of team amongst the kids." She knew that the social bond between skaters was very important and must be nurtured. "With kids, the social aspect of skating is so important. I think that's why you build a love of something, not just for the sport, but the social aspect." She came up with these changes based on reflecting on what she learned in her biography through her own experiences as an athlete bonding with her skating friends.

After figures was taken out, the emotional connection that she built with athletes was not created through the amount of time they spent together, but through her own preparedness in coaching the athletes and through her ability to motivate her athletes. She had to problem-solve and learn to make the most out of her time technically and through motivation to develop the rapport with the athletes.

One other major change to the sport was the scoring system for competitions. When Sheilagh competed, and up until 2004 when the change was made, Sheilagh's athletes would

receive a mark based on an excellence rating of 6.0. However, the new point system was put in place in order for the athletes to be able to compare their results from different competitions. What this meant for Sheilagh was that she had to work to maximize the skaters' points at competitions.

It's become so much more of a planning and managing and maximizing your points. It becomes so much more time consuming than it ever used to be... The yearly training plan is set but then every time they go into a competition I have to make sure that I'm maximizing their points and make those changes. It's a lot of work that coaches aren't getting paid for... Statistics is not my thing...

This time, instead of changing her coaching to focus on statistics, Sheilagh dealt with the change by digging her heels into her original plan – teaching basics well.

I focused on the skating. The other stuff is out of our control. What's going on with the judges, you can't control that. I can only control what's going on with my athletes. And so ultimately no matter what I do, I have to go back to their technical and artistic performances. Some coaches get so carried away with the whole point system, that they lose sight of the most important part and that's teaching them to skate. If they don't know how to skate, if they don't know the basics of what they're supposed to do on the ice, then they're never going to be able to maximize their points on the ice anyways.

***Becoming a resource coach: changing attitudes.***

Both of Sheilagh's children became competitive skaters but had challenges. The older daughter had recurring ankle injuries that stopped her from being able to skate, though she still enjoyed other sports. The younger daughter developed type 1 diabetes, which meant that she was not able to control her blood sugar levels and this affected her during competitions. Despite these challenges, Sheilagh still felt her children were successful in life.

Sheilagh learned from her daughters. Her eldest was easy – self-confident, positive, and performance oriented. Her younger daughter, especially since she is diabetic, gave her an “emotional makeup” that meant that Sheilagh learned more from her on how to deal with emotional athletes.

It's been a challenge both as a coach and as a parent to try to make her feel satisfied and confident in what she's doing in sport, because of her personality. We try to keep

a very positive approach with her and try to be very supportive in the everyday things that she does so that she feels that she's being successful, but not in a material way... You're going to find out, you learn so much from your own kids. Things that have happened with skaters over the years, I also use with my own daughters, in trying to help them succeed in anything. Whether it's something at school or whether it's sport. Really, sport is just a window of life. What do you learn in sport? You're learning life skills. I think that trying to teach them life skills is the most important thing I can do so that they leave the sport as a better person, not just as a better skater. I think that's sort of what Jack and I have tried to do with our kids – through sport, they're learning about themselves. That's how I look at it now... I think when I was younger, I was far more result oriented than I am now.

Sheilagh discovered from her children that in coaching sport, she is coaching individuals in one part of their lifeworld. She learned that she can impact athletes beyond the skating rink, and realized that this was ultimately what she wanted. These experiences with her children changed Sheilagh's biography, and ultimately changed her perception of future skating experiences. Sheilagh realized that competitive skating and success at competitions was not as important as she had previously believed. She became less tough on her athletes and more open to helping them love the sport and develop as well-rounded individuals.

When I started out, I was very keen and maybe almost aggressive in the way that I approached (coaching). I wanted my kids to have every opportunity... and they would do well. I think from my second year of coaching, right up until now, I've had kids every year who have gone to either the Eastern Canadian challenge or nationals. I am fairly successful, I think... I remember one time, this was after I had my kids, a coach I knew quite well said "boy, having kids really changed you." Ha. And I think it's true... the two coaches that I coached, they always look at me and say "you never did that with us", they think I was pretty tough when I coached them. I think that has to do with me having had kids. I look at the whole process of coaching skaters in a different light after having my own kids and after having them skate as well.

She foremost wanted the skaters to be happy skating. Her attitude and values had changed as a result of her biography. She noted that she had become more lenient with the athletes and

more of a nurturer. She started to have difficulty coaching the older competitive athletes because she was no longer tough and controlling on the athletes like she used to be.

I used to just lay down the law – “this is how it’s going to be, you’re going to do it this way, or no way.” Now, I’m not like that. I think that’s because of my own kids. I think I don’t see it now as the be all and end all to be at the top in skating.

She did not need her own children to be at the top in skating in order to think of them as successful, and realized that this was the case for all children.

For example, in another episodic experience, Sheilagh recognized a shift in her own attitude and began to think about creating a transition in coaching out of working as the main coach for competitive athletes. Six years ago, Sheilagh taught a teenager named Jessica. She was “probably the most successful skater of all my years of skating. And she was very similar to Kristine in many ways.” She was a friend of Sheilagh’s daughter, and so Sheilagh knew her outside of skating, just like Kristine. She was also very stubborn and as she grew into an adolescent she started to become rebellious.

She still did very well, but I couldn’t, I don’t want to say “control”, but... she just couldn’t keep control anymore. It came to the point where I decided that I couldn’t do it anymore, it just wasn’t working. It was sort of like the beginning of the end for me in working (as a main coach) with full time students, because I thought that I didn’t have that toughness in me anymore to work through those hard times with them. So, last year, around last February, I made the decision that I’m not going to work with full time students anymore, because of that. I just thought that I’m not doing her any favours, because I can’t get through to her anymore. It’s not the teaching, I love the teaching, the drills, the technical side of it. (I like) working with the (competitive athletes) and building them up. But the actual managing them, bringing them to competitions, that whole side of coaching - It’s hard for me now.

Sheilagh recognized that she was going through a similar situation with Jessica as she had with Kristine, but this time it was different. Because Sheilagh’s biography had changed, she was no longer willing to act in the same way as she had previously acted. In this disjuncture, she learned that she could stop coaching the competitive full-time athletes because she did not emotionally or cognitively enjoy this aspect of coaching.

I could not take it anymore. It became all-consuming. Trying to get her day-to-day training on track was impossible. I felt like my life was being consumed by all this. The last straw was at Sectionals. (Jessica) skated her program and did not skate well. She got off the ice, grabbed her guards and I was trying to pull her aside, because I knew that shit was going to hit the fan. I tried to get her to the side, because, you know, the whole audience was right there watching. She made a bee-line for the lobby, and her mother went running after her. And in the lobby, she started screaming at her mother to f-off, and there were people everywhere! I thought “this is out of control! I’ve totally lost control of this situation. I can’t do this.” So, after that I sat down with them, discussed it, tried to resolve it, but couldn’t resolve it. I was still going to work with her, but I wasn’t going to go to competitions with her. It was very difficult for me, first of all, to do that, because I knew it was going to hurt her. I thought I was doing it for the right reasons because I thought that she wasn’t going to improve, I couldn’t help her emotionally anymore, she was not relating to me... It just wasn’t going well. I thought, I’m bringing this home to my family because I would tell my husband, and it’s affecting the way I’m relating to my girls, and is this something I really want at this point in my life? I thought, no it’s not.

Sheilagh did not stop working with all her full-time skaters at that point. She thought she would miss this aspect of coaching. For a few years, she continued coaching competitive athletes and critically reflected on what her life would be like without working with competitive athletes before she made the decision to stop.

But the reason I decided to do it is that I thought, I’m not giving enough to these kids, they need more. And, I haven’t regretted it... In some ways, it’s surprising, because I’ve been doing it for so long, that’s it’s surprising that I’m fine with leaving it, but I am. I really am. Because I’m doing the part of coaching that I like best. It’s the day to day working with the kids. That’s what I like best. I think it goes right back to... the part of Bill that I liked the most, I think that’s what I am, I’m a person who likes to work with the kids. I care about them more than I manage them. I’m not a good manager, it’s not my strong suit, it never has been. I just like working with the kids!

Once she acted on her disjuncture, and chose to change who she was as a coach, she felt emotional release.

Interestingly, Sheilagh's change occurred over the course of twenty years. She said that having children changed her outlook, thoughts, and emotions, but that she only chose to change her actions – her coaching career - last year. She explained how these changes developed:

When Kaitlyn was born,... right from the beginning, Kaitlyn was just so special because she came into the world in a different way. We loved her to death. You know, you're a mom. Your life just changes and everything is about the baby. I think also because the fact that within her first year of her life, I lost my father. So these monumental things happened within the course of one year. I do think that in some ways, that was the beginning of it. I started to think that I'm putting so much into skating, and my Dad died and he was only 65 years old... It was sort of a reality check in a way. I was still working really hard, but I think it was around that time, I had always worked seven days a week, but it was shortly after she was born that I thought, ok, I'm taking a day off, I'm not going to work on Sundays anymore. That was step one. I took a day to myself... Then Marissa came along three years later, and it was all the same feelings all over again. So, as a family, we were pretty close and we spent all our time together, as much as we could. I don't think at that point I had changed so much, because I was still really into the competitive side of it, I still really wanted my kids to succeed in competitions, and when (my daughters) started to skate, I think that's when I started changing a lot. First of all, I looked at the parents a different way, because I'm a parent and all I want for my kids is the best, I want them to make errors and learn from it. I don't want to protect them so much, but I want them to be happy. And skating is a happy thing for them... I think that that's where I started looking at the other parents and started thinking "my God, why are you treating your child that way? It's just skating." *It's just skating*. All of a sudden, skating started to not be 'the be all and end all' to this life.

The combination of processes that occurred in social experiences, whereby Sheilagh's body (carrying and delivering children) and mind (her attitudes, values, and beliefs) changed resulted in big changes in her biography. In consequent experiences, Sheilagh's changed biography impacted the way she perceived the situation.

Indeed, Sheilagh chose to transition to the CanSkate program instead of being the main coach for competitive athletes. Part of the reason that she made this switch was because, as she explained:

Now with the competitions, it's a game of points... It's all statistics. I am not a math person. Statistics just don't interest me. Yes, when they go out to skate, I'm pretty good at figuring out how they can maximize their points, but... when it's a game of points, it takes a lot of time. That to me, it's another side of coaching, and it's not for me. I like to be out on the ice coaching. It's a different world now. The parents, they're on the computer looking at every competition across Canada, they're looking at the skater's report card that gives you an itemized idea of everything that you've just performed, and they would come back to me and say "look at these points." That's just not what I'm interested in... I love working with kids. I just like to see them learn. Be involved in the whole process of teaching them how to skate. I really enjoy working with the younger ones when they're just starting out – giving them the basics and watching them develop. That's what I'm most passionate about.

Due to these experiences and changes in the sport, Sheilagh chose to alter her own career track.

It must be noted that Sheilagh had been the director of the CanSkate program since 1988. However, at that time, there was very little that she had to do throughout the year to manage the program. Over the years, Sheilagh reflected on the program and realized that the skaters were having trouble moving from CanSkate into the "test" or competitive stream. They were ill-equipped to do the necessary work that they needed to do by themselves in the competitive stream. So, Sheilagh created the "Special Juniors" as a bridge program between the two levels. At first, just like in the competitive stream, the parents chose the coach for their children, and this coach was often the coach who had taught them in CanSkate. Sheilagh was at a point in her career where she was looking at coaching in a different way since she was thinking about transitioning out of the competitive stream. She reflected on how to find the best fit of coaches to take over her athletes. From watching the coaches working with the athletes, Sheilagh had a disjuncture: "I would think there's a student who would probably work better with this coach. I started thinking, what is a better way of doing this? How can we make it easier for the parents and better for the skaters?" She realized that

the parents did not know the entire coaching staff and did not necessarily pick the coach with the best fit to their child. She decided to change the Special Juniors program so that the coaches cycled between each skater every week so that they could find the coach that best fit with each athlete. She explained,

At first, the coaches weren't all that keen on it, because they thought it was going to be a competition to see who could get the most skaters. But it hasn't worked out that way at all because what some parents perceive as a strength in a coach, other parents perceive as a weakness... They have different ideas about what they want in a coach. So every coach has children coming out of that program. It's been a really good change to the program.

Sheilagh's role as director of CanSkate became more involved as the club grew from a couple of hundred skaters to one thousand skaters this year. She found it difficult to direct the registration at the same time as helping her competitive athletes prepare for their competitions. Additionally, Sheilagh did not enjoy the time that was required to count points in the new system. With these combined changes in her career, Sheilagh decided to transition from the competitive stream into the CanSkate stream.

Sheilagh explained her interest in helping athletes develop as individuals using sport as a vehicle for growth and development.

When I'm on the ice, I'm not just teaching them how to skate. I'm helping them grow as a person. I'm not just helping them do a jump or a spin. Every time they go out to do a test or a competition, they're learning about themselves... Last week we went to a competition, and one of our skaters who we really thought would move forward, didn't do well. She didn't perform to her ability. Talking to the parents, they were disappointed, but they are really good parents. So I tried to explain to the three of them that when there's a setback, sometimes there's a reason and it can make you stronger because you look at it and decide, do I want to do this? Yes? So then you look at what went wrong and you try to fix it and you grow as a skater and as a person. With this little girl, she came back fighting and stronger and happier about her skating than she was before the competition. She's learned a life lesson that she can become better through things that happen. I think through skating, teaching kids, I'm not just teaching them (skating). I'm teaching them things that they can bring to

their lives when they grow up and get jobs and have families, in working with people... I try to think about what they're going to be like when they move on from skating... I think that if they can leave the sport still loving it and use the things that they learned when they do move on to other things in their lives, then I've done a good job. I guess, maybe, it's also having my own children now, I'm looking at it as more than trying to help them skate, I'm looking at it as helping them as much as I possibly can so that they're going to be a better person from being involved in sport. I think any sport teaches you that. Being involved in sport makes you such a strong person.

In another episodic experience, Sheilagh was made aware of how much she did help athletes not just in skating but in growing up to become young adults in society. As you may recall, Sheilagh stopped working with Jessica. Her mother was very upset when this happened. A few years later, Jessica moved to California, she went to college there, and met a man that she recently married. Sheilagh was invited to the wedding.

The mother started emailing me... She wrote in these emails that I had had such an impact on Jessica's life and Jessica is the way she is today because of me - I helped raise her daughter!... I received another email from her about a month ago about how much skating has meant to Jessica, and a lot of it was because of me and our relationship. It was interesting because I think she had traveled through the path that I had traveled through. As a parent, the competitions were the be all and end all, she wanted Jessica to win and to be on top. And then after Jessica had left the sport and the mother had had time to reflect, she realized that skating was about way more than just winning, and that Jessica had learned so much through sport, even though she had a rebellious time at the end. I think the mother wanted to rebuild our relationship. And we have. It's interesting, because it's a reflection of how I feel about sport that she was able to come full circle and see that it was more than winning and that Jessica did attain so many other things aside from making it to Canadians.

Indeed, Sheilagh learned from the experiences that she had with challenging athletes.

Just like you learn more from challenging competitions, you learn more from athletes that are a challenge to teach than the easy ones. I've had many over the years that have been challenging to teach, and I think I've learned the most from them. And

every time I have one, I make mistakes, but then I learn from those mistakes and the next time a challenging athlete comes around with similar problems, I've learned from my previous athletes on how to deal with those problems. I think for sure, I learn from everybody, but I definitely learn from my athletes.

Observation was an important learning tool for Sheilagh in order to learn from her athletes. To understand the technical and tactical processes that a skater must do, she would watch skating on TV, also using video analysis of her athletes. However, Sheilagh also learned by watching her skaters in order to help them change their behaviour in her lesson. She watched her skaters when they were on the ice to determine what they were doing with their time, and this helped to determine what she needed to teach them in her lesson.

Sometimes I'll just go up in the stands and watch what's happening on the ice when they're not in a lesson, and what they're doing with their time on their own. Some kids are very effective with their time, others aren't. You learn from them that way, because that helps you coach them, guide them... This girl that both Darlene and I coach,... she's having a really hard time. She's a circler. She'll circle over and over without attempting (a skill). We're having a hard time just getting her focused. So, day to day, we're trying to figure out what's happening that's making her feel this way. So, we brought in a sport psychologist to work with her. I learn, more often than not, by the errors that the (athletes) make rather than the accomplishments that they have. I learn from watching what they do with their time, I watch them learn, and it teaches me also how to coach them, because everyone learns in a different way.

***Social context: learning from peer coaches and support people.***

Sheilagh considered herself "lucky" because the board of directors at the club did not interfere with the coaches. However, since the board was made up of volunteer parents of skaters, she remembered an episodic experience in which a board member did interfere in the coaches' work: One board member decided that he wanted to set the coaches' rates for working. However, the coaches went on a miniature strike. Her experience of the negative situation was good:

It actually was very good because as coaches, we pulled together and we came up with a whole fee guideline for coaching. We based it on years of coaching, own qualifications, NCCP levels, and we came up with a grid... But it was good, because

we had our backs up with this board, and we went into action, and we actually put some thought into how we can do this. Skate Canada even looked at what we did. And in the end, they accepted our rate scale.

The demands of her life world determined her opportunity to learn in this case. Sheilagh learned from that situation to back up her ideas and decisions. She went through a similar justification for her fees this year, and again, it was supported. The board of directors trusted her and this helped to build a good relationship between them. "We're lucky... I shouldn't say lucky. I think it's the level of trust. I think it's also that they recognize that we're doing what's in the best interest of the club. It's a two-way street: we benefit and they benefit."

Indeed, trust was an important aspect of coaching skating at the Gloucester Skating Club. In choosing to work with the CanSkate program, Sheilagh gave up being the main coach for the competitive skaters. However, she worked with competitive skaters as their resource coach. A resource coach works on certain skills with the athletes, but does not attend competitions or plan out the athletes' year. In fact, at the Gloucester Skating Club, none of the coaches work alone with their athletes.

People let me work with their skaters when I was young. With Bill, I reciprocated. My skaters that were good, I had him teach them when he could. I never had, ever, that issue of somebody soliciting my students away from me. It was a very open-door policy. Whatever is going to make my skaters better, great! Back then, (one coach) did everything. In a way, we were the beginning of how it is now. Bill, Amelia, and I, we worked together and that was new. Now, everyone does.

Most of the coaches were athletes at the Gloucester Skating Club and became coaches. The full time coaches had all been at the club for twenty to thirty years. They all learned to work with one another because that was how they had been coached and how it naturally evolved when they started coaching. Sheilagh learned that communication was key to smoothly working with other coaches.

We do the best we can to have open lines of communication so everyone knows what they're doing with that athlete. There are definite roles with what coaches are doing with the athletes, and it changes as the season progresses too... You always have to keep everyone coordinated. So, the biggest and most important thing is open lines of communication... It's important that everybody knows the main goal for that athlete

– where are we moving. Within the goal setting of the year, every one has to be involved in that so that we know where we're trying to end up and we know how we can try to get that done.

Since each coach had their strengths, the other coaches relied on one another. For example, Sophie, who was an international level skater, is now coaching at our club and she has her degree in Kinesiology. We have this interaction between what they do on the ice and what she's doing with them off the ice, and coordinating the two. I'm learning from her, because she's giving a medical, kinesiology model to what I'm teaching them. The two things together really get the athletes to understand what we're after... There's a lot of interaction between the choreographers and the main coach and me, just trying to organize the kids and get the most out of them. The reliance is important. There's always that fall back too, when you're having trouble getting through to a skater, you can have another coach come and look at what you're doing, and sometimes they'll say something just a little bit different of a way, and it'll click. So, that's important too, we rely on each other.

Sheilagh had a pretty good understanding of her strengths and weaknesses, and understood other coaches' abilities as well. Because they worked together, she did not have to be good at everything, and could use other coaches' abilities.

I think I'm a pretty technically sound coach. I have a really good understanding about how to teach skating. I have a good eye, which is so important in coaching. (I am) able to identify where the problems are and how to correct them, and how to work on the different aspects of the skater... I would say I'm more of a nurturer. If you look at Darlene and I, she's a good manager, she's very organized, she has a totally different life than me, she doesn't have kids, so she's very dedicated to skating, very dedicated, and very organized. When I transition in my coaching role, my top skater went to Darlene, because she was a good fit. She can do all the yearly planning, I mean, I always did it, but she can take it to the next level and I think that's important.

In order to continue this network, each full time coach, even if they worked predominantly with competitive athletes, also worked with the CanSkate program to help mentor the younger part-time coaches and to help empower all the coaches.

I think the fact that we're able to work so well as a group, that empowers each of us individually. So, collectively, we come up with ideas and then we go individually to work with our skaters. That makes you feel more confident, it makes you feel like you're on the right path, and that's empowering... We're all working towards something. Even though we are in an individual sport and we're individual coaches and sometimes our skaters are competing against each other, we still need to feel like we're part of a team. Because to be successful, there has to be a common cause, and for us, our common cause is that we want our skaters to be the best they possibly can be, so we push each other in a positive way. To make your skater the best they can be, you have to give them every opportunity they can have, and that means opening doors for them, and it means opening doors for yourself too.

Indeed, feeling safe at the club increased her confidence and ability to learn.

If I want to open myself up and expand my horizons by trying things I haven't tried before, and I'm in an environment where I feel safe, then I'm probably more willing to do that. I never really thought about that before, but it does make sense to me. In anything, when you feel comfortable you're probably more confident in what you're going to be doing. Confidence in coaching, I think, is a big part of how I do learn. If you have the confidence, you will challenge yourself to do more. If you don't have confidence in what you are doing, then you are going to stick to the same things that have worked in the past. If you don't feel like people are going to trust in what you are doing, then you won't ever go out of that little safety zone that you have. To be a better coach, you're constantly pushing the borders, and you're constantly trying to find new and better ways of doing things. I think if you're feeling comfortable about where you're at, you're feeling confident. They go together I think.

At the Gloucester Skating Club, it was a safe environment, open to learning.

I think that in our sport, there's a lot of solicitation of students, not in our club at all, but at other clubs, there's always that worry that someone is going to take your students. If they see a parent talking to another coach, instantly they think the worst. Whereas, it wouldn't even phase me if I was walking down the hall and I saw one of my parents talking to one of the other coaches. I wouldn't even think twice about it. We work so well together, and the parents too, they know what's going on, they

know that if I'm going to be away, I'll make sure that their skater is taken care of. They know that they can trust anyone on staff. I think confidence is so much a part of being a coach, that you have confidence in what you're doing. That you feel, you're always going to learn, that's probably the most important thing of all, that you're willing to learn and make changes, but that comes from having confidence.

This confident behaviour that is a result of a network of coaches could be observed by others.

I was just at a seminar yesterday with eight of our little ones. They were out doing their thing, and was thinking "they're doing great!"... And a coach came up to me and said "I just have to tell you this, one of the parents came over to me and asked: 'what is it about the Gloucester Skating Club that all their coaches can work together so well as a team?'" I thought it was so great that people outside of our club can recognize that we work as a team. They are recognizing what we are doing here. I think that's great... I don't know how to define it. I still say it's because we've been together for so long... (All the coaches) have all come through (our program). There's this base where we all just melt together. We're all together. At times, it's challenging because we've all known each other so long, but it's great because we make it work because we've known each other so long.

The closeness of the group was a benefit to coaching, but could also be difficult.

At times I refer to us as a dysfunctional family because we know each other so well, and know our quirks and the ins and outs of our personalities, that sometimes it turns it a bit unprofessional because we know each other so well. If we didn't know each other so well, then maybe sometimes we would deal with things in a more professional manner. Sometimes emotions get in the way. But generally, it's a good working group with a high level of trust, which in coaching you don't see all that often. People are not worried about a coach going behind their back and soliciting skaters. There's none of that at our club.

Sheilagh was burned once by a coach who "stole" her athlete away from her. She learned from this experience.

I had only been teaching two or three years and I was teaching with one of my very good friends. The student's mother was a problem mother. She was super pushy but the skater wasn't that talented and the mom wanted her to try her figure test. I said

“no, she’s not ready.” She kept pushing and pushing, but I put my foot down and said that she’s not ready. She changed to my friend, and my friend put her in for her test without ever seeing it. That was one of my first really challenging things as a coach. “How could you do that?” I was totally floored that she would do that just to get the student. It was a wake up call. We discussed it and resolved it, she was still my friend, but I was just surprised because I saw another side of skating.

While Sheilagh took for granted that all coaches wanted the best for their skaters, she learned that some want the best for themselves.

While the social environment in most skating clubs dictates that former athletes are generally not hired to coach at the club, Sheilagh felt that this was a strength to helping the coaches learn.

I do the hiring for CanSkate. I always hire people who have been helping in my program for the last couple of years, they understand how we run the program, they understand how we teach the program. It’s easy for me to bring those people in. They have an understanding about how it works, right from the beginning. And then it’s an easy transition from CanSkate into our other programs... I don’t know why (other clubs) do not do that. It’s just that the (new coaches) need to be seen as coaches and not skaters. Maybe people will look at them and say “oh, she’s a skater, not a coach.” But, I don’t have a problem with that. I think that it’s good. Marissa (my youngest daughter) is teaching CanSkate now, and she was skating one day and one of her kids was standing at the door with her Mom, and watching her. When we got off the ice, the mom said “we were just watching Marissa skate!” They thought that was great that her coach was out there skating. They thought that was really good... For us, it’s a plus, it’s a positive that we are able to bring these kids into our program.

The great support system at the club enabled the club to build great coaches. Sheilagh liked the informal mentoring that occurred because the coaches asked questions and discussed issues together, rather than the formal mentoring through the certification program with Skate Canada in which the coaches simply observed one another.

Nonetheless, despite the positive aspect of mentoring new coaches and creating a bond between the coaches, with Sheilagh’s youngest daughter, Marissa, starting to coach, Sheilagh wanted her to only coach part-time and go to university. As previously mentioned,

Marissa had diabetes, and Sheilagh and her husband were encouraging Marissa to get a job that had benefits to help pay for her medical expenses. Besides, Sheilagh thought coaching was too difficult – she would have to coach at several clubs and would have problems finding enough students.

***Love and passion aid lifelong learning.***

Sheilagh thought that coaching skating was not only hard for new women coaches but also for men because full-time coaches who did not coach at Olympic levels, like herself, did not make a lot of money. In society, she stated that men felt the pressure of needing to be the primary bread-winner for their families and providing them with health and dental care (through work benefits), and so coaching skating was not ideal since there were no benefits. However, for Sheilagh, since her husband could provide those benefits, she felt,

It's been excellent. I think it's fortunate that I have a career doing something that I love. I knew very early on that coaching skating was what I wanted to do, and it's been rewarding. I think financially, it hasn't been great. It's all this work and effort and time that I put into skating. At the end of the year, it's not a great salary, but it's a heck of a lot better than doing something that I don't want to do. And I don't see myself sitting at a desk. I would never have done that sort of thing, that's not me. I feel fortunate that I could be successful at what I chose. It's hard work but it's also good work.

According to Sheilagh's biography, she chose to learn to coach. Her active childhood and lack of interest in academics impacted her perception of the things that she learned so that she perceived information related to coaching and sport as important, and other information related to school and university as not important. She learned to be a coach, and could not see herself in a desk job. Sheilagh laughed as she explained what her husband would say about her coaching:

He would say it's the be all and end all. I think there are times when he's actually a little jealous of my coaching, like there are times that he thinks that I put more into my coaching than I put into things at home... But the thing is, is that it's part of my identity of who I am. I've done it since I was 18 years old. It's my life, in many ways. Even though I've changed, I've evolved and (my coaching) has evolved over the years, from the start of the day to the end of the day, it's what I do. I'm only

physically at the rink from 2:30 to 9pm, but the whole day, I think about it. I think that for me, doing the best job I can as a coach, is really important. I always try to improve myself and make myself a better coach. It just becomes a huge part of my life.

Sheilagh was constantly learning, for instance through reflection when she was not at the rink. She changed her reasons for coaching because of the experiences that she had when she felt rewarded by skaters who were not necessarily very talented or skaters who did not want to become competitive figure skaters.

When I think about when I started, I was consumed with it. I had to be successful at it. I really wanted to be a successful coach... But now, it's not about that anymore. Now it's about sharing my love of skating. It's about helping the kids, teaching them, and trying to get them to love the sport like I love the sport... It's a passion... It's sort of an expression of yourself. I think that definitely when I coach, it's an expression of me. This is who I am... I love to share my joy of skating... It's a joyful experience to skate, no matter if you're just going out on the canal to skate, anybody who lives in Canada should learn how to skate. It's a Canadian thing... With the kids, you can see it on their faces, when they skate, most of them, they might have fear at the beginning and they might cry, but once they figure it out, they love it. There's just something about skating that's just a joyful experience, it really is, at every level. It really is.

It is clear that Sheilagh had a passion for figure skating. This passion was important when learning about coaching skating.

I think the sport of skating just has everything in it. There's feeling, expression, music, there's so much to love about it, really, because it encompasses so many things... Everything that's involved in it, makes it so interesting and fun to do that you just become passionate about it... It is hard to explain though. It's like I was born to do it. It's something that's been in me from the second I started skating... I like to instill that into kids, as much as I can.

Through the conversations that Sheilagh and I shared, and from reflecting on the transcripts of the conversations, Sheilagh had become aware that the different parts of her life-world, her athletic career, her coaching, her children, her husband etc., all impacted on other parts.

(Reading our transcripts) has been really good for me to reflect. Last night I sat down to read through our last interview. Reading it through, you think of your life in parts – there's your family life, there's your childhood, there's your coaching. You think of them in sections, but they're really not. Everything is one whole thing that makes you. Reading through and talking about when I skated, my relationship with my father, my sisters, my kids, Jack, coaching, it just sort of made me realize that it's all me. All these things that are really separate, they're really separate, they all make up my life. It's been interesting for me to think about it that way. Instead of "Ok, there's coaching, this is my life at the rink, this is my life at home", that there are all these parts that are integrated. Especially since both Kaitlyn and Marissa skated, it brings it all together, and that all these things make up my life. It's a pretty good life. I'm pretty happy, there have been hard times, but I'm a happy person with the life I've chosen and the life I have. You've helped me reflect on that, and that's been really nice. Thank you!

Sheilagh's entire life-world, her thoughts, emotions, and actions to all that have happened to her, created her biography. Her life, while always changing, was made up of all the social experiences that change how she learned information and integrated it into new knowledge, beliefs, and values. Indeed, lifelong learning was aptly described throughout this narrative!

**Narrative C3: Shelley (also named Christine, Sandy, and Kate in the articles in this dissertation).**

***Primary socialization: "Shelley's room."***

Shelley was born in 1968 and raised in a small town in Saskatchewan. She was the second of four children – she had an older brother, a younger brother, and a much younger sister. Shelley was competitive with her older brother and attempted to do everything he did.

If he climbed a tree across the street, I would see if I could do it quicker or further.

We always had a bit of a competitive spirit between the two of us... That was a pretty good learning opportunity for me because your older brother should be able to do everything better, stronger, faster. I was always determined to try to find a way to get things done.

Shelley's father flooded the ice rink and taught the local hockey team, including her brother, and the family quickly realized that it was easier to keep an eye on Shelley if she was playing hockey too. She immediately had a passion for the sport, and her father was her role model. Together, they would watch Hockey Night in Canada and would discuss the plays. Her Dad would study the game, he would read books and he was always looking for ways to do things better in hockey. She said, "I thought, 'hey, look at what my Dad likes, that would be a lot of fun to do when I get older.'" Shelley's mother was positive and competitive with Shelley's aunt. By watching their friendly competitive jabbing, Shelley unintentionally learned to have a competitive drive to win. She said, "It was never malicious, it was always a little discussion and laughter. I grew up in a very competitive spirited place."

Shelley's parents would take her to watch the local Bluebirds women's fastball team games, and they would point out to her how hard the women practiced and how much effort they put into the game. Shelley learned from watching others and from listening to her parents that effort was very important. This translated into her own athletic endeavors. Her parents always asked: "How hard did you work? ... Are you proud of how hard you worked?" Years later, Shelley looked for effort and determination when recruiting players to her team.

That is very much part of how I coach, and I would put that back as being an important piece from my parents. It's more about (effort) than just the skill itself. It very much helped me be a better coach and a better athlete.

Many people were supportive of Shelley playing hockey. When she went to other communities to compete, she said that many people recognized her and knew her by name since she was the only girl who played hockey. Some communities even set her up with her own dressing room with a sign that said "Shelley's room." This support helped to build up her self-esteem. From these early experiences, she developed a sense of confidence.

However, not everyone supported her, and she often heard people say, "girls shouldn't play hockey, girls don't play hockey." In an episodic experience, Shelley learned a lesson that stayed with her for the rest of her life: to get involved and find solutions to problems that she cares about. One year at provincials, Shelley scored a couple of points and her team won. However, at the end of the game, the other team protested because it turned out that her name was not on the roster – Saskatchewan Hockey and Hockey Canada would not recognize her as a player since she was a girl. Her parents inquired with the Human Rights Commission, but were told that Associations had the right to decide on their rules, and that they would need to sue Hockey Canada to change the rules. They did not have the money to do so. Shelley said,

The first thing I learned was that it doesn't make sense. I could play and I could shoot. I didn't understand why girls couldn't play. I think that was for me the first opportunity to realize that everything in life isn't fair and that if you want something to change, then you have to get involved and be part of the change and part of the solution and not part of the problem. The easy solution for that would have been for me to quit and go play ringette... But I had a real passion for hockey. People around me who had supported me through that taught me that it was a good thing and that if you want something enough, and you're passionate enough about it, then you can gain support of people to help you through it.

In this disjuncture, Shelley learned pre-consciously a determination to be a part of a better solution. She was determined to create a positive experience from this barrier:

Hearing that directly in a phone message, "Girls can't play hockey, and they don't. Sorry Shelley, but you can't play in provincials." And I didn't play in provincials with the boys or in any games after that. But since then, I've had many great opportunities to play with the women. (Now) I'm coaching in the women's game. It's

about believing there is a way, and sticking with your guns.... This... gives you an idea of who I am.

Shelley was passionate for women's hockey and learned to appreciate what women have now. She explained, "I think that's the reason I'm so passionate about this experience – I get to coach women at a university, they get to play and compete at a high level against other young females that have their opportunities to play, and they get their own team rooms!"

***Values learned through sport in childhood.***

For Shelley, hockey, but also all other sport, is a vehicle for "helping people to grow and change" and for learning life lessons.

Sport is an outlet for people to leave the real life troubles behind and come together on the field or ice and have a chance to have something in common and work towards that, and see, as a group, what you're capable of. The push for excellence, that's another piece too in terms of passion. As a coach, I need to figure out... what are they capable of and how can they push through that artificial barrier for them and find something new and exciting... Those are pieces too that really drive me.

These lessons were learned long before she became a coach, but fuelled a drive for teaching life values to her athletes.

As a child, Shelley's passion in hockey grew: She loved the game, the wind on her face as she skated, the speed, and the strategy; but she also loved the friendships that were made through the team. "I can go back to when I was four and five, and think of the friendships that I developed at that time, up to now, and the friends I still have from that. That speaks numbers to me." Shelley incidentally learned about the special bond that developed between players and the ability to be tolerant of others.

When you look back, the seasons that you cherish the most and were the most fun are the ones where you can forgive somebody for a little or big mistake, you're able to go on and move past it... I think when I look at the passion, one of the things that I'm really thankful for in sport is that it did teach me to be more open and more understanding of people and a little more tolerant of different behaviours, and how to be more respectful of people around you.

Shelley learned that not everyone has the same values as herself. For one of the children on her hockey team, being on time was not an important value like it was for herself. The

coaches dealt with the issue by telling the child and his parents that while this was not an important value for the child individually, on the team, it was an important value, and so if he wanted to play on the team, then he would have to respect this team value. From this episodic experience, Shelley learned two lessons: First of all, she learned not to judge others' values if they were not hurting the team just because they were different than her own. Secondly, she learned that if their values were hurting the team, then the individuals must understand that when they are on the team, they must practice the team's values.

Shelley also learned to be non-judgmental. This message was reaffirmed when she first learned what it meant to be gay, something that would become part of her life when she grew up.

One day, I was walking up to talk to two of the (Bluebirds fastball team) players and they were sitting in their car in the centre field of the ball diamond, and as I walked up behind, I saw the two of them holding hands, and I still remember choking on my little popcorn twists, because all of a sudden, I was like "what's going on?" ... So, I asked my parents, "What were they doing, these two girls were holding hands?" My mom sat down with me and was really good, "Shelley, sometimes girls like girls or boys like boys, and as long as they don't try anything on you, you don't have to judge them. They're not hurting anybody. If they're hurting somebody then it's not right. But, they can do their thing. They were in their car." I see that as being part of my homophobic side, you know, if I'm in my home and my curtains are closed, then that's my business, but otherwise, that's different. I'm not someone who would walk down the street and hold my partner's hand.

Her mother taught her not to judge others', especially if they were private and they were not hurting anyone.

### ***Role models and support systems in adolescence.***

Shelley could no longer compete in Saskatchewan Hockey sanctioned pee-wee tournaments and games, but she still practiced with the team and as they got closer to these games, the coaches "would take me aside and ask me, 'Shelley, what do you see?' They had a pretty profound impact on me, in hindsight." Indeed, preconsciously, Shelley developed her eye for coaching and was encouraged to become a coach. Her high school principal, Doug, recognized her interest in sport and would give her incentive to finish her school work

by allowing her to coach and teach the primary school children on her breaks. She said, “during my spares, I would go over and help teach classes and help the elementary teachers to set up stations. That really fuelled an interest for me to get into teaching and coaching.”

Shelley was a batgirl for the Bluebirds fastball team. She said, “I was around the (women), taking part in their warm up, hanging out and learning from watching them. But then they would take the time to hit balls to me... they gave me technical advice, and supported me... just building my self-esteem.” Shelley learned about the importance of support and how praise can build one's self-esteem. Shelley's interest in fastball meant that she was a player on the team from the age of 16 until 22. Her coach, Norma, “was the best practice coach I've had the opportunity to play for.” The practices were physically and mentally challenging, where players had to think ahead and be prepared. Shelley explained what she learned from Norma that translated directly into her own coaching.

She always taught a bit about ‘hey, this is not always a democracy. I'm the coach, and you have to fall in line’ ... I realized that I needed to be the lead and role model... She taught me a number of life lessons, where she challenged me to be better, fitter... try harder... Some of the life lessons from Norma included getting a good night sleep if I wanted to perform... As a coach, there were times when I was working into the night and then I thought ‘you know what, if I tell players that they need sleep to perform, then how can I perform as a coach without sleep?’

Furthermore, Shelley learned from Norma to bring in experts in various areas. Norma brought in a sport psychology coach and a nutritionist and this was the first time that Shelley had gotten this kind of professional advice.

Those elements that Norma brought to us, now as a coach, I have such an appreciation for... Norma was the first coach who brought in lots of experts. It wasn't just her way... So we had so many tools that were put out in front of us. For me, as a coach, if you look at our team website, I get the comment all the time that we have the biggest coaching staff around, we have more coaches than players. But, with it, I don't pretend to know more for a minute than (the experts) who focus on (certain aspects).

These elements also gave Shelley added support as an athlete and she learned that this was optimal.

Shelley also played hockey as a teenager and was supported by and learned from the individuals involved in this situation. When she was 12, she joined a women's hockey team as the youngest player. The average age of the players was 40 years old.

Because there was a such a big age difference, some of the women that had been playing for awhile, they had a bit of a coaching or teaching background, and they would take time to give me a little extra, and make better use of the time that we had. That part was a ton of fun. Great growth and development for me as an individual. Sometimes, I take things onto the ice in practice, and I think "huh, that came from Hillary. She showed me that piece." Most of the girls that I played with over time brought different elements that I use (now in coaching).

Their coach, Bob, had the foresight to understand where women's hockey was heading, and he set up a "learn to play" clinic for women and girls in each town where they would play. The women on the team, Shelley included, taught these clinics. Shelley found it rewarding to see how many women would come to learn and then continue to play afterwards. She learned to give back to the community and get women involved in and interested in playing and coaching hockey. She also found these experiences sparked an interest in her coaching, and through coaching these clinics, she learned that she became a better player as well.

These clinics created pockets of women's teams in different regions, but it was not until the Women's Worlds were aired on television that the interest in women's hockey blossomed. From 1987 until 1990, Shelley completed her degree from the University of Saskatoon in education with a specialization in physical education. Shelley's parents had always said to her, "if I don't like how something is done, I shouldn't just sit there and complain about it, I should get involved and do something." Since Saskatchewan Hockey had once told her that girls can't and don't play hockey and she wanted to change that statement, throughout her university degree, she volunteered as the provincial branch representative for women's hockey with Hockey Canada. From this, she created SaskFirst in 1990, which was a provincial team camp that incorporated a number skill building sessions, and that became the high performance team for the best women hockey players in the province.

### ***Coaching Education.***

While at the University of Saskatoon, Shelley took her coaching certification courses. In all of her sport courses, Shelley was often the only woman in the room. She did not have a chance to share her thoughts because she was often overlooked. She felt they were all confident men and she was the “little kid at the dinner table with an adult conversation going on all around me.” Shelley said that despite being a confident woman, in these situations she felt intimidated. Some men were supportive like “big brothers.”

Mark would say “Shelley, what do you think?” He realized that I was missed. I was thankful to him, because otherwise I think that after the first night I would have been thinking about whether I come back the next day or not. Should I just try to find another clinic somewhere else?

In the end, in this challenging situation, her disjuncture was a great learning tool. First of all, she learned the importance of drawing people in and asking every person in the group for their opinion, not just listening to the more talkative players. She understood how much richer the experience would be by inviting others to share their thoughts. Furthermore, Shelley learned that she did not want other women to have such an experience, because others might not get supported and might not want to continue getting certified.

Everybody's always saying, “there are not many girls signing up”... There *are* a significant number of women who would take their hockey certification courses but they are afraid to step inside that room, they don't want to sign up and go with someone they don't know. So, if you can encourage them to go with a friend, it makes it a lot easier.

Shelley did just that. As a coach, Shelley set up coaching certification courses for her athletes each year. In these courses, the athletes not only learn more about the sport and about how to coach, but also take the courses in a friendly and safe environment where they know others, which helps ensure that they have a rewarding experience.

I take a look at coaching clinics when I have all the girls in the room, and they laugh and they share stuff, but then when they have to deliver the program, they all got the same message and I can see which pieces different people picked up from it... They don't have to sit in a room like I did... At least they all have similar goals, similar age range, similar dynamic, it's very similar and not as threatening to sit in a room with

people who may have had a lot more life experience than them and who may not value their input or opinion to start.

***Early coaching experiences.***

Until 1990, Shelley played for Bob but when he retired, the men that took over as coaches were more interested in finding women on the team to date rather than developing their skills. After Shelley finished her degree at the University of Saskatoon, she tried out for team Canada, but was three times cut. Shelley recognized her disjuncture: She would only continue to get cut from team Canada if she continued playing on this team where she was not advancing her skills. Shelley was working for the Heart and Stroke foundation, but decided that she needed to go somewhere where she could grow and learn more in hockey. So, she quit her job and moved to Edmonton to join the Edmonton Chimos.

From 1992 until 1998, she played with the Chimos. However, she separated her shoulder at nationals and could not continue to play. So, during the summer, she said, "I was there on the bench hanging out, and I listened to (the coach) who I had grown up respecting as an athlete, and listening to her feedback." This helped her develop her coaching repertoire.

In 1993, Shelley coached a girls' Atom hockey team. Shelley saw this as an opportunity to give back to the sport, and to help girls grow and learn through sport. The parents all said that their goal was to get their daughters to love the game of hockey. However, once the team started winning, one father in particular, who had played professional level hockey, tried to get Shelley to change her coaching style to a more competitive/win oriented style. Shelley was confident in what she knew.

At the end of the day, it's nice to win the trophy, but it's not what's important because a lot of these girls just love to play. That had to be a discussion. It was a challenge because this Dad had played pro hockey and was trying to tell me what to do so it was a growing experience for me because I had to explain what I was doing. It was interesting because it seemed to the Dads that it was ok to tell Shelley how to coach, but I had a friend who was coaching at the same time, and nobody was telling him what to do, or not the same way, anyways. I developed an understanding of how to communicate and with who. I learned that we don't only need a beginning of the year meeting, but a couple of updates throughout the season. Some checks and balances for them and for me.

Shelley had to learn to communicate what she was doing. From this experience and others over the years, she learned that there are still some people who believed that women should not be coaching. To counter this attitude, she now gets her athletes to volunteer as coaches in the local community after taking coaching courses to develop themselves as good coaches. She learned that getting more women who were already strong hockey players involved in coaching would develop a strong image of women coaches.

I think we have a big role to develop young women coaches. I take that part really seriously. I'm proud of the fact that when we look at the U Ottawa team that I coached, how many of them have become coaches of young girls teams. It still baffles me how many of those young girls teams all have dads that coach. The moms step back, even if they've played. They are reluctant to coach... With me, the girls are "voluntold", they coined the term, because I in a sense force them to do that. But, it puts them in a place where they can develop their role model and leadership skills and they need to develop that. The young girls that they go out and work with, they have women coaches, so it's kind of a given for them, as opposed to never seeing women in a coaching role. That for me has been helpful... For me, the more girls and women we can get into it, then the easier it will be for us to continue to have women coaches.

It was at this time that she and another woman decided to start up a women's hockey team at a college in Edmonton. Shelley immediately encountered a setback – the athletics director said that the college did not have the money to start a team. However, Shelley reflected on how she could solve this problem to achieve her goal:

'What are the options here? The women are used to paying money to play.' We got together a little committee of people to set up bylaws for the not-for-profit, and I found a couple of friends together to help me coach it.

Shelley was able to create the team. Some of the girls came to this tryout with left and right sticks because they did not know which way they shot. Others came with figure skates. This was the start of women's hockey at the college level and she revels in seeing how far women's hockey has come because women were given the opportunity to play. At the college, Shelley was given a stipend to take professional development courses and so she pursued her Advanced certification.

In 1998, Shelley started her master's in adult education but stopped after one semester because shortly thereafter, in 1998, Hockey Canada convinced her to take a job as the manager of female hockey and she moved to Calgary. She was excited to have the opportunity to work full-time in women's hockey.

Sport had brought so much for me, and I thought, here is my opportunity to get this sport out to way more girls and women in the country and to work to encourage more women to get into coaching and to encourage more girls and women to get into officiating.

In this job, she learned that the power that an organization held was in the hands of it's board of directors and administrators. Long ago, when she had been told by Hockey Canada that girls do not play hockey, the organization had seemed like a large and unchangeable powerful structure. However, in her new position, she realized,

As an individual, you do have a say, and you can go to the board meetings and voice your opinion. If you don't like the rules or the equipment, you can make the suggestions, but it's about you knowing how you can work the politics to move something forward.

Shelley was motivated to work in this environment to change hockey to be more inclusive for women.

In Calgary, she was a referee and also assistant coach for the women's hockey team at a college.

It was a good learning opportunity for me when I look at roles and responsibilities. Pieces for me and my initial assistant coaching years was figuring out what is the head coach's philosophy and how... do I stay on side with that message so that the team can move forward. I enjoyed the experience... it gave me an opportunity to be closer with the athletes. It was not always me that had to come up with the things that affected their lives and their play time... As an assistant, I was the eyes and the ears of the head coach, and I had a lot of fun in that role. For me too, I'm sensitive... I don't always like to be the brunt of the negative message.

Shelley was able to learn how to support the other coach and act as a middle-woman between the athletes and coach. Therefore, her disjuncture in learning to coach was safe because she could learn without consequence of failing. At the same time, she learned that when given

some responsibilities, assistant coaches could feel empowered. Shelley had knowledge to contribute.

As an assistant, I went through many of these learning experiences where they said “you’re going to take this one tomorrow, Shelley, so make sure you go home and get prepared. Here’s your egg basket of opportunities and what you’re going to teach.” It gave me a lot more opportunities to develop that skill set. Versus some of the head coaches that I was working with where I did feel like a puck pusher on the ice. It’s one thing to push pucks, then it’s another thing to know that you’re qualified to grow and do more.

Shelley enjoyed coaching part-time with the college, and received an honorarium. However, she wanted to see the impact that she could make on her program and athletes if she was able to work full time as a coach, and she could only afford to live if she was paid full time. Only head coaches were employed full time. Therefore, she wanted to become a head coach. She felt that she needed to take more coaching courses to help her on that path. She wanted to take her advanced certification, but needed to get more high performance coaching experience. To get that experience, she worked with the women’s hockey team at the University and when the head coach wanted to leave that position, she asked to step in. However, here she encountered another setback. The athletics director was not interested in keeping women’s hockey on the roster. She knew that his powerful position in athletics meant that the women’s program would likely fold.

I’ve been here long enough to know that if the athletic director doesn’t care if he cuts the program, then so much for that playing experience or coaching experience for anyone. He had no interest in that women’s program.

In her barrier to become head coach of the University team, Shelley acted no further.

With the AD who was there, I could see that it was, I wouldn’t even say a glass ceiling, but he wasn’t going to support additional training times or ice time... I didn’t want to invest the time and energy into something like that with the job that I had and the demands that I had. I didn’t have the time to fight those battles at that time, and I thought I would let somebody else try it.

At the time, in Shelley’s life world, this was not a priority or a learning opportunity that she felt capable of taking on. Instead, on the same day, the College asked her to become head

coach. The Athletics Director had a vision to grow the program so that within three years they could employ a full time coach. Shelley took the job. In this disjuncture, Shelley learned that she would not accomplish anything in the position that she wanted at the University, and that instead, this other opportunity that had presented itself would yield greater returns.

***Self-learning: coaching university teams.***

Five years later, Shelley was still working for Hockey Canada and since this was her full time job, she could not devote as much time to coaching as she wanted. In working as an administrator, she missed the hands-on experience of coaching full time. In 2003, Shelley was chosen from a national search to coach the University of Ottawa's women's hockey team. She took the job despite the pay cut.

I look at Canadian University sport and I think there's such an opportunity for us to develop and deliver high performance programs for female athletes. When I saw this full time coaching position available at the University of Ottawa, it was a great opportunity to be able to take a lot of things that I was working on at Hockey Canada as an administrator and be on the other side of the desk and actually bring it to the table, develop a program at the university, and I felt that there was a great opportunity to develop the girls, get them into coaching and officiating, and for us to go out and deliver programs in the community as a university sport, and be there as a high performance program.

Despite her optimism, her first year coaching at the University of Ottawa was tough. The athletes had had a male coach before, and they liked him and did not want a new coach. She said,

I got emails from the kids on the team and parents and people sending me notes saying "who do you think you are? The only reason you got the job is because you're female. This is only about equity, and we're not going to accept it."

The way that she was treated impacted her experience of the coaching situation. Some of the athletes were opposed to anything she suggested. She dealt with this situation by learning what to do – she discussed the experience with her mentors and role models who asked her questions to help her work out what she had done and could do. She also had the athletes vote on the leadership positions within the team, and spoke with the leadership core about

what the problems were and what solutions could be taken. A major disjuncture came for Shelley when she met with this group. She said,

With the captain's group, we met on a weekly basis and they kept saying, "the team does not like this, they want to change that..." I finally made a list of all the bad, and thought, what have I done? I can't believe I left my job at Hockey Canada because I really liked my job there and coaching the college girls was great. Who was I to think that I could come here and build a program and make it something great for the athletes? I've just created all these bad things and how do I manage this? I made the decision to meet with the whole team, not just the captain's core.

Shelley found out that it was the captain's core who had problems and not the other girls. Eventually, one of the leaders on the team who had made her coaching life very difficult was cut, and things improved because Shelley could carry out her coaching philosophy and values without conflict. She explained how she learned through this experience to change her coaching so that such an experience would not be repeated. "I learned to take a direct approach. I really learned that had I come in and been more direct... and made those tough decisions (to cut players) early on... then the program would have moved a lot quicker." She said that being direct included explaining herself more often, something she also learned in coaching the Atom team years earlier. This was an ongoing process, because sometimes she thought she was being clear, but would notice that the athletes had not understood her message. Indeed, Shelley became more aware of others' reactions to her coaching approach in order to help her communicate her message properly.

One of the greatest things that happened that year, when things were spiraling down, I was looking to people for support and that's when I ran into Matty. Here was this upbeat, bubbly guy. We brought him on staff and that really helped change the face of where we were headed. We joked because there were times when I would say "ok Matty, I gave them this message, but can you go in and send it again." And he would, and they would say, "oh, what a great idea, let's do that." He was a fresh set of eyes in there... When Matty came in with the experience that he had, it helped to settle the ship.

Shelley explained that she learned a lot through trial and error in those first years. She also learned to trust herself. "The other piece I learned was to be confident in what I knew. I

really started to second-guess what I was doing and I often asked myself: how could I leave the position I had at Hockey Canada?" Shelley stuck to her own coaching philosophy.

I looked at why I was hired – to coach and to win – 60/40%. I looked at all the things I had to do to coach, and realized that ultimately, I'm here to develop people. We had kids who weren't as skilled who did all the little things right: they competed hard and practiced hard. They were paying to play hockey at school... If they were paying, I was not going to play only the more talented kids just so we could win games. It was a philosophical decision on my part.

In another episodic experience, Shelley learned more about how she wanted to coach the players. She realized that she needed to be aware of their goals so that she could help "set up the kid for life", not just help them improve at hockey.

In my first year (at the University of Ottawa), there was a young athlete ... and she was on the watch list for the national team program... I tried to work really hard with her to help her with those little things that (would bring her to) the next level. She just wasn't interested. Right there was this opportunity for her, but I had to think, "no, you know what, that was a dream that I had, it wasn't a dream that she had."

In this disjuncture, she recognized that she must understand the athlete's perception of their varsity level hockey experience.

For the majority of these kids, this will be the end of their elite competitive experience. But we want to get to a point where if any of them do want to go on and play over in Switzerland, Germany, or Russia, then they have the opportunity to go do that... But if they're looking to finish their elite experience now, then we want to make sure they get the most out of their experience so that hockey will continue to be part of their long term athlete development, and that they get into coaching. That's part of the reason that we put them through their coaching clinics, because we want them to be engaged and part of the game for life.

Shelley learned to ask them their goals and to listen to what they wanted out of their varsity hockey experience. "When we sat down at the start of the season, I'd ask 'what are your goals and where do you want to go with them?' It wasn't Shelley's way, it was their way. That was an adjustment."

Although Shelley changed as she learned new approaches in coaching, she always coached in a way that felt authentic to her own personality. She often observed other coaches to get ideas on what to do and what not to do. In an episodic experience, she and another woman coach watched Sharon, who was a very outgoing and motivating coach and who had success challenging her athletes. Shelley recognized that this approach would not work for her because of their differing personalities. On the other hand, the other woman coach tried to mimic Sharon's approach, but her athletes only felt threatened, not challenged. "Watching her, I was thinking, why don't you just try to be yourself instead of trying to be Sharon? I think that was a great learning experience for me."

At other times, Shelley did mimic someone who she thought had an approach that could work for her. She said that one of her high school teachers would whisper when he got really angry, and that she would lean forward at her desk to hear what he was saying, because she did not want to miss a word. She learned to use this approach, because yelling did not work for her. Shelley reflected on these different approaches.

I'm a very analytical thinker. The reality is that for me, it's relax in the hot tub and think about it, or just take some time in the office and think about "how do I approach this athlete?" I'll (also) ask other coaches for feedback on how I approach an athlete or how I appeared to have approached an athlete so that they can help me develop. Indeed, Shelley asked other coaches for help in giving her the chance to learn about herself. One of her mentors sent her video clips on You Tube to analyze so that she could learn more about how to coach certain plays. In this disjuncture, Shelley realized that she was learning a lot in watching other teams' video clips and it was a non-threatening way of exploring mistakes. She decided to use this same idea with her athletes. She found that the athletes perceived this experience much more positively than when they analyzed their own mistakes.

### ***Technological impacts.***

Shelley's coaching changed with the use of the video camera, the Internet, Email, and her Blackberry. With video, she was able to see the play from another perspective and perhaps better understand why a player chose a tactical approach. She could emphasize good technique and tactics that the players could see by watching it themselves on the video.

(Video) for me is rewarding, to be able to show them things they are doing right. I used to take components that they weren't doing well, and show the team "we need to

improve on this, take a look”, but then I’ve listened to other coaches, and they only use video of their teams to show what’s working. I have started to go down this path as well... How does (showing them the negative aspects of their game) help to build self-confidence? We want to use video more. We want to get it on YouTube or some sort of a web channel. But we haven’t gotten to my vision yet.

In order to get to her vision for technological advances, Shelley took courses on computers and webpage programming, but she now hires someone to do this type of work so that she can focus on taking courses that will help her coaching directly.

If I can find that Internet expert..., then I’d rather take that route and focus on taking courses on how I deal with people, how I can lead people through change, those types of leadership courses.

Shelley learned that she needed to take some courses and keep up-to-date with technological advances because that is how her players communicate.

I realized (emailing) is how the kids communicate... One young lady in particular, she said, “from grade two on we had our own computers.” They learned how to type. So, that’s how they communicate. Texting. I learned the files and templates and I’ve been more diligent in those areas.

Technology has helped Shelley personally to be able to unwind away from the rink, because she can choose when and what emails and phone calls to answer by having her blackberry close by, and she created google calendars to allow the players to easily check their schedule and communicate as a group.

***Networking with other coaches.***

Shelley actively sought advice from other coaches. She consciously learned from other coaches, “There are things that I can pick up from other coaches, from a professional development standpoint.” She would phone her mentors to discuss problems, and from the good experiences she had in doing so, she continued to do so.

For me, through sport and in life in general, I’ve had some really great people who I’ve interacted with who said, as they walked away “If you ever need anything, then give me a shout.” So, it’s just taking the time to actually pick up the phone and do that... I can really watch and learn, listen and learn... That is so important. There are so many experts out there, that everyone can teach us something... If I’m going to

make that phone call, then I want to make it to somebody who can really provide those pretty quick comments and things that I can really reflect on and use.

Shelley called many coaches over her career when she had problems and especially liked it when they explored ideas with her without telling her what to do. Shelley met Chris, a dynamic coach whom she greatly respected, when she took a coaching course. He was an informal mentor for Shelley.

He would make me think about the game in different ways. I loved his questioning approach... Any time that I've had any concerns about how to deal with an issue, I'll pick up the phone and he'll help guide me through it. He doesn't provide me with the answer... He is somebody who leads me with different questions, leads me to coming up with the answer. He makes me reflect.

Shelley also learned from observing her role models, especially other women coaches, in order to understand their experiences.

Sharon is a good friend and I watched what happened in situations that she was in and around. She was a young and inexperienced coach that was put into a really high-pressure, high profile position. She was given some support, and she took some, but not all the support that she was given. I was watching times when she would say something and then I would watch the reaction all around her. When she was on the national team I was the volunteer branch rep. So, I was part of the whole social gossip chain. I learned some valuable lessons watching Sharon go through her coaching experiences... I had the opportunity to listen and learn and you find out who can say what to and when should you say what you're thinking.

In another episodic experience, Shelley learned when to speak and when to stay quiet.

When I was an assistant coach with the Canada winter games team, and Melissa was my mentor, Melissa was pretty direct in pointing out to me that there were times when I had an opinion and I didn't think the head coach was listening to me, she said, "ok, it's good that you have an opinion, but if it's not being asked for, then don't share."

In these episodic experiences, Shelley also learned that the media could slant coaches' words.

In the media, you look at what did the (women coaches) say, and what was printed. There were times that I was standing at the side of the room and I heard one thing, but that was not what was printed in the paper the next day.

Nonetheless, Shelley found these to be good experiences for her because she was able to learn from others' negative experiences to understand how to keep herself out of such situations.

If you want things to go in your direction, sometimes you have to bite your tongue or figure out who you can say things to. I've watched some really skilled and talented coaches head down the wrong track because they didn't realize who they could say things to and what to say. I learned that sometimes I had to limit my opportunity to really express myself.

While this may be counter-intuitive to learning through doing, it allowed Shelley to keep a good reputation and remain in coaching.

As previously mentioned, Shelley had been ignored in Hockey Canada coaching courses. Shelley decided to advocate for women in hockey by starting women's workshop sessions in Hockey Canada's coaching conferences when she was the manager for female development.

A lot of women who were in that high performance coaching pool in women's hockey came in and shared ideas on how to help each other develop. We tried to really develop that network between women, so that you had a link with someone else who maybe went through a similar situation that you're now facing.

Shelley's experiences networking with other women coaches was positive. Therefore, she attended a women's conference led by the Coaching Association of Canada. She learned more about how to communicate as a woman in a male dominated environment by listening to other women coaches' stories and experiences.

We also talked about how women communicate. That was one of the things that I found very interesting. When you work for managers that are male and you ask for help or their insight on something, at times they think you're asking for their insight because you don't know. That has been very useful for me in terms of working with Hockey Canada environment because it's a mostly male environment. I realized that I had to say, "in your opinion, how do you approach this?" instead of saying "what's

your thought here?" Because in the latter, they're thinking, "she has no clue, I have to tell her." In listening to some of the women who have walked in those shoes before, I'm able to learn from them. As a group of women, we may learn from women's stories differently than a group of guys going "hey, she doesn't know what she's talking about."

***Coaching with learned values and beliefs.***

Shelley found it hard to openly communicate with all coaches because she is gay. As previously mentioned, through her social experiences as a child, her mother taught her to be non-judgmental of others, but not every coach shared that value. Therefore, Shelley was private about her own personal relationship with her partner. However, Shelley's partner was heavily involved in hockey, and helped Shelley to recruit players and get the players' discounts on equipment. She supported Shelley's coaching, even though it was and continues to be such a heavy work-load.

She gets at times that I need to be working and athletes need to have the opportunity to come in and chat about something. That is a definite plus... Not many partners would go sit in the rink and watch my teams play. Around her two jobs, she's very supportive that way too. We can go home and banter about different things that are going on, and she understands the dynamic of what's going on here. There are other times too, when she's going "are you being too soft? Too easy? Are you letting them get away with too much?" She's very ethical and values driven... She helps me weigh those issues. She's part of that process of reflection... But then there are other days when I go home and it's like "I don't want to talk about hockey", or she says that to me.

Nonetheless, during Shelley's first year coaching in Ottawa, her partner was not seen by the team. Shelley had learned that if it did not affect others than there was no problem, but she worried how introducing her partner might affect the team and her coaching position, since she was unaware of how people might react to her being gay.

I'm way, way, way more out now, in the past few years, than I was before. I laugh because I was the homophobic coach. I was worried. But does it get out there anyways? Yes. Do people speculate? Yes. Now, I'm like: This is my life, this is what I do.

Shelley learned to become more open, but also to be careful.

If I go into the dressing room, I make sure it's shirts on... I've had kids in here at times that have tears in their eyes, and I want to give them a hug, but I don't. I give them a pat on the back... That's a piece that I struggle a bit with my sexuality in coaching, because I don't want to cross the line, I don't want to make a kid feel uncomfortable or ever put her in that sort of situation.

In 2009, she took the head coaching position at Carleton University. What she learned in her own biography helped her coach a group of athletes with varied beliefs, values, and experiences – in short, a group of athletes with potentially very different biographies.

Shelley initially banned her players from dating one another on the team. She soon realized it was fruitless because it would happen anyways, she could not control it, and it would only be secretive and harmful to the team. So, instead of banning the girls from dating one another, she got involved if it affected the team.

Now if there's a relationship on the team, the two of them have got to manage that, and if there's a break up... I've been very quick to involve myself in the storm, because, if your private life is your private life, and it doesn't affect team, then I will not step in, but the second that it affects team and the team dynamic, then I will step in and we'll see how we can move through it. It may mean that one of them may need to go in order to move forward, are they willing to do that?

Shelley also continued to learn about herself and how to work with her team by discussing coaching with her staff and support group. Last year, she worked with Master's students who did a research project outlining her coaching behaviours. Shelley wanted to work on her specific feedback and realized that what she valued (i.e. to be a process oriented coach) was not what was being delivered in her feedback (i.e. she was being an outcome oriented coach). She was able to see that she was not giving the players enough credit for what they were currently doing.

It was something I was aware of and that I consciously knew I wanted to do better. (The Master's students) came out with the microphones, the charts, and showed it to me... After practice, I was sitting looking at the marks on the sheet, and as a coach, I am a perfectionist. I expect a lot out of myself,... but on the bigger picture, I want the staff and athletes to have a connection, so that we can help the (athletes) achieve

excellence whatever that is in their life. I have to watch that Shelley the perfectionist doesn't demand perfection, but that they put what they can out there for them to be the best that they can. I'm somebody who does demand that.

This exercise was a very valuable learning tool for her to reflect on her messaging to her athletes and become more self-aware.

In wanting to be a process-oriented coach, Shelley reflected on how to do so. She observed others to determine how they were feeling in order to develop the process of what she wanted to achieve. She learned to do this as an athlete because she would observe the other athletes when the coach would give a motivational speech to see who was getting it and who was not. She would listen to the feedback in the room. As a natural leader, she would try to determine how to get everyone to follow the vision.

Right now, we're into mid-terms, and I see kids who are trying to be there, but there are black circles under the eyes. For me, I've learned that we don't need to put in all the hours that we've been allotted. Let's find out what's healthy for the athletes. If we're coming out and the effort is not there because it physically can't be because of what's going on in their lives, then let's figure out a new plan.

Shelley spent a lot of time reflecting on her plan and on how the team was working with that plan.

If someone has an average performance, whatever the criteria is for that game, I ask myself – have I put a barrier in? That's usually my first reflective question. Then, I look at where is that athlete at today? How come they weren't able to execute?...

Does this person need more support in a certain area? Is it just one of those days? I'm somebody who is very reflective. (Then I think) what do I have to do tomorrow to bring about change.

Shelley's plan included hiring two assistant coaches, support coaches, and experts to create a network of coaches to help her team. Her assistant coach was outgoing and loud, while Shelley was introverted and challenges her athletes. Her other assistant coach was a former player who acted as a liason between the players and Shelley. Her manager was very organized. Shelley hired these people because they complemented her style. Shelley also hired many experts to help the team: A sport nutritionist; a team doctor; a sport psychology consultant; a fitness coach; and an athletic therapist. Shelley wanted her athletes to form

connections between the information that each expert taught them to help them understand the big picture of health and well-being. From her own athletic experiences, she learned that experts can bring a lot of knowledge that boosts the team's performance. She had also learned that athletes will challenge the importance of this information, and they had to learn themselves how the information linked with hockey and with their well-being.

The importance of this network was also reinforced when she worked on staff at Hockey Canada and she was able to see how the national team programs were run. She said, I was very fortunate to work with Hockey Canada as a staff person, and see how our national team programs worked. As a manager of female hockey, I traveled around the country and talked to other coaches and people who are building programs, how are they building them, what are they doing and why? I looked at best practices. Norma planted that seed, and then to be around the Hockey Canada crew and see 30 coaches on the trip and see what all that the athletes are getting... I was able to see how much the coach changed because of working with all those people, based on what she learned in the program. That took me to a whole different place.

Shelley learned from observing how others were learning and how their experiences were changing them as coaches, and she learned from reflecting on her own practices and she used this information to change her own coaching.

***Authenticity in learning to coach.***

When Shelley's mother died, the people who were there to support her were all people that she had connected with through coaching or as an athlete. She realized that the amount of time that she spent with people who were involved in sport and the care that she gave and received from these people was very valuable and gave her perspective on the importance of sport. And so, now, in coaching she strove to get the players to develop such relationships.

Knowing that I value those connections impacts how I coach now. I'm very conscious of how our dressing room interacts and though they may have different values with their teammates, they need to find ways to work together and be together, we need to talk about what we value and respect what somebody else does. It's a pretty eye opening experience to see the people who came back to Mom's funeral for me. It's a great life experience.

She tried to form bonds with the players on the team so that they had someone to support them because she found that in her years as a university student, although she was a social young woman, she experienced disjuncture since she was used to knowing everyone in her town, while at university she hardly knew anyone. In coaching, Shelley started noticing that she “lost” a few players, because they chose to be on the team one year, and then chose not to continue in the next year of university.

Instead of having kids flunk out after the first year, or just realizing that it was too much, I help them out in the first year and talk to them... I look at the kids that have stepped away from hockey as kids that we've lost. If someone had just taken a few minutes with them, it could have made all the difference.

In reflecting on these experiences, Shelley developed the idea that connections between the players could help ease the transition into university life. In order to create these connections between her players, Shelley initiated “PUP” teams (Pump Up Partners), in which a veteran and a rookie player were paired up. In this way, the veteran could act as a mentor and support network for the rookie.

If we found that in talking to that first year player in those first couple of months that she was not getting the support that she needed, then we'd find somebody else that would try to help support that link, and we'd work with the three of them, instead of just letting it slide. In a sense, we forced it, but I also watched a lot of it evolve. I could really see the leaders emerge... Throughout the year, each group was responsible for cleaning up the team room or bringing out the water bottles each week. It wasn't just a rookie activity, but a senior player and rookie together who were doing those tasks.

These activities provided opportunities for the leaders of the group to emerge, and helped create a team chemistry. However, there was initially resistance to the PUPs.

The (players) said “we don't want to watch out for someone else.” But at the end of the day, it's not about watching out for someone else, it's about supporting each other and making sure that all the links are part of the team. The further that an athlete gets to the outside of the group, especially in women's sport, I find, it doesn't matter how good they are, they won't perform with the group because they just don't have that chemistry. The more we can work to bring the group together and have that

chemistry, the better we are as a team. (I learned that by) looking at teams that I've played on and that have won, and how and why have they won? Teams that I coached and were successful, how and why were they successful? It's about the chemistry that the team's got, the chemistry and effort ethic more than the skill set.

The PUPs were created based on reflection and innovative thinking. Shelley asked herself what she could do to help the team.

Um... I think it was just looking at the dynamics of my team. It wasn't anything I read in a book or anything like that. Looking at our group and saying "how do we help these people be more successful? How do we help them transition into university life and move them forward? Who in this group can bring support to help them get out of their shell?"... When I look at that comparatively on the ice – when they make a tape to tape pass, they might ask, "how can I open up so you can give me the tape to tape pass?" That operates in the same fashion. The successful teams that I've been around, they're asking "how can I help you out?" versus, "how can I show that I'm better than you so that I get to play more often?" That's where that came from.

For Shelley, this reflection and innovativeness came from a determination to glean a lesson out of each disjuncture.

Through some of the learning opportunities I have had, whether they were good or bad, they helped me develop as a person. I've got to pull a lesson from that, and that helps me develop and grow. I use those words (learn, grow, and develop) interchangeably all the time.

Shelley also learned that the players needed to be accountable. What this meant was that the athletes were aware of what they needed to do to succeed, and so the expectation is that they would follow through on what they needed to do. Shelley learned this life lesson in part through her step-son, Gordon. She explained that Gordon had a different personality when he was with her than when he was at school. With Shelley, Gordon was very respectful, polite, and helpful. However, during a parent-teacher interview, she found out that he was being disrespectful of women. Though Shelley was shocked, she listened to the teacher's account of the events that had led to this accusation. Shelley arranged a meeting with herself, Gordon, and his teacher, and Gordon was made accountable for his actions.

I still remember one teacher saying to me “Gordon really struggles with respecting women.” My first reaction was “What are you talking about?”... It seemed like a different person... When I deal with parents (of my athletes), and we don't have to a whole lot, but it gives me the opportunity to sit with the parents and say, “I know what you're going through. Your daughter may be the most respectful person at home. But you need to understand that she isn't being that here. Here's a letter that you can read through and just tell me how respectful that is.” ... I go back to that lesson in accountability with Gordon, it has helped me to be a better coach.

Sometimes, if you don't get called on things, you continue to do it.

Gordon taught Shelley to look at the perspective of the other individual. She had always pushed athletes to achieve their potential, but had become frustrated by athletes who were talented but lacked the drive to excel.

When I look at Gordon, I had all these thoughts and visions for him... He would get 90% on the algebra exam and he only went to five classes all term. He's a smart kid, but completely underachieved. I found that frustrating... My partner's motto was “he's going to have to live with the consequence of what he's done.” I was like “no, we need a little more structure here, more discipline so we can help him achieve what he's capable of.” That for me was a good learning experience too, in seeing that two people have very different approaches in terms of how you develop an individual.

Shelley learned to look at Gordon's goals. From Gordon, she learned to ask athletes what they wanted to achieve before deciding for them what they were capable of. Shelley herself was a perfectionist. This drive to always strive for excellence enabled her to succeed in her endeavors, but also prevented Shelley from ever personally experiencing a lack of drive in sport. Therefore, she had trouble accepting less than full effort from her athletes. She had never learned to how to deal that. She learned from her athletes:

The kids I find the most hard to coach are the ones who are the most skilled but don't want it. They just want to play. That for me is trying to understand where they're coming from, because it's just not part of my experiences or what I'm about. That's been the most challenging. That part has been more about me trying to ask them questions and finding out what their goals are and realigning mine so that they fit that.

Shelley learned from interacting with the athletes so that she could see their perspective. She continued to rely on the players to communicate with her to let her know what was happening, and she respected their ability to communicate specific feedback to her.

Shelley was aware that she was a perfectionist. She changed her coaching approach over the years to be more aware of how her perfectionist personality and introverted approach helped or hindered her coaching. For example, Shelley analyzed the game, but remembered to communicate what she saw instead of simply re-examining the play as it continued.

I am a thinker and introverted in my approach. I like to sit back and think and be very methodical (and a perfectionist) in my approach. I've learned that I need to be more vocal, and when I say vocal I mean for example providing more feedback on the ice, key teaching moments and things that we're looking for so that the kids sitting in front of me who are waiting to go out can hear what we're looking for... I provide more feedback now instead of sitting back and thinking about what they should be doing.

She learned from working with the Master's students that vocalizing her thoughts would help to be more direct and positive in the process of achieving the outcome. This communication helped Shelley also learn to question what the athletes wanted so that she could help them achieve their goals, and not just goals that she imposed on them.

Here's another way I've changed as a coach: If I saw an athlete who had national team potential, that's what I would be pushing that athlete to achieve. I would say "here's what you're capable of, and we're going to do everything to get you there."

I've learned to find out what are the athlete's goals, where do they want to go? So, they know what we see in them, but what do they want?

In being aware of her perfectionist drive and introverted personality, and in changing her approach to better communicate with athletes, Shelley was able to help athletes pursue excellence without overtraining. She learned to routinely check up on her athletes' lives outside of hockey to make sure they were eating and sleeping well, keeping up with school, and doing activities to relax. She learned to do this because in previous years when she did not do this, she found athletes who were burnt out or failing school by the end of the first semester.

I've had years where at Christmas time I find out some kids aren't doing well at school, their first four months they've been on the phone to their parents every night in tears and wanting to go home. Then I realized, oh, I've failed that kid in terms of support because we haven't made sure that someone's watching that individual.

Shelley had to develop an approach to coaching that worked for her specifically. She was often compared to male coaches, and found that some athletes did not respond as well to her as they would to a male coach.

The athletes said, "I've always had male coaches. You don't yell enough." Well, I don't yell... When I yell, it's more of a squeak. I'm not a yeller by nature. I'm not saying that all male coaches do that, but I'm not that big and intimidating coach who others have to look up at... And I've learned (to take a different approach) as well. Because when you look at some of my first coaches, a couple of them were big men. As soon as they stepped into the room, everyone was quiet and they looked. The first few times I stepped in as a female coach and there wasn't silence right away, I thought "oh. I don't get that same kind of respect." But, they just don't see me. Once they realize that I'm in there, yeah, it quiets the room. Those are things that I had to grow through, because at first I thought "do they not respect me? Do I have to change my approach?" It's been kind of a reflective growing process.

In growing as a coach and being involved in women's hockey as it evolved, Shelley had a unique social context that impacted her biography. In 2009, Shelley was the assistant coach at the World University Games. This was the first time the games included women's hockey.

That was great, just the games themselves, the opportunity to work with elite athletes that just play at another level. I was a little bit awestruck in that moment. I look back on that and think about how special it was that I got to be part of that for the first ever experience (in the games for women's hockey).

Shelley was involved in the sport almost since its inception into a popular and well-respected game for women. Perhaps because there was so much to learn and so much learning to transfer to others, Shelley tried to turn every situation into a learning situation. She learned to coach from watching, listening, doing and not doing, reflecting, and creating, but overall,

from being authentic to herself. As she became more experienced, her confidence grew as well.

I'm not questioning everything that I'm trying to deliver. As you evolve as a person, you realize, this is the right way, and this is going to help... Bettina, you throw out a question and I think "wow, is that how I've approached it?" After, I think, "yeah, that is actually how I approached it. That is what I've been doing." By being actually able to state it, I realized what I've been doing... "Hey, try to be you. Don't try to be someone you're not." And that's a message overall.

**Narrative C4: Lesley Ann (also named Samantha and Laura in the articles in this dissertation).**

Lesley-Anne, or LA, was born in 1965 in North Bay, the youngest of three children. Ten months after her birth, her father passed away and left her mother to care for LA and her two brothers, aged five and seven years old. LA's mother worked full time as the director of human resources at a hospital. When she was young, LA learned preconsciously about being a good leader by watching her mom at work.

I spent a lot of time in the hospital with my Mom. I still remember that on Christmas she went in to the hospital and gave a red carnation to each one of the staff that was working there on Christmas day ... to say "thank you. It's Christmas day and the last place you want to be is working in the hospital. But you're one of my staff and I appreciate what you do." I saw her do that and I thought, "wow, these are good qualities in a leader – someone who cares, who will go in on their Christmas day for them." I saw my mom put in the extra time and extra hours and when you coach, you're on 24/7. You're their mom, their technician, their teacher, whatever. I think I saw my mom doing these things and thought that was pretty cool and thought that if someday I have that opportunity, I'll do it. I remember my mom one day saying to my godmother ... "I don't know where (LA) got all these leadership qualities, but she's got them." Now that I think about it, I probably got them from my mom, watching her juggle all those things and raise a family and pretty much do it by herself.

However, LA's mother did not financially support LA in sports or in school. LA learned that she did not want this for her own children.

One of the big things in my life has been to put my family first. I was raised in a different way and I think I lacked some of that in my upbringing. My deal was that my family wouldn't suffer so that I could achieve or move forward. It was probably the number one reason that I (give my children opportunities) now.

LA's brothers were much older and so they introduced her to things she shouldn't do. One of her brothers struggled through school and was never able to finish high school. LA considered herself the black sheep of the family and found friendship in a rough crowd.

***Disjuncture in adolescence: choosing to stay afloat.***

When LA was 14 years old, one of her acquaintances told her that she should try out the sport of Canoe-Kayak. The disjuncture of how she felt as a leader and as part of a team when paddling was something she had never had the learning opportunity to reflect on before. In her biography, there were no previous experiences that had opened up this world of possibilities through sport, until she tried paddling.

LA accredits sport to saving her life because once she started Canoe-Kayak in the summer of grade nine, her biography changed forever. She came back to school in grade 10 and changed her life world by signing up for different sports teams: basketball and cross country skiing (in order to train for canoe-kayak). She was invited to leadership camp. Her life took a positive spiral. Before this happened, her felt that her life had been on a negative spiral.

When I made that choice in grade nine (to start paddling), ... I made a positive choice, and sport gave me the opportunity to see that I could be something. I could be part of the team. That was always a big thing for me, to be part of a team. I was never the fastest single paddler, but as part of a team, I could do it. I could lead it, I could be involved, I could be positive, I could be real. I don't know if it's just females, but looking at it, the girls and women in sport really like to be together as a group and as a team, it's really social. I think that's what drew me in. I thought, "wow, I could be doing this" instead of standing in the smoking section at school. Then I thought, "What are they (the smokers) going to do the rest of their lives?"

Paddling for LA was her way of staying afloat in a life world that seemed to have no direction beforehand. She liked the physical challenge of paddling and the social aspect of being on a team.

I wanted to stay up in the boat. It is really tippy and I wanted to stay up. The idea of the team going to nationals, that really got me. I thought if I could make that step, then that would be really something cool. The next thing you know, I was paddling in more and more boats... You know, I never thought of it before it happened. But I always say that sport saved my life and it probably did because I'd probably still be in that place, living in a small town, not really living up to the potential that I had. But I didn't really know I had that potential until I got into something that had some element of sport, and then the leadership portion came out in high school through

sport when I got selected to go to the leadership camp. I thought, “wow, maybe I do have the ability.” It was about gaining confidence, and gaining confidence as part of a team. I didn’t know if I could do it on my own. That’s probably why I started so late, because nobody told me I could do that. Nobody pushed me to try. My mom was just too busy and sport was not a priority... Through sports, I wasn’t looking for (confidence), but I found it, and I thought, “this is amazing.”

At the North Bay Canoe Club, LA met a couple who had founded the club.

Preconsciously, she learned that these were people to emulate. When she founded her own club years later, she was encouraged to pursue the endeavor by thinking of the couple and what they had been capable of creating with similar resources.

I can remember one little boy who had no money and he wanted to join the North Bay Canoe club. The fees were \$50. I can remember the Mrs. walking over to the boy’s house and telling his mom that she was going to give him a free membership that summer. Those were the kinds of things that I always remember and we do them at our club. We support some families. Our Paddle All program for paddlers with a disability is capped off at \$50 because most of our athletes are on some kind of social assistance and they don’t have a lot of money. Those little things that the Mrs. did, I remember them and I do them... I watched that everyday and I learned from that.

She was compared to the Mrs., whom she admired for her hardworking ethic, her dedication, and passion towards the sport and towards coaching.

I guess in my heart, I watched them work really hard and they were so passionate about what they were doing... I thought about them along the way, in my head, subconsciously, because I knew other people had done it before me, so why couldn’t I do it?

LA also attended a training camp in Tennessee where she was coached by two women. She remembered one of the women was coaching with two children in tow – a toddler and newborn. LA learned that women could coach and have children.

I remember seeing the woman coach with her two kids. I was in awe. I thought, “how can this lady do this? That’s kind of cool.” When I started coaching, in the back of my mind I thought that I could do anything with kids. I think as a female, you think that you’ll have to shut down and stay home. But I never had that experience in my

life because my Mom was always working, so I never saw anybody do that. Then when I saw this woman coaching, I thought, “this lady is incredible, this can be done.” I don’t think at that time that I was even thinking about coaching, but as I got involved in coaching and as I started having my own family, in the back of my mind I was thinking, “this is no big deal, she did it. Why can’t I?” I think it just becomes what you do.

In North Bay, she also trained under George, who went on to become the head coach for the Ontario team, and later the High Performance Director of Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC). As his athlete, she tried out some of the things that he wanted her to do, found them useful, and later used them in her own coaching. From him, she learned the importance of caring for the athletes through goal setting, meeting with athletes one on one, and being honest with them.

I liked his honesty. He cared. He talked to us and he met with us one on one. He did a lot on goals, and I do a lot of goal setting too... It’s really important, because where are you going if you don’t have goals? I didn’t have goals when I first started paddling, and that was one of my problems... So, when George sat down with me that day and said “where do you want to go?” and I said, “I don’t know, the Ontario team?” and he said, “well, you’re not going to get there right now, going the way you’re going.” That made me think about what my goals should be. I think just the whole organization, goal setting, sitting down one on one, and using his sense of humour, there were quite a few things that he displayed in his coaching that I would pick up. As an athlete I tried them out, and as a coach I continued using them with my athletes... I’m pretty honest with the kids. That’s one thing I will not do is lie to them or their parents about where they’re at or where they’re going.

At 15, very soon after starting to paddle, LA began coaching. It was typical for the athletes to coach and continue to compete. LA needed a summer job, and this allowed her to be on the water. She immediately realized that she loved teaching kids and that this was something that she may want to pursue further. She was teaching competitive girls and boys aged 5-12 in introductory canoe and water safety.

At 18, LA graduated from high school and did not know what she wanted her career to be. She knew that money was the driving force behind furthering herself as an athlete in paddling, and that her family did not have money for that endeavor. Nor did her family have

money put aside for her education. At this time, LA was dating a boy who was on the 1984 Olympic team for Canoe-Kayak. LA followed him out west for the year to be part of the training camps, and then she followed the team to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. She saw the high performance side of paddling, and loved coaching paddling, but in her biography she had had no opportunities to see how coaching could be a full time career.

***Taking the leap: being a student and a coach.***

LA moved to Ottawa and became the assistant coach at the Rideau Canoe Club (RCC) where she was responsible for athletes 14 years and under. As a woman coach, LA felt that she had to prove herself to the male athletes and coaches.

In the beginning, I can actually tell you that it was very hard. A very real situation that's still in my brain from when I started coaching happened at RCC. I was the assistant coach. I was working with the younger kids at that time and the head coach said, "LA, I'm going to need you to cover for me for two weeks while I go to the Junior Worlds." I was all excited because I thought that he really believed in me and thought I could do it. He gave me his program, and told me I could change it up a bit if I wanted, but the boys were all ready to go... I knew the group of guys, they were cocky and confident and all those good qualities that make athletes good. I remember being so intimidated by the guys. Especially because women's canoe wasn't big yet. I had paddled women's canoe, I had paddled C4s, but they didn't really respect women's canoe at all at that time... I could sense on the water some days that they were thinking "what does she know?" I made it through the two weeks and didn't really enjoy it. It wasn't great, but just making it through put another peg in my board because they could say, "she did it. She didn't cry. She didn't lose it." I remember the head coach came back and I said, "well that was interesting, I don't think they respect me as much as they respect you, but I held my own."

In order to gain the men's respect, she had to prove that she could "walk the walk."

That summer, I went to the national championships, and hopped in a C4... and we won a medal. I remember when we were going out, this one young man that I really struggled with for two weeks, he said "women's canoe – it's a joke, what do you guys know!" But we trained really hard and we won. When we came back in, he came up to me and apologized and said "sorry, I should have never underestimated

what you guys can do, you guys looked awesome.” But I had to prove to the men that I could do it. That was one of the problems and struggles that I think I have always had, because I never made the national team, so athletes think that if I never made it, how can I coach it? But I’ve seen some national team athletes try to coach and they can’t get the information out properly. They can do it, but they can’t necessarily get out the information in the phases like they need to. I think that was something that that day, the light just went on. Yeah, I’m not on the national team, but I still know enough, and I can teach it.

LA’s disjuncture came in the reflection that she had after proving herself to the men. She had never competed on the national team but was capable of coaching high levels because she had learned through coaching experiences and through experiences as an athlete. Most importantly, she could translate that information to athletes.

During this time, LA attended College, and became an Educational Assistant (EA). She wanted to work with developmentally and physically delayed youth because she wanted to help adolescents who were like her brother had been. She said, “I learned about patience and learned that even if you didn’t have something, you could still work through it. That had a big impact on my coaching and certainly my teaching career.” She wanted to work with disabled paddlers and help youth at risk. Part of LA’s coaching philosophy became to give all kids a chance to paddle because of the difference it had made in her life and perhaps could have made in her brother’s life had he had that opportunity.

She also started dating her future husband, Ben, just before she turned 23 after meeting him in Ottawa during volleyball practice. He was also from North Bay and had been a war canoe paddler, an alpine skier, and triathlete. They were married in 1991. Ben was a ski coach, and eventually became a paddling coach as well.

LA became the head coach of the RCC. In this position, LA experienced disjuncture that would later change how she coached. In an episodic experience, she was forced to make decisions that went against her beliefs because of the rules and regulations of the club.

I’ll never forget this - one of my athletes, Suzie, was a very good (14 year old) paddler. She was capable of beating Megan, one of the 15 year old girls that was part of the K4 group... I remember having a disagreement with the parents because they were saying, “we have to have a race off between Suzie and Megan to see who would

be placed in the K4 for the race.” Suzie had every right to be there, but she was younger. I would have liked to say, “Your time will come” but there was no way that was happening. It was quite detailed at RCC, what you had to do. It was about having the best out on the water. So Suzie beat Megan in the race off and Megan was off the boat. Suzie really could have and should have waited the extra year... Maybe in another year, Megan could have been a great paddler, but we probably lost her because we bumped her off for someone younger. Did we really need to do that? ... I did need to at the time. I went to the board, but they had their criteria and it was probably against what I wanted to do, but that’s just the way it was... It would be hard to change a 100 year old canoe club’s values because they’ve always been about being the best. Now we know so much more and I would never do that again. Now they’re coming to me and asking me “how should we do that? We’re trying to get away from that approach.” That’s good. But at that time, that wasn’t going to happen. I wouldn’t say that’s why I started my club, but there were times at my club when I said “now I’m going to do things my way.”

When LA coached at RCC and on the Ontario team, she was the only woman coach. She came to realize the importance of being a woman coach because athletes felt comfortable talking to her and not to the other male coaches.

Some of the athletes, I keep in touch with them to this day, and they tell me “you had such an impact on me because you were a woman. And you were there.” I think to myself “but I didn’t actually do a lot, I was just learning.” That’s when I realized how important it was to be a female. Some of the trips that I went on... the athletes would come to me. They may not have come to me if I was a male. They felt comfortable with me.

In an episodic experience, LA experienced disjuncture when she realized her impact.

One of the girls on tour, she had a splitting headache the night before she had to race. She came to me and said, “it’s my period. But I don’t want to tell my coach. Can you just give me some advil? I just really know that’s what it is.” Maybe she wouldn’t have gone to a male coach because she didn’t have that comfort zone with him. There was another female coach with me and I remember saying “Christine, can you just imagine if you didn’t feel comfortable telling someone that?” She would have just

suffered her way through it I guess... Maybe it's the motherly side to me, I know I'm like that... I just have that more caring side to me, that I'm a bit more aware of the (women athletes') issues.

Although she was "motherly", as the head coach of RCC, she was intense and passionate in order to be heard.

I was always pretty intense when I did sports. In coaching, because I was one of the few women, I got more intense because I needed to make a point and I wasn't being heard. Then as I saw and did more and more in the sport, I totally became passionate, and if I'm passionate, I'm not going to let go until I get what I want or need.

She further explained her need to be intense.

I was a pretty wild coach when I started, I was pretty intense. I am all about fair play, so that gets me. But I also felt that I needed to be aggressive, because I was a woman. Every coach, back then, was a guy. So when I went to the officials' tower, I had to be that much louder to be heard. There were times when I probably didn't handle myself properly, I don't know if it's maturity, or if I just felt "you guys aren't really listening to me. I have an issue here. I'm not just another pretty face, and you guys are fluffing me off." I know now that I'm much more mature and there are ways of getting what I want without diving in head first. That is maturity for sure, but it's also my position as well. I was one of the only women in the room trying to fight for my athletes for fairness. I was able to sometimes even bring that perspective that wasn't there.

LA worked full time at the RCC from April until October and was responsible for athletes who were 15 years old and up. Despite this large responsibility, the RCC would not hire anyone as a year round coach. LA was learning that coaching was not a viable career path.

I was established in Ottawa and my husband and I were both here. So the options were pretty limited: there was RCC (and it was not a full time job); there was the Ontario team, but there was only one position and it was taken; National team wise, they had a small pool of coaches who were already there. I started to think, "what are my job opportunities in Canoe-kayak? They're pretty slim. Ok, I guess I'll stay with it and do whatever I can do"... It was kind of a scramble, I tried to make (coaching) a

living, but it didn't add up, so I had to fit in other things to get the salary...I wanted to stay in Ottawa, and if I didn't move, I wouldn't get a full time head coaching job. LA's old coach, George, was now coaching the Ontario team, and he was her mentor. In the off-season, LA was paid as an assistant coach with the Ontario team to go to Florida and also to coach the dryland training. LA learned a lot from working with George.

If George was busy, he would often let me run the practice. Those are opportunities that I may not have had anywhere else... He involved me in writing the program. He would sit down with me and explain about why we were doing certain things in certain parts of the year. He would explain what were the phases and why we do this and where we're going, which is always good... I was his assistant so I could see what he would say to the athletes and do with them. Things that you just don't learn in a book. You have to be around the athlete to get it.

LA learned well by being part of the team, watching, and talking to George and working through the issues herself.

Just by being with him, I was learning so much. I learned much more than I could have learned in a textbook because I had him there and I could ask him anything... I always felt like my lifetime is happening right now. I did not want to take a weekend off to go sit in a course or look through a book. I just felt like I learned a lot more by being involved. I do think that's a learning style, I learn a lot better when I'm doing, rather than sitting.

For example, LA learned about the paddle stroke from watching the team.

I learned a lot in the off-season about what to look for. I learned the technique when we were in the pool. These were things I didn't think about before, like the detail of the stroke. Sometimes the university team would come down and do stroke work in the water and they had all their special equipment. I would never have been exposed to that in a course. The athletes were right there.

However, when LA took formal courses, she realized that she was able to learn a next level of coaching. She had previously believed that she did not need to take courses. After attending a few courses, she realized that in learning from her mentors, she did not pick up all the things that they did. This was because the mentors had been coaching for so long that their actions were automatic and were never discussed.

I didn't have any formal training, I had no NCCP levels... But then George said, "you know, you really should take your levels." And he gave the first one that I took, so that helped. I went to that, and I thought, "wow, there's so much more to know."... Then I did my Human Kinetics degree because there was so much more to learn.

In the NCCP formal courses, the technical information that she learned changed the way that she thought of paddling. After learning this information, she could see the difference that it made in her own paddling. This helped her change her approach to coaching so that she would explain technique more precisely using the terminology that she learned on course.

I learned how to break the stroke down to the phases. Before that, I would look at the athletes and say, "I can see what they're doing and it looks ok to me." I remember one sheet that George had was error detection and correction. You had to detect what the error was, and down the next column you had to explain how to correct it. For instance, the arm is bent here, and I could tell them to straighten it but what would that look like and how would it feel? The resources on paper and the hands-on activities were great.

Learning this terminology helped LA to better coach her athletes.

The technical knowledge learned in my courses affected my coaching... When I teach them the phases of the stroke, I say, "when you put the paddle in the water, well that's called the catch." I use the word "catch" with my athletes... As a kid, I don't think I ever heard it that way or understood if I was doing it right or wrong... When I reflect on my athletic experience, I think, "this is how I came through it but this is what I can do differently to make it better for the athletes that I coach."

From 1988 until 1992, LA took a bachelor degree at the University in Human Kinetics. She went into these formal learning situations with some previous knowledge of how to coach, so that she understood how to apply the information that she was learning in the classroom.

I thought I knew it all, but then I learned the science background. I loved science in high school so that was a good thing, but then thinking about it, I never really listened. In university I learned the Creb's cycle, which I learned in high school too, but it never really applied to anything I wanted to do back then. I just memorized it and wrote the exam and that was it. But going back to university as an adult learner was really neat because at that point I was coaching and thinking, "man, I have so

much to learn.” I loved the science background and the sport psychology background. I did my undergraduate thesis in sport psychology and realized that I could have so much more information to share with the athletes I was coaching.

***Making choices.***

LA was chosen as an apprentice coach to attend the Junior European Tour in 1990 and then the Junior World Championships in 1991. As head coach at RCC, it was the board of directors who decided whether she was allowed to go on the tours. She had signed a contract for the year, and so the board was reluctant to let her leave. She was upset because this was a learning opportunity for her. In the end, the national team had to find a replacement coach for her while she was away. It was not easy to attend these informal learning opportunities.

During the Junior Worlds, LA had a major disjuncture.

The other coaches said, “you know LA, you could be really good at coaching the high performance level.” But I just decided that I didn’t want to do that. At that point... I was thinking about having kids, and there were priorities, it gave me perspective... It was like an “a-ha” moment: I didn’t really want to work with that level. It took me a little longer to figure that out, and I’m actually really lucky that I had the opportunity to try coaching at that level at the Junior Worlds. I got to go and test the waters.

LA realized that she enjoyed teaching development level athletes and watching them improve instead of going on tour with high performance athletes.

Staying at the entry and development level,... I don’t have to travel, and I can watch these kids develop... For me to watch kids develop properly, it’s way more important than the gold medal... I was excited to be selected to the Junior Worlds, but I was not in any way connected to those athletes... My connection is in developing athletes in a holistic sense: In a positive, fun way, rather than at a high performance level. My heart is in it when I know that that athlete knows that it’s me that has helped them to get to that level... I was making myself a path, but not a path to that level that I knew would make my life chaotic and out of control.

LA made a connection with athletes and knew she helped them on their path to excellence. This was apparent in her relationship with Nick, an athlete who she coached that went on to win at the Canada Games in 2009.

Developing athletes and then watching those kids at the Canada games, those are my Olympic medals. When I see where Nick came from and where he got to, I think, “whoa, I did that. It worked.” ... And I know that if one day Nick gets to the Olympics, I played a huge significant piece in that. That’s enough for me... At the Junior Worlds, I felt like an organizer or manager, running around. The athletes were at the junior Worlds for six days and the only technical things I had to deal with were minor because I was not going to change anything they were doing on the water. I just had to make sure they had everything they needed. There was no connect there for me... And then I stood at the Canada Games this summer and cried my eyes out as Nick won the medal. Each person who won a medal also got a pin that was stuck on a card that said “please share this medal with someone who has had a great impact on you.” And he walked straight up to me and he gave me the pin. That was very cool. Probably more cool than any of my Junior World, national team experiences, anything I’ve done that way. I know I’ve gone down the right path, and I think I fell in that direction. I didn’t fall, but I meandered through it and made it through the other end, content.

In fact, LA did not fall down that path but made choices and changes in her biography in order to create that path for herself. She chose to work with development level athletes, to coach them as much as they needed coaching, but this was not a “full time” job. LA gave birth to Harriet in 1994 and to James in 1997. In 1995, LA went to teacher’s college. She went on to teach at a high school for developmentally delayed youth.

In 1996, LA began volunteer coaching at RCC for girls’ midget C4s and women’s war canoes. This was a considerable step down from being head coach. She also volunteered on the board of directors for Canoe Kayak Canada (CKC). Over time, she was more recognized for the volunteer work she did with CKC and founding her own club than for any Head Coach position she had held before.

She learned to be happy with volunteering as a coach rather than having the title of Head Coach. This learning was not conscious. Rather, when LA became a teacher, she had a paid job and this helped to justify her choice.

In the old days, I remember going on the European tour and getting the Canada jacket and thinking “this is cool.” And then as I did more work, I didn’t enjoy it as much.

Then I started realizing... that I can be at the development level and be really, really important. It came a point where I was ok with who I was and what I was doing. When would that have been? It's hard to say. Probably when I went into teaching because I had a job. I didn't need to prove I was good at coaching to anybody, really. I think when I started coaching ... I thought "they have to know who I am and that I mean business." Now I could care less. Maybe that's just maturing... I don't know. I just got to a point in life when I decided I would just care about what I was doing and be a professional community coach.

LA went to the Junior Worlds in 1991 and resigned as head coach of RCC in 1993. She restarted coaching at a development level in 1996. She started to coach Nick in 2000 saw him win a medal at the Canada games in 2009. The learning process was indeed long, but started soon after she left RCC.

For me, maybe it was a long process... For sure, having Harriet slowed me down and having James slowed me down even more, and then that's about the time when I started going back and volunteering at RCC. I became a mom and I'm their coach in a different way. I've poured everything into those kids - to be their coach, their mom, their psychologist, their teacher. All those things that high performance coaches do I still get to do, but with my own kids. That's where I shifted. I think all those things are part of being a mom... When did I switch coaching high performance to development level athletes? You made me think about it, maybe it was when I was having kids... I picked a level that was functional for what I could do.

LA was able to stay connected to the high performance scene by continuing to paddle as an athlete and attend national championships or by volunteering on the board of the CKC. "Doing all that sort of stuff, I still felt that I was valued." At that time, coaching (aside from head coach of the national team) was not recognized as a profession. LA was passionate about professionalizing coaching because of the lack of career opportunities that she had had and took up the volunteer job of the Domestic Development Director at CKC with the intention of developing full time coaching careers.

I think now coaching is being recognized as a profession. That's why I do so much volunteer work as well, because I want this to be a profession, not just for women but for everyone. Sometimes I get so angry at myself because I get spread so thin

(because I coach and teach). But (having a coaching career) wasn't an opportunity for me. There was no full time work... I chose to teach because once I started having children, it became increasingly difficult to do it all. I chose a career where I could support my family. Ultimately... The teaching pension and the things that go with teaching are so big that I don't know how I could give those up. It's something that isn't even there in canoeing. There's no full time salary in Ottawa.

In her volunteer work on the board of directors for the CKC, one of her roles was to help professionalize coaching.

It's been really neat because some of my athletes became coaches and that makes me really happy. Krista is now a high performance national team coach and I coached her, and I'm really happy she chose that avenue. She is now a professional coach! The joy of seeing that, it's huge! I am so proud that she chose that occupation. I worked really hard to help ensure that job was there for her. Through my volunteering, that's what I've done. I wasn't upfront on the line, but I was in the background saying that at some point, someone like me needs to get a job, and it happened. It was pretty neat to see it all unfold. I'm really lucky to have that chance to make an impact to see someone else have the opportunity that I didn't have.

LA learned that she could make a difference by sitting on boards and volunteering her time and energy to voice her knowledge. Even with her hard work and dedication to the position, and long hours of volunteering, she felt that she did not do a good enough job. She felt that the CKC needed someone who was paid to devote his or her full attention to truly developing professional coaches. Indeed, through her work, her volunteer position on the board was developed into a full time paid position.

In 1999, she and Ben reflected on their lives. They were driving 90 minutes per day to volunteer coach at the RCC, when they lived in a small town on the river's edge. They decided to found their own club so that they could provide a needed service to the community, so that others would not need to drive so far to paddle, and so that they could have more active time together as a family. In this way, LA created a coaching job that better suited her chosen path.

***LA's beliefs: "I can't stand on the sidelines and watch."***

At age 35, LA and Ben started the Ottawa River Canoe Club (ORCC) and she has been head coach there since its inception in 2000. The club has grown to 185 members and has approximately 250 people who paddle there on any given year.

What I did was move my family to the canoe club. I picked something that I could do where my family would be near me... It's about getting us to do something where everyone can be involved. Like I said, I wouldn't be a good soccer mom. I can't just watch. I've got to be doing something.

They took the model from another Canoe Club and made a proposal to the city. They received a \$50,000 grant to start the project. "We were an April to mid-October club, as we do not have an indoor building to train in. In past 3 years (we have) become a winter training environment with athletes ranging from 10- 60 yrs." Soon after they started the club, LA realized that in order to be a club that competed well, she needed to focus on developing the young athletes. She started to work predominantly with the young children who were five to 12 years old and taught them by using an approach based on her beliefs and experiences.

I can only draw on the right side in my boat. I cannot draw on the left side. I never learned it. That's unbelievable. That experience showed me that these kids need to learn all that. There's no way that they should be on the start line and unable to draw on whatever side. There's no way that should happen. That was my commitment to make sure it would happen with the kids that I coached.

LA started "Regatta Ready camps" where the children trained to prepare for certain key regattas. Unlike other clubs, the athletes did not compete in every regatta throughout the summer. LA learned to create these camps for several reasons. First off, the club was in a remote location and the athletes would remain there all day. Therefore, LA needed to fill the time and did so by teaching the athletes about paddling on the water, and also about nutrition and meal planning, sport psychology and goal setting, stretching, recovery and yoga, race organization like loading the boats onto the trailer, and motivation through bringing in top athletes to talk to the young children. Secondly, LA created the camps because she believed that the athletes competed in too many races throughout the summer and she wanted to trim down races and focus on training. Parents liked the approach because they did not need to bring their children to races every weekend throughout the summer and their children had time to engage in other activities.

More kids came because they could engage in other sports too. I wasn't trying to take over all their time. That's what I think we did in the old days in paddling, we felt they had to commit to paddling, full scale in the summer and training in the winter. In my club camps, when kids do other sports in the winter, it is training. I don't believe that kids at 12 years old have to be there 5 days per week. Right now, my kids who are 14 years old, they only have winter training two days per week, but they're doing other sports and it shows – they're ok! The ones who aren't doing anything, that's a different story. The regatta ready camps are great because it's one week, all day – 9am to 4pm, because we're remote, they have to stay all day... We competed in singles, doubles, and fours, but we focused mainly on the club and the club doing well instead of individual paddlers doing well.

LA learned to coach this way because of necessity – the athletes at her club would remain all day and she needed to do something with them. But also, LA knew what parents wanted for their children, since she was a parent herself. LA recognized how much she could teach the athletes beyond paddling on the water. Finally, LA had a strong belief that she did not want to single out the best paddlers only.

We spent the whole week focusing on the Ottawa River Canoe Club going to a regatta, versus focusing on Harriet and James, who were always the best paddlers because they were raised there. It was about how I could get Harriet and James and a couple of other athletic kids mixed in with the other kids to make team boats which lured the other kids in much like I was lured in my team boat experience in North Bay. I don't know how it happened. I just thought of it.

Although it was unconscious, LA learned to create these camps by reflecting on what coaches in other sports do or by thinking about regular canoe day camps and changing their programs to accommodate her own purpose.

Sometimes I'll watch another sport and I'll think, "hey, they do it this way, what if we did it this way?" The way we ran the canoe club that first summer, we only had four weeks of the season. That was probably the start of my brain-child for the regatta ready camps, because I realized that the kids only need four weeks! So that's how I started thinking... I observed a lot of the canoe clubs when we were developing the programs at our club. I saw what they were doing and looked at what the canoe kids

day camps did. I knew those programs existed, so I just thought, “why don’t we do the same thing, but call it Regatta Ready and at the end of the week we’re bringing them to a regatta.” Then we’ve lured them into being competitive! I think I see existing things and think that I could do it better.

LA learned to change her coaching based on using her creativity.

I think I have a really strong creative side... I look at the way things used to be in our sport and how I was brought through the sport and I think, “remember how that felt? I’m not going to do that.”... The regatta ready camp and stuff like that, I don’t know how I came up with that specifically, I’m just always thinking and it just pops into my head... There must be something in my brain, it would be cool to do a science experiment on, because I’m always, always thinking about something and how to make it better... I have a creative side but I don’t really use my creative side in any other area, like in the arts or music. I don’t know where it comes from... I can look around and think “oh, it would be cool if you changed it to do that or this.” I don’t know why my brain goes that way.

Furthermore, LA’s approach at her club was to give a chance to all kids. From working as a teacher with developmentally delayed kids or youth at risk, she learned that it was important to give all kids positive opportunities through sport. She said,

When you work with that population, it makes you aware that they don’t have a lot, but they work with what they’ve got. That’s a bit of a mantra with me. It doesn’t matter what you’ve got. I carry that to my canoe club too. I don’t need a whole bunch of future Olympic gold medalists. Even if a kid doesn’t really know if this is what he wants to do, I feel that I owe him my time, regardless of the level of skill and ability that he has. I think that’s an important piece why the philosophy at our club is maybe that much different, and why my philosophy is to work with kids that are a bit different, and why I work at a school where kids are getting fourth and fifth chances.

In creating her approach at her club, LA’s own biography as an athlete who enjoyed paddling as a team sport rather than as an individual helped her recognize the wealth of opportunities that could become available to all children participating in paddling through team boats.

What I’m most proud of is that I went back to coaching entry-level kids and the success that they’ve had is really cool to see. One Dad saw what I was doing, and

said, “this is fun. This is not all about just racing. LA does fun things.” Our club only has stable boats, no fast boats. If you do everything technically that I’m coaching, when you get into a fast boat, you’ll be fine. That’s the method and model that I went after, and the LTAD came along right then, so it was like a living laboratory at my club. It was so cool. I was so excited about it. I took all the knowledge that I had and used it at my own club.

***The Long Term Athlete Development formal document.***

In 2003, LA learned about the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model for canoe-kayak. “LTAD came along when the club was starting, and it matched my beliefs. I always had a deep belief that the club would not be about training only the best, but introducing something to all the children as an option.” This was “very rejuvenating.” The idea of implementing her own approach and having it supported by formal documents helped her rediscover her love of coaching and passion for canoe-kayak. LA learned about the LTAD when she was sitting on the sprint racing council for the CKC and the domestic development director approached her with the document. After reading the document, she further questioned the approach that was taken in the sport.

We are a race driven organization. We have such a short season in the summer that we try to get in as many races as possible, so kids are racing 6 or 8 races in a day. They’re burnt and fried. I thought, maybe we need to learn a little more here, are we doing it right? So when the LTAD model first came out, I was there. I went to a coaching conference, and totally became absorbed in it. There are things in there that are not perfect, but certainly for old-timer coaches like me, we can look at this and say “are we really doing everything right? Or are we driving kids out of our sport? Is that really what we want to do?” I am one of those people who believes that we want to keep kids on the edge wanting more, not giving them everything so they want to quit by the time they’re 12. It’s probably about 6 or 7 years ago, as soon as it unfolded, we grabbed it and took it on.

She was excited because this model resonated with what she knew. LA was in the right place at the right time. She was starting a club where she could decide on the approach she would take with the athletes at the time when LTAD was a document that supported her and gave her the tools she needed to learn how to implement her own beliefs. For example, the LTAD

promoted helping children engage in a variety of sports, keeping children's involvement relatively non-competitive, and starting to focus on one sport more competitively in adolescence. In her own biography, LA had started competing late in her adolescence, she had focused on team aspects and developing skills, and had not felt the pressure as a young child of being watched as a future Olympian. She had started to use this approach in her club, and when she read the LTAD, she was struck by its likeness to her own informal learning. Here was a formal document that guided coaches in learning what she already knew. It helped reaffirm her own beliefs.

There were a few parents in our division saying, "LA, you've been in the sport for so long, and you're changing your beliefs?" And I said, "no. I'm not changing what I believe. I actually always believed in this. I now have something that says – go for it, LA, and try it." It's like a license to try what I believed in. I do think I had those beliefs for sure, but it's really hard to implement those beliefs when the system is old and archaic.

At the ORCC, the waters were rough and the boats were all training boats not built for speed. This gave the club a different atmosphere. Additionally, LA's approach to coaching was unique. The difference at her club was in stark contrast to other clubs.

I tend to be one of those coaches who really believes that the kids should do as many sports as they can. I remember doing that myself when I was in high school... My big thing was that I felt it was always a shame to lose young athletes because we pushed them too fast too soon. At our club, we make a conscious effort not to do that. We wanted them to have fun and go to regattas, but also to be a team. I do not focus on the best and only those people. I know I did that when I worked at RCC, and I regret it. But that was where the sport was at that time... At ORCC what I wanted to do is develop the athletes to love the sport and to develop as a team. To do that, we focused a lot on team boats... We became a community. Maybe I just see it this way, but in the country it's different than in the city. In the country, we really depend on each other with the way we live, what we do, and how we behave. It tends to be more relaxed. You don't feel the pressure. Nobody's looking at you and saying, "is that our next Olympian? Show us what you've got."

LA learned that it was important to build a community and a team of people who depended on each other. She learned not to create pressure situations for young athletes while they were training. Furthermore, she always tried to build athletes' confidence, just as she needed that confidence built up when she was a teenager starting to paddle and starting to see her potential.

I'm really positive and focus on the bright side of things. At the end of a race, I give a "high five" to every single athlete. I'm at the water's edge when each child finishes to tell them they've done a good job. I asked the division to take a look at the heats... to make sure that the kids are of the same ability, so the kids at the front are not pummeling the kids at the back... It wasn't just about racing the best, it was about making sure that all the kids were seeded, and that we had lots of ribbons. I have voiced some of the beliefs that I have and I was lucky to be part of the education piece with the LTAD group with the CKC.

LA believed in her coaching approach.

At other clubs... it's about the best athletes. If there's a K4 or C4, it's about the best athletes getting in the boat because the club wants to win. I believe that's ok when you're going to the national championships, at the midget level or above. But over time, we've bumped that all the way down to our atom, bantam, and pee wee levels. When we went to the provincials this past summer, my club wasn't pushing the best four only, we wanted to get two boats to the finals, rather than just having one stacked boat and four others on shore. It was about finding the best fit of four kids... I know that at some of the big clubs, it's all about performance. I agree that at some level that has to happen or you don't ever get high performance at all. But if I were to look back (at my days head coaching at RCC), that's the selection we used with our little kids and it was the wrong approach, because... we were eliminating so many kids.

LA was testing out her approach to coaching with the children who were at the club the most often – her own children. She started the club for the community and she believed that this gave her own children the opportunity to have positive learning situations like what she had had at the North Bay Canoe Club.

It's about opening things up for children and letting them have the opportunity. And then letting them have the choice about what to do... The best example I can give is sport related. Ben always said to our children, "we started this canoe club for you." And I always said, "no, no, let's back track here. We didn't start this club for you. We started it for the community, of which you're part." In doing that, we wanted them to paddle, for sure... I thought the canoe club was a great place to hang out. My big worry for my kids, and I think what most parents worry about, is what are they going to do in the summer? Are they just going to hang out at a mall? Not in my world. So, we had to build something where they could hang out.

LA also gave her children other sport opportunities.

We introduced hockey, soccer, and all the school sports. We have always encouraged the children to try out, and there have been failures, yes of course, but through that process we've been able to say to them "so you didn't make it, but at least you tried out."... I've learned that you have to give kids options and guide them.

Ten years after Harriet started paddling, she was now more interested in alpine skiing.

When we started the club, Harriet was five. Because our club didn't have many kids that were ready to race, we put the pressure on Harriet to be the "demo child." That's what I always called her. She was five and started racing at seven, which is really young. In our sport, we have a notorious reputation of doing that, racing our eight and nine year olds at regattas. Now, I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think she was ready. I thought she was ready, but in hindsight, maybe it was too much, I don't know. It might have been too much paddling... Maybe because I was so well known in the sport or because she started so early, there are a number of factors, but I feel in my heart that she's done everything that she wanted to do. She built the canoe club! She did! All of her friends were the first kids who came through the club. I always relied on her to go to school and recruit... I think there were some pressures there for her that I didn't even think of at the time, but I see it now.

Harriet developed into a very athletic young woman, but, because she remained in many sports, she chose to continue a different sport into the high performance stream, and wanted to continue paddling as "sport for life." LA, using the LTAD, helped Harriet develop her

own strengths and passions in sport. In learning how to raise her own children and develop her athletes, there were no clear answers. LA reflected on how it unfolded:

Have I driven my kid out of the sport? Did she stop because I'm in it or did I just give her all these different sport activities and she chose the one she loved the most? Did we give her opportunities or did we push her too much? I could go either side of the fence on those issues. I wonder if my timing was right, knowing about LTAD. She started paddling really early and she had a lot of success really early. Was that a good thing or bad thing because of what I know about LTAD? I don't know. It could be really good or really bad.

LA always encouraged her own children to stay involved in other sports, and did the same for other athletes at her club. She asked the athletes if they wanted to continue. Through her daughter, LA became aware that athletes must want to paddle, and that when pushed, they may retreat. LA's son, who was treated much the same way, had a different character than her daughter and did not want to stop competitive paddling. With her own children, LA never singled them out, always encouraged them to be part of a team, and gave them a relaxed training environment, but she also learned that every athlete will grow differently and must be asked what they would like to do.

If LA ever questioned her approach based on the LTAD, she was reaffirmed when watching athletes that she had coached perform well.

This summer at the Canada Games, the water was a bit rough and Nick was like "yeah, bring it on!" because he paddled in that as a kid at my club. Nothing scared him. He got a silver medal and I watched him, and that was a great moment for me because I coached him for 10 years and I got to see that and know that what I do and what I did works, and that my approach works. There were some people who were skeptical of the approach at my club and just to see it unfold that way was very magical.

Like she did with Nick, LA developed young athletes and once they were ready and wanted a more competitive environment, she sent them to a more competitive club. In doing these interviews about her life, coaching, and learning, she learned that she was willing to share information and athletes in order to best help the athletes.

I found out how much I'm willing to share and to give back to my sport and my community. Now, I get calls from (the coaches at other clubs) and they say "let's go skating on the canal together." Inter-club activities didn't happen before, and they happen now. And I know that that's why they happened, because I'm willing to share my athletes, I give all my athletes at midget level to another club. I feel really good about that because the other clubs need kids and the kids need to go to war canoe or K4s. I could keep them at my club and they could paddle K1 all the time but I know they want what is offered at the other clubs, so I send them to that.

LA liked sharing athletes, information, and knowledge and wanted coaches to share more often, but she felt that the competitiveness of sport stopped them from doing so.

The education system for years has been about hoarding and not sharing. We take in everything and we're not going to share our secrets. Hello, if the athletes don't understand what you're saying, so much for your top-secret information. Share and what you share may not come out the same, may not be delivered the same, and may not be received the same, but the very fact that you're willing to share and open that world up – it's great... The national team coaches used to work on their own and if you were lucky enough to meet them and get information from them, then that was great. But in the past ten years, we started bringing in the national team coaches to teach clinics, sessions, and workshops through the coaching education programs... I was lucky to have George as a mentor, but a lot of coaches don't have that, so if a course is able to mirror that mentorship piece, that's great... We've made our courses a lot more real life and the experience that I had with George, a lot of our coaches now can have in a weekend session any of the facilitators because that's how they are delivered. More of a mini-mentorship weekend.

***Personal attributes and support.***

During our interviews, LA found herself on the brink of burnout, not from coaching, but from all that is involved in running a club. The passion needed to run a club was immense and support was necessary. Additionally, LA's children were teenagers heavily involved in sport, and she helped them get to their training, emotionally cope with the pressures, and financially pay for the expenses. In addition to raising two teenagers, coaching, running the club, and teaching, LA volunteered on the board for the CKC, and

competed as a national champion in master's races in paddling. LA was also the female coach at the 2006 and 2009 Canada Summer Games.

This past year I have been asking myself if I have to pull back for a bit. I have been unloading because I've been feeling really burnt out and that it not a healthy way to live... I think about the commitment that Harriet wants to make to skiing, and I know it's going to be a lot of driving and dryland training. Life is going in different directions, my own family as well as my canoeing family. I don't know. I think whatever I do, I will continue to paddle... Part of me is wondering what else I would do. Actually, I have no goals, no objectives through all of this, except to lighten my load a bit. I just got diagnosed with osteoarthritis in my spine, and that's fairly painful. It's an overuse thing. I need to do some things for me. I can't just paddle and think that everything's going to be ok.

LA admitted that Ben thought coaching was "totally crazy" because of the long hours and strange jobs (like loading and driving the van and trailer full of boats). But Ben supported her. He began paddling and coaching paddling and this helped her stay interested in pursuing coaching as well. He helped her to start her own club and became president of the club. He continued to support her by encouraging her to take up professional development and to make sure that everything else was taken care of while she was doing so.

There was an opportunity for me to go to the Canada games last summer, but I knew that all of my kids at the club were competing at their Ontario provincials in Sudbury at the same time, and I so wanted to be there... He took over my responsibilities there. He ran the whole thing. There were some issues, but I didn't focus on those, I was just grateful that he did it. He always encourages me and picks up the pieces. He said "go to the Canada games, they need you there. You go, I'll take care of the kids here." And with our personal children, he's always made sure that they were fine if I wasn't there. That is a huge juggling act because there's always places they need to go. So, he's always been there in helping with everything I couldn't do or wherever he could fill in.

Ben was calm and relaxed while LA was intense and always busy. "Opposites attract." Sometimes just being with him, she realized that she needed to settle down when she would "get a little wired and revert to my old self." As previously mentioned, this "old self" was

someone who was very intense. She learned that her intensity was not a bad attribute, but would help her to be focused, in the moment with the athletes, and passionate.

I'm pretty intense on the water. It tells me that I care and that I can focus on what's going on... I think the intensity is my passion... and gets the kids all fired up too because they're like "this is cool. I can do this," For me, if I'm not intense, then I'm a bit tuned out and I'm not doing my job... It's what drives me. If I'm not intense in practice, then what am I here for? Intensity and passion go together.

However, this intensity was not always effective.

In the past, (my intensity) got me into a lot of trouble because I didn't think before I spoke. It got me into situations where I had to pull back and say "ok, I've done some foolish things"... I matured and got more reflective before I spoke rather than just jumping the gun and assuming things and making mistakes.

LA learned to become more reflective so that she was better able to choose her battles. From watching her mother as a child, LA learned preconsciously to have an outlet for her intensity in order to reflect on the emotions and take more calm steps to come to a solution.

I may think the steps through more clearly than I used to rather than just saying what's on my mind. I may bounce it off Ben, "I'm thinking about doing this? What do you think? This is my strategy. Or should I just let it go?" I guarantee that at 18 or 19, I wouldn't have let anything go... I was just thinking the other day that I'm so much like my mom it's scary! My mother was like that. Maybe it was learned from her... My mother, if she was really angry about something, she would say "I'm going to go write a letter about that, that's unacceptable." She used to do that all the time! The other day, I found myself saying that. I'll write letters and emails and journals... I've written letters out of frustration or intensity or whatever. I've found them in drawers and laughed my head off, you know! I'm glad I didn't send that! I taught myself a way to release because I am intense... I write letters. That's my outlet. That was my mom's outlet too, I guess.

LA was pleased to reflect on her mother's positive influence. She said,

My experiences with my mom, they weren't always great, but I obviously came out of it with something... It was really cool for me to look back on it and see it as a positive thing too. Quite often I look back and am hard on my mother because of the

choices she made. But... there are some really cool things there that I got out of that journey that I think are important.

LA explained that she reflected often and this helped her learn to change her coaching.

With training, sometimes I try new things that don't work. Whenever I try something new I'll reflect, "was that great? Would I ever do that again?" And maybe I'll go back to the Internet and I'll say "maybe I want to look for something like this to do or that to do." I do a lot of reflecting, daily.

LA explained that the reflection happened whenever she could find a spare moment.

I spend way too much time in my car. I reflect in my car, walking my dogs, sitting at my desk, or sitting at home. My kids can be talking to me but I'll be zoned out because I'm in that moment reflecting on what I will say, how I'm going to say it, or how I could do it better. It's just finding those minutes, and when I'm in the car it's a quiet time usually...

However, she also had to come up with ideas quickly.

To be honest with you, at the canoe club we have really, really rough water, and so there are times when I have something planned, but then we get out there and the water is huge and so we'll have to alter and reflect on what will work. I do that all the time.

It was clear that LA continued to learn through reflection on her own experiences, but was happy to have a mentor guide her when she could get that chance.

About three years ago, we rented the pool in Arnprior, and Nick had broken his collarbone and was just coming back, and I said to (his father) George, "Bring him to the pool and let's do some work." I was working with Nick on the floor, and I could see George was waving to me, so I went out and he said, "Ok, LA what I want you to do is to think about ... how he can get his elbow down a bit," or whatever it was that he wanted me to do. He was helping me, again! It's great, I'm loving it because if he sees something that I don't see, I will take his advice. I went back in and said "Nick, your Dad has an idea, let's try this." I was lucky because Nick was at my club so George was there quite a bit. He hung back, but if I was having trouble, I could go to him and say "George, what should I do here? Can you give me a tip or a drill?" But for most coaches, rarely do they have access to that... I brought in the provincial team

coach the odd time for a workout just to check out the kids and go in the boat with me and watch me, I'm never afraid to do that. I'll call a coach if I need one, to watch the kids or to watch video with me or whatever.

The people in LA's life world, her mother, husband, mentor, and children were deeply influential in learning her approach to coaching.

I've always known the power and influence of other people and the strength of mentorship... If you don't want to learn and you don't want to take that in, then you're missing a lot. And I didn't miss anything and I'm still taking stuff in. People can learn from that (social) approach, and it's not in a textbook.

In 2009, a women coaches' network was formed to help other women in positions like hers.

At nationals last year, we had a women coaches' dinner and I think there were 32 women in total. Whoa, it was so cool. We talked about not being respected and not being heard... These women were saying "it's so frustrating because the (men) are just driving the bus and we're not allowed to say how we feel. If we do, we're just 'bitching'. But if the men complain or have a statement, everybody listens." Going to that dinner, I was thrilled to have everybody there, but I was thinking "are we in 2010? Are we still having these discussions?" And we are.

LA reflected on this network and found that it was the same issues that women have always faced that they still faced. Nonetheless, change was happening because now there were a number of women where previously there had been only one or two. One of the women coaches reached out to LA for help to get funding to go to a coaching conference. It was not a "woman's issue" but,

She knew she could reach out to me because we had formed some bonds to support one another. I think that dinner was so important because it formed a network that I didn't have... I learned a lot from them and I was probably shocked more than anything else because a lot of them are going through what I went through. That's just the way it is. We live in an evolutionary world and sometimes we hope it will move along a little quicker and sometimes it doesn't.

Indeed, she reflected that social issues like power struggles are slow to change. This pointed to the importance of such women's networks.

That dinner told me that there are still many issues out there for us and we can help each other get through that. Now that we are connected as a group, there is safety in numbers. Even if it's nothing more than just blowing off steam and having someone listen to you who has been in that situation, they understand it... By all of us working together, there's a lot of power in that. Also, sometimes it's easier to contact a woman... If a woman coach were to contact a male coach, he might judge her. Whereas I wouldn't hesitate to say, "oh, that happened to me too. Try this."... Certainly, the gender thing is there... One of our issues is that we've got children. I wouldn't ask a guy about it, they wouldn't know the answer, right? "How does your wife feel about you being away all the time?" Well, that's different because if I was away then I had the kids with me. When they were little, I brought them everywhere with me.

LA said that the social connections that were created in networks such as this one will help future generations of women paddling coaches.

I never had a network like that when I was younger, and I don't know how I survived. I guess it was that "never say die", I just went for what I wanted, but if you don't have that personality, having this group will give you legs to stand on, and I know that's what they all use each other for now.

**Narrative C5: Nancy (also named Olivia and Nadine in the articles in this dissertation).**

***Childhood.***

Nancy was born in 1961 in Idaho. She was the youngest of three children. Her brother and sister were considerably older. Her mother loved skiing, and so Nancy grew up recreationally skiing and enjoying the outdoors. When Nancy was seven years old, the family packed up and traveled North towards Alaska. They stopped in a small town called Smithers, in British Columbia, where they decided to stay. They moved into a remote Guide outfitting ranch that had few of the amenities of city life, with over a dozen horses and a river flowing through it. Nancy was mostly home schooled because they were snow bound in the winter, using a snowmobile or cross-country skis to get to and from the ranch when necessary. From this type of education, Nancy learned to be self-directed, and to think “outside the box.” She said,

(Home schooling) made me very aware of time. It made me self-directed. It required self-discipline because the work was not going to get done unless I put my mind to getting it finished. I learned time management and self-management... When I did go to school, I showed up, listened, was told to do something in such a way, I watched, I copied, I memorized. Everyone was following the same approach to the daily learning. With home schooling, this was not the case.

Indeed, these skills were useful to her when she became a coach because of the irregular working hours and self-directed planning that is necessary to coach.

(From being home schooled, I learned) the ability to be more self-directed and think “outside the box.” It is a terrific asset to coaching skills, because that’s what we do, right? Home schooling takes you outside of that normalcy of traditional schooling. I use those skills of being self-directed and motivated in the coaching realm. They are very applicable to keep me two steps ahead of the game, for trouble shooting, for having back up plans, and to help me manage athletes without them knowing that they’re being managed. It gives me those smooth operational skills from thinking outside of the box.

Her parents operated a children’s camp in the summer that included horseback riding, hiking, canoeing, and leadership activities, as well as running cabins and boat rentals. In the

fall, that switched to trophy hunting and steelhead fishing. Being the youngest, Nancy had relatively few responsibilities.

When we first moved out I was too young to be of any help, with the exception of feeding and grooming the horses and bailing out the boats when they got water in them. As time went on, my brother and sister worked as camp counselors and I did a little bit of that. As I got older, I worked as a wrangler at our hunting camp. My childhood up there was pretty responsibility-free in terms of the actual business of guide outfitting.

Nancy was not greatly influenced by her brother and sister due to the age gap, and aside from the social activities at the ranch, Nancy spent a great deal of time alone and independent.

The ranch was a vast area and I spent a lot of time on my own. Most of the time (my parents) had no idea where I was. I was either out gallivanting with the horses somewhere in the mountains or out in a canoe on the lake – I was out exploring.

There was no limit to my independence, and not a lot of social support.

Nancy was able to ski at the local ski area. Rick, a coach at the mountain, saw Nancy skiing and convinced her parents that she should race. In grades 11 and 12, Nancy was able to go to school in the winter, and she was on the alpine racing team. After high school, Nancy moved to another town to join the racing team because she thought it was a great learning opportunity. Her racing career was short but she was exposed to many great coaches and athletes who would take her aside and give her personalized feedback. They understood the sport well and pushed her to succeed in racing even though Nancy did not feel as skilled as the other athletes. In reflection, once she began coaching, it became apparent to her that coaches should be authentic to themselves and coach in different ways depending on who they were. For example,

Certain (coaches) with certain experiences should be doing something very different than others. I started realizing that great coaches could say so much with so little and stay on that path to make it interesting. Other coaches, it was a barrage of information that was probably pertinent but maybe not timely – everything at once.

At a speed camp, Nancy met Martina, a coach from the United States, who was the first well-respected, high performance, female ski coach that Nancy had ever met.

The exposure to Martina was an “ah ha” moment: “There’s a woman coaching this camp!” After working with her for a couple of days, I started winning the time trials at the camp. I just remember the awareness, there was suddenly an awareness that she was just as, if not more so, effective as a coach as all the others I had worked with who were men.

Nancy had several surgeries in her racing career. After an ACL reconstruction she “lay around” recovering from the injuries.

Having had only exclusive exposure to men as coaches (except for Martina), it was not yet formed in my mind that coaching could be an avenue for me, until I got injured. Then I started wondering: “what’s next?” That’s been my motto in life – what’s next? Anything that’s come up in the past that has been a controversy or a challenge or a change in plan A, (my parents) have encouraged me to always have a backup plan. In lying in my hospital bed, the “what’s next?” got me thinking about coaching ski racing and that’s when I started remembering this woman who had obviously made a bigger impact on my life than I had realized at that time... That’s when I kind of started thinking about how cool it would be to be a coach, in a female role. Martina was a no-nonsense kind of gal, the men there respected her... I often thought about the way that she approached the athletes and other coaches and realized that she had something going that other people were not picking up on.

Nancy had a reason to think about coaching. In reflection, Nancy began to consider and wonder why all the athletes on the same team were always given the same drills and exercises when alpine skiing was an individual sport and not everyone had the same problems. She had been independently home schooled, and had learned to think outside of the box. She “had to perform critical thinking at an early age”, and understood the advantage of having individualized programs. Furthermore, Nancy noted that some coaches had a hard core, kick-ass, “you deal with it or you’re out” type attitude back then, where you would train ridiculous amounts of runs on the hill and then when you get off the hill you’d be going for three hours of dryland training in the hot sun after. There just wasn’t that education there. There wasn’t that common sense of management. But this is how it was done, and no one seemed ready to step out and question if there were better approaches – the science was still not there.

The general lack of athlete management and individualization that she had felt as an athlete, combined with some experiences with great coaches who had given her personalized feedback, had turned her onto the idea of ski coaching. “I think just the whole spectrum of coaching that I was exposed to made me really interested in discovering if I could make it better.”

***Early coaching experiences.***

Nancy started coaching in 1980 at the age of 19. For three years, she coached at her local club near Smithers under the guidance of Rick.

It was really good because it was a very remote club, it was very small, there wasn't a lot of talent coming out of there, there was no pressure to produce in the eyes of the current administration. It was a place where a young coach could go in and make the mistakes and not be chastised for them. The people there have a wonderful sense of humour, support, and this created a positive learning environment.

Right from the start, Nancy had coaches who supported her in two very different ways. One group of coaches told her she could do anything she wanted in coaching – she could make this her career. Another group told her she should go to university and have a “normal” life. In her first year of coaching, an episodic experience stands out: Nancy was recovering from her knee surgery and was skiing on one ski with a brace on the second leg.

I remember this one coach looking at me as I was coaching and he made the comment... that to choose a life as coaching as a woman would be the biggest mistake I ever made... He also made the comment that it would be a lonely career and if I was going to do it then I should think long and hard about what I would sacrifice for it. He and a few others from that “side of the fence” – they were all really supportive guys but simply did not think that there was any place at all in coaching for women. These were the guys who supported getting out of the sport, going to university, and having a normal life.

However, Nancy was not persuaded by his comments. She said,

I did consider his point of view, but the adventurer in me just didn't buy it... Because of my upbringing, with my stubborn and independent streak, it made me grit my teeth a bit. I remember thinking “you're all wrong. You're so wrong.”

Perhaps she learned unintentionally that this comment was a warning to her about the sacrifices that she would have to make in order to be successful as a coach. She said,

Since speaking with you last week, I've been thinking about this and I would like to let him know that he was absolutely right. I'm not saying that I regret my dedication to my life coaching. To live with regret is a terrible way to live. I do not regret going into coaching, but I certainly acknowledge that he wasn't lying. His opinion, back in the day, was delivered in his rough and abrasive manner. Perhaps, had it been delivered differently, I may have even considered it more. I didn't take it as a well-intended warning, but more as a challenge. That's the mistake of being young and competitive, really competitive!

Nancy was around many male coaches. She quickly recognized that she could not fit into that group. She knew that she was a different kind of coach and that she should not try to "be one of the guys." Nancy did know some other women coaches but they worked part-time at the entry level and did not have leadership roles. Nancy ran the club at Smithers in her second and third years coaching, and she did take on leadership roles, even though she was not much older than some of the racers. Rick helped her learn to design a program. Nancy stayed at the club for three years and pursued her formal certification as well as doing correspondence courses in physiology and sport psychology to further her learning.

In 1983, Nancy got a job at Fernie ski resort. Mike was the Club President. Nancy thinks that she got the job because of forward-thinking people in the Fernie Club who believed in having women coaches.

His brother had told Mike about this young female coach who probably had qualities that were desirable: organized, hard-working, and ethical. Mike was a forward thinking trend-setter. His wife, who has since deceased, was a big believer in female coaches and females in sport, and I have always had a feeling that she was part of the reason that Mike brought me down to Fernie. He hired me over the phone.

Nancy's plan was to coach at Fernie for one year and then to coach on the National team. During that summer, she worked with the women's national team as a guest coach. She realized that she was not ready to work on the national team.

That camp was not a tremendously positive experience for me. My expectations of what I had assumed I would experience were let down. I witnessed things that raised

red flags in my mind. I thought that it would be a good idea to go back and develop my skills – communication skills, organizational skills, ethical knowledge, and my knowledge of the development process better before I could speak up amongst coaches at that level... I saw things in that camp that stuck with me for my career. It did help me formulate my feelings and beliefs / values on integrity, honesty, and equity in coaching, and hierarchies that interfere with group coaching environments. By watching and being involved in the group dynamics, Nancy's disjuncture was that she wanted to learn to define her coaching practice. She explained,

Even to this day, I refer to my "practice of coaching", as one would practice law, or medicine, whatever you would practice that you have a passion in and that you truly believe in. At that camp I realized that if I was to be true to my own integrity and to my own passion for the sport and my interest in being athlete focused, then I had to figure out who I wanted to be in the sport and how I wanted to get there and what I would do, or not do, in order to maintain that belief system.

Nancy learned from the experience.

I won't say it was negative, nothing is negative if you're learning and gaining something by it. But I definitely walked away from there realizing how I would not coach, how I should coach, and having seen a glimpse of how I would like to inspire athletes. I saw some really good things and I saw some things that really disillusioned my view of elite sport and elite coaching. I decided to go back into the learning environment and define who I wanted to be and what I would do in order to get there.

Nancy decided to return to Fernie for another four years. Here, she had a chance to work with many talented athletes. She had several open and frank conversations with a former coach about the ethic of sport, her philosophy and approaches, and she started to determine her own coaching practice. She said,

(Our discussions) were not necessarily always about coaching, but about people working with kids. That's where our discussions always started... We would get into these discussions about different coaching techniques and whether these coaching techniques were applied in the classroom, if a teacher behaved in this manner, or if someone involved in the medical field behaved in this manner, would it be acceptable? We always had these really interesting discussions on coaching

behaviours, respect or disrespect of athletes, and fascinating discussions on the egocentricity of the coaching profession... That was really where I believe I started knowing that I was going to do whatever I could to ensure that somehow the environment that I was coaching in was safe for all athletes... I was still in my early 20s when I started having these discussions and it definitely got me on the right track and the strong track, and I never looked back... I don't know why we all don't take more pride in being a coach. There are coaches out there that don't understand that being a coach is a profession, and it involves the trust of a parent to take care of their child. Even if their child is 20 years old, there's still a trust there, and a certain protocol to use for behaviour... No matter what, unethical behaviour is absolutely inappropriate.

Due to her experiences as an athlete and her discussions on ethics, Nancy's approach included taking an athlete-centered approach as the cornerstone of what she did on a daily basis.

I would say that being athlete focused kept me on track 100% of my career. The athlete focused approach was just beginning to come in at that time as some of us were leaving the sport as athletes and becoming coaches, and we started practicing that a lot more. It slowly became adopted.

Nancy also valued being honest. "I called it as I saw it, and athletes always knew that if I said that their performance was good – it was good; if I said it wasn't, I was making a comment on their performance, not their character." Because she took this honest approach, she found that she was better suited to coach older athletes who could handle the feedback more maturely.

I quickly found that my focus and my energy and my gifts, if you can call them that, of coaching, were mostly appropriate to older athletes. I started honing in on this because after working at Fernie (at the club level) for five years I felt that I was almost ready to move to a more demanding level of the sport.

While Nancy was beginning to define her abilities and her knowledge of the athlete development process, she felt that she was lacking the organizational skills that would tie her coaching practice together. From 1988 until 1993, Nancy worked with the Canadian Ski Coaches Federation to help develop these skills. She said,

In order to lock down all the components of a coaching career, deliver a product that was professional and polished, and ensure that people understood and that I understood the sport, I decided to work for the Professional Development side of the sport to enhance these skills. I ended up working for the Coaches Federation for five years on a full time basis. During that time, I definitely hit the intensity in terms of developing my own professional skills. I took courses and studied towards my level four NCCP High Performance Coach, and mentored with many of the people that we now regard as excellent role models in coaching. In working with the Coaches Federation, it was a really good insight into the pros and cons of the coaching profession in Canada. It definitely made me more aware of the integral spot that the coaches for our younger kids held and how that was related to the product of athlete that would come to us at the provincial level.

Nancy took her ski coaching certification levels one to three. In working with the CSCF, she started also taking courses with the National Coaching Institute (NCI) for her level four. She explained how she learned in the courses.

Once I got up into the level four courses, I found really specific information that made a difference to my coaching practice. It was all insightful and applicable information. I can't really pull one thing out that was more important. I think the planning and periodization is one of the more heavily loaded components of the level four and was highly important to know, to understand, and to implement that information in order to lead an aggressive and progressive athletic program. I would question a coaching career, in a leadership position, without that education. I think it would be substandard.

When Nancy took the NCI courses at the same time as being a facilitator with the CSCF, she was better able to understand the application of the material because of the people around her who impacted her biography.

I wouldn't say that my learning came all from the level four materials themselves. It created the knowledge of not knowing. This motivated me to learn more and use the tools that we have now like the Internet to find out more information that some of the courses touched upon. The level four started tying things together for me... I had access to people who could give me information well beyond what I could get from

our coaching certification process at that time. When I was working for the CSCF, I learned such valuable information about coaching. When you teach you learn. That opened up more avenues to my learning.

Nancy was able to learn so much because the top management of the CSCF encouraged the staff to learn whatever they felt they needed to learn. She explained,

I was working with all these guys who had been there for years - to present in front of them I had to learn fast. They were in the back of the room watching and evaluating every presentation that the “rookies” delivered. I received a huge amount of direction on what I was doing well, what I could do better, where I was failing, what was significant and what wasn't. With their help, mentorship, and input, my professional skills improved drastically. If the presentation wasn't what they wanted or wasn't good enough, they would let me know right away, and I would work on it. We also had so many people come in and present to us on how to present, how to organize, how to prioritize.

Through these mentoring relationships with the top management and through the seminars that she went to regarding pedagogy, organization, and communication, Nancy was able to learn a great deal about how to present herself and her coaching practice.

Nancy started as the level one Western Coordinator for the CSCF, and moved up to the level two Program Coordinator and assistant to the National Program Coordinator, traveling through the entire country. She met many experts in the sport science field, like Dr. Istvan Balyi, from whom she learned “periodization and planning for athletes and he helped provide the backbone for many of the programs that I designed over the years.” She met him because,

At that time I was involved in writing manuals and handbooks so I was involved with experts in the field of pedagogy and physiology, and we (the staff at the CSCF) were exposed to international experts, just to get the information. So, when I was in that environment, I was learning huge amounts of information. I didn't even realize it until suddenly one day I had a grip on much more than I realized.

At that point, Nancy started to have other disjunctures in working in the coach education and certification programs. She explained,

The CSCF got to a point where there was so much information and there was a struggle as to whether we were an organization trying to “certify” or “educate”, and I didn’t feel you could do both at once. We were cramming this information at guys over five days and then testing them on it. I also had a problem that I knew that there were coaches showing up at courses that were excellent because they were ethical, they had integrity, and they had values... But, due to the format of the courses, some of these guys were not able to get certified because they were no longer considered strong skiers... I just didn’t understand why such an excellent coach was not passing... It became my own personal struggle internally.

She left the CSCF, applied for and took a coaching job with the Alberta ski team.

***Nancy’s evolving coaching practice.***

In 1993, Nancy started as assistant coach for the Alberta men’s ski team. One year later, she became the Alberta women’s ski team assistant coach. In 1995 she took over as the head coach for the women’s team. Nancy remained as head coach for the women’s team for three years. During this time, Nancy continued to learn from the coaches whom she had admired when she was an athlete, and whom she had gotten to know as a coach through meetings, conferences, and courses. They became mentors when she worked with the CSCF and helped her to develop her abilities.

They’ve always been the kind of guys where you can pick up the phone and call them to bounce ideas off them and get their perspective... In terms of mentors, for “coaching style”, no one has been a mentor, really, because I didn’t want to try to copy anyone’s style of coaching so I developed my own. But in terms of how they approach conflict, how they deal with issues, they’re really good at those things.

They were my mentors in that way.

Furthermore, Nancy learned from working with a sport psychology consultant, Dawn. She met Dawn at a conference.

I was exposed to this woman who was talking about mental prep, delivering a presentation. Then I started to get to know her on a personal level. I utilized Dawn probably more than any other coach in Western Canada... Dawn was just fantastic in helping me gain insight into different athletes’ motivations and reasons for their motivations, in trying to inspire them, and look at their learning styles, in trying to get

them to progress more quickly or help them deal with adverse situations like injury or a run of bad luck. The information that I was able to learn from Dawn really helped to bring that relationship between the coach and athlete right in line with trying to achieve specific goals.

At this time, Nancy was married to a ski coach. He was “calm and professional and an outstanding coach... He was supportive of me going after the job with the Alberta ski team, even though at that time we weren't that aware of just how much I would be away.” Nancy's relationship unraveled and she went through a divorce that in large part was due to the high time demands and constant travel of her coaching job.

Life took an unexpected rough road for awhile ... it literally took the life out of me for some time. It was a failure and loss that I had never anticipated and made me really take a look at who I was, and what I wanted out of life. But I still knew I loved to coach, even after all the heartbreak.

She stepped away from the job to try to save her relationship, but could not succeed.

The manager offered me many options to stay with the Alberta ski team... At that time I just realized that that other part of my life was just falling apart and I realized that I could not do it all. I resigned. The athletes really took that hard and I took that to heart. From that point on I kept my private life really private, to a point where it was a frustration to many of my athletes that I worked. I don't like bringing my life into coaching.

From the experience she learned that as part of her coaching practice, in being athlete-centered, she needed to be private about her personal life and keep her own emotions separate when working with athletes.

I think that there needs to be that distance there so that you're able to make the best decisions for the kids – they're the clients... You have to have a bit of distance without losing the warmth and that pure sense of caring that you have for the athlete, for the well-being of the whole athlete.

Nancy learned that she needed to make sacrifices for her coaching career.

I do not have my own kids, and I think that had I had children of my own, this story would read very differently. It was a choice not to have kids and the choice was the career of coaching as opposed to having my own family. Of course, this was after my

divorce, it may have been different otherwise. I knew that I would prefer to have the career of coaching instead of the more normal, no, “traditional” norms of society.

Nancy also did not engage in social activities with the male coaches.

My colleagues who I saw on the side of the hill, I definitely did not hang out with them. That is just not what I did. I didn't care what people thought as long as I was doing my very best for the athletes.

Nor did Nancy try to be “one of the guys”. Part of the reason why women cannot try to be one of the guys, Nancy explained, was because it was, and still is, hard for women to take leadership roles or work with high performance alpine ski athletes because women are different than men. She said,

Coaching high performance athletes has always been “hallowed ground” for men. I've been over in Europe and a number of times I've had to explain: “No, I'm not a start coach. No, I'm not a physiotherapist. No, I'm not the coach's girlfriend. I'm here coaching.” You can't imagine how many times I've had to explain this over the past 28 years... But I have to let it just roll off. I've met some women over the years who... took it personal and they walked away. As one (female) coach told me: “It's not worth my life to fight this fight.” I do know where she's coming from. But even to this day, she regrets having walked away from coaching.

Nancy believed in her approach not to be “one of the guys”:

From the very start of my coaching career, I never tried to be one of the boys... There's the image that if you're a female coach then you don't have the ability to be a “normal” female in society. I always found, luckily, I have a pretty good sense of humour about these things and have been able to chuckle my way through this. But I have met tremendous female coaches through my experiences that have been turned off coaching, (a) because they're isolated, or (b) that they've tried to become one of the boys and that back-fires every time from what I've seen... The gals who try to get in there and be buddy-buddy, or do the late night at the bars, it simply doesn't work. (She) will not only lose the respect of her colleagues, but also of the athletes, who do understand the difference.

While ostracizing herself socially from the men may appear to be a lonely experience, Nancy did not see it this way. You may recall that her upbringing was very solitary. She said,

I think other people see being alone as being lonely. I never felt that way because back in the day, I would go out in the bush or in the mountains alone. I had older siblings that did their own thing. I was literally alone all the time. I was never lonely. I can honestly say that. I always kept my brain busy and I was always doing things. I think that that has continued.

She believed that her approach helped her to gain the respect of the male coaches.

I think the acceptance of being alone is critical for the success of women in this sport. That's just my opinion. I feel that it makes the men around you a little bit more appreciative that you have recognized that you're not one of the guys. Professionally, I always felt that there was respect out there because, for sure I missed out on a lot of fun, but I don't really think I was entitled to share in that type of fun because I'm not a guy, and I don't want to be a guy. I like being a female coach – I feel I have something different to offer in terms of approach and philosophy which is in part due to being a woman. I would say that at times, it's very lonely, but only if I allow myself to get into that mindset of "poor me." (That) is a bad place to be so I always tried not to go there... At times, I have been lonely. But the choice not to hang with or try to be not one of the boys was a conscious decision... By choosing to be not one of the boys, I was also respecting the choices of male coaches to do the traditional male bonding or male activities without the threat of this female person making judgments upon their behaviour.

Nancy felt authentic to herself because she did not engage in conduct that she may not have found professional.

I did not, and still do not, approve of coaches showing up in the morning smelling of booze, hungover: whether they are male or female. At any level, it is just not professional and I think it is disrespectful to the athlete - and to the sport. I did not approve of behaviors that would reflect poorly if a parent was to enter the environment. Unacceptable behavior is unacceptable behavior: no matter the profession.

Nancy did not feel pressured to socialize with the other coaches because of her independent upbringing.

I have never been one to really care what other people think. I attribute that to my upbringing. My parents were both hugely responsible for the attitude of self-responsibility... The independence of being so remote, really, there was no peer-pressure, so really, to this day, I don't understand peer-pressure.

This affected her in her coaching career because Nancy stuck to her beliefs and values.

Maybe it's because the initial beginnings of this career started out with this little kid who walked to the beat of a different drummer. As long as I upheld the ethics that were taught to me by my parents and I was happy and felt good about what I was doing, that was enough for me, I didn't worry about what other people were doing.

***Later coaching experiences.***

In 1997, Nancy left Alberta and took a job in Collingwood, Ontario, coaching the National Ski Academy. She worked there for two years and then was asked to an interview for the Ontario provincial team in 1999. Nancy thought she was being interviewed for a coaching position with the women's team, but instead was asked to work as the head coach for the men's team.

I went in for the interview, and half way through, I was looking around and I said "I don't quite understand, what position am I being interviewed for?" He chuckled and said "We're interviewing you for the head men's coach for the Ontario team."... I thought, this should be interesting.

Nancy explained how she reflected on this opportunity before accepting. She said,

I drove out to a little part of Georgian Bay and it's really beautiful, and I put my kayak in the water and paddled out. I thought about all the things I could bring to the team and I thought about all the things that I would need to really focus on and make priorities in order for people to buy in to my approach, and I also thought about all the repercussions of what could go wrong. The one thing that kept popping up in my mind was that this was one of the biggest "what next?" scenarios that I could really challenge myself to see if I had what it took to survive in a male dominated job.

Everyday was a new challenge for Nancy to figure out how to best reach the athletes that she worked with. She would reflect on her day to find the best strategy.

That was probably the most terrific opportunity that I've had in terms of challenge everyday. I would wake up in the morning and over coffee, I would form a strategy of how I would approach the day depending on who I was meeting with.

Nancy formed the personal coaching strategy based on what was planned for the day.

I was still experimenting with my approach, my presentation, my affect on the hill, how much I would step forward or step back on a certain day... Depending on the tone of the day – if it was a time trials day, a skills day, a training day, I definitely had different approaches. (For instance), on race days, I would back off more and use my voice, which can be quite annoying on the radio, less and less so that the guys would only hear what they needed to hear and that was it. Forming strategies came more into play when I was coaching the men because... it's easy to break their trust, so I always had to be thinking one step ahead. A couple times I nearly blew that trust, in coaching disciplinary matters the wrong way – maybe too heavy handed or with not enough humour. But certainly, I had to have a strategy for everything in my back pocket and be ready to go with whatever happened... I had to play out these scenarios in my mind to know how I was going to react to make sure they didn't lose their faith in me and I wouldn't lose their respect.

Nancy had learned about the competitiveness of sport from being an athlete and had worked with male athletes before and had learned a bit about their competitive drive. She knew that as the head coach, she needed to plan and reflect on different issues so that she would have an idea on how to deal with them when they arose.

I was dealing with a dozen competitive young men who did not necessarily like each other because they were competing against each other. There's always the underlying truth that these guys are all duking it out for the very same spots, the very same funding, the very same rights to be selected to events where maybe only one guy can go. These guys want to beat each other. They want to be the best. To recognize that, no matter what scenario you're going into, I think that's a good thing, especially for a woman coach! I had to imagine what I was getting into, to think of possibilities, to prepare and be ready to act.

With this group of men, Nancy was able to take a “no-nonsense” approach where she did not need to “sugar-coat” her feedback. She had seen this approach before from other

mentors and could emulate it. "It was the toughest role that I had, but by far the most beneficial and the one I value the most, even to this day." You may recall that Nancy was an honest coach. With the men's team, Nancy learned that this was indeed the best approach to take.

The less you beat around the bush, the better. It kept the athletes on track and didn't waste anybody's time. I liked that idea and I really believed in that idea that coaches don't have the right to waste time. There isn't a lot of time.

Nancy supported hiring Grayson as her assistant coach. He was another great support person and an ex-World Cup racer and Olympian. Nancy knew that she needed to have clout for her decisions.

I had a partnership with an ex-world cup racer and Olympian, who could still walk the walk with this group of guys! In that environment, I needed someone who I could communicate with, and Grayson and I could communicate very well, but also I needed someone I could trust. He could take my thoughts and ideas and with his input, he was able to sell it to this group of guys. It didn't take long before I didn't need Grayson to sell it, but he was still an integral support system for me. I just had to get my foot in the door to get these young men to understand that I was very serious about making them the best they could be.

Nancy knew that she could deliver messages through Grayson. Her intuition told her that this would be the best approach.

I always knew in my gut that if there was a message that had to be delivered to the guys that was not an easy message, that it would be much better coming from Grayson than from myself. I just knew that. So rather than fight that... I just thought Grayson would be the right person... I believe in my intuition, 100% - Right from the very beginning of my coaching career it has led me well. Any time I've gone against my intuition, everything has backfired. I think that's a thing that women have, and for sure, guys have it too, but I'm going to call it a woman's intuition right now. Women have that and not nearly enough of them use in their favour. I believe in it, and you have to believe in it and have tried it to trust it. I had this intuition or gut feeling, and usually when I go with it, I make excellent decisions in the environment I'm in.

Perhaps this intuition was learned preconsciously when Nancy realized that saying less was better and that she needed to take different approaches to get some men to follow her leadership. She explained,

I would try to think situations through, and try to listen to what my intuition directed me to do. Trial and error was part, of course. Was it the right or wrong timing? The right or wrong delivery? Did I consider the environment?" Of course there are many instances of "hit and miss" with the delivery of communication and decision-making process. It is all a learning experience that encompasses personal knowing, ethical knowing, aesthetic knowing (or the art of coaching – the flow of decisions, of approach, of demeanor when one is out there coaching. I believe in the science of coaching, but I think that it is incredibly enhanced with the "art" of delivery), empirical knowing and, of course, the emancipatory knowing between a coach and athlete. The combination of this "knowing" and reacting to intuition was my guide through the years. I always took the time to learn about each individual athlete. I think that's really important as a coach, to study people. You're a coach, right, and you're observing people anyways. So, you cannot go wrong by studying the people you're working with and really paying attention to what is important to them.

During this time, Nancy was finishing her level four through the NCCP/NCI. She learned from the other coaches in the course who reaffirmed that what she was doing was correct and perhaps also she incidentally learned what men thought of women's leadership, which helped to inform her "women's intuition."

The most valuable thing in those courses was that I learned from and had access to high performance coaches from other sports... It was very interesting to get access to other coaches: gymnastics coaches, hockey coaches, swimming coaches, skating coaches, you know, just to get a different perspective on sport and approaches to coaching... When I was doing the leadership course, a hockey coach and I got into a discussion on one of the coffee breaks. I was coaching the Ontario men's team. Anyhow, we had an interesting discussion on leading men and the situation where a female would be in the position to lead men. It was almost amusing to him, but not in a derogatory way. He was just playing with the scenario, if he was a woman and was leading a team of men, what would he do. He was coming at it from a hockey angle

and he confirmed that I was on the right track, in terms of no-nonsense, straight shooting approach to coaching and feedback. There's no candy coating, it's what it is, and the guys can take it or leave it. I wish I could have recorded that conversation, because it was enlightening... He was a very well spoken man and his eyes were just twinkling as he imagined what it would be like if he showed up to a team workout as a woman.

While Nancy coached the Ontario team with Jimmy as the manager, she learned from his way of packaging and presenting information. Jimmy was very thoughtful and organized, and clearly communicated his leadership without micromanaging the team. Nancy admired these traits and tried to emulate this approach.

For two years, Nancy was head coach for the Ontario team. This was a very valuable position for Nancy because it brought attention to her career.

I know this sounds harsh, but when you're a "chick" coaching girls, nobody seems that interested. But when you're a "chick" coach and you're in charge of a men's program, people seem to think that's interesting. It was valuable that way. It was a privilege. I have been fortunate that for the most part, people have always taken me seriously, but all of a sudden there was that little bit of an edge that allowed me to express my opinion and have people listen. It was very valuable that way, and it did open doors.

Unfortunately, Jimmy left the team and "the dynamic was not the same under the new management." This impacted her future with the team.

It wasn't because of the job, the team, the success, or the budget, it was only because the new manager had come in with the implied attitude that women should not coach men. I was not re-hired. It was very unusual to have that opportunity. I still thank my lucky stars.

### ***Finding the groove.***

From 2002 until 2009 Nancy worked as the head coach for the BC women's ski team. She had great success with her athletes and also on a personal level, she "found a groove." Because Nancy had worked with the Ontario men's team, in coming back to the women's team in BC, the disjuncture in the difference between coaching men and women was clear. She felt that she was more aware of how to best coach the women.

I think it's because of working with the Ontario men, but also with the Alberta men, all of a sudden when I returned to coaching women, I understood the difference between coaching men and coaching women. In my opinion it's hugely different. In an episodic experience in her first camp with the BC women's team, Nancy experienced disjuncture:

When I first came back to BC after coaching guys for a few years in a row, I jumped right into my first spring camp with a bunch of girls that I didn't know. No reports, no information on the group - just a group of keen faces with hopeful eyes. I was making comments here and there, but carefully, as I hadn't seen them before and I wanted to just watch them ski for four days and not talk to them. Of course, they weren't used to that sort of approach, they wanted feedback after each run... I'm generalizing here, but the female athlete's perspective is if you're not saying anything to them, then of course, that means you "hate" them. It was just such a different way of thinking compared to the guys. I could go for a couple of days with the guys on the Ontario team, not saying much, just a nod, nonverbal communication, and they would be fine with that. Then I was dropped into this group of young women that needed this constant affirmation that they're "ok." I was immediately aware of their need to know that I support them.

From this experience, she learned that she did not want to give constant feedback to the girls, but that in doing so, she needed to be aware of her facial expressions because this could also be used as feedback for the girls. She found that the women were emotional and took a lot of her honest and straightforward feedback personally.

People have said to me that there is a subtle difference when coaching men and women. To this day, I disagree... The whole idea that the women take things personally, as opposed to the guys, is the fundamental difference when it comes right down to it in my opinion. I needed to remind the (girls) all the time that my comments were directed at the performance, not the person. I never found that with guys.

To deal with the women's emotions in order to better coach them, Nancy learned to read their expressions, body language, and tone.

I was able to become pretty good at reading the girls. I would watch them when they were loading the van in the morning or eating breakfast, and I started to develop a sense of who I would take what approach with on that given day.

Nancy had moved from coaching the Alberta men's team, to the Alberta women's team, to the NSA women's team, to the Ontario men's team, and back again to the BC women's team. She had gradually learned to take this approach, but was really made aware of the difference when she finally stayed with the women's team for a long period of time. She said,

Coaching girls is an art. It's something that you develop over years and years. I don't think there's any one experience where you learn how to coach girls... The girls, it's definitely an art, and more of a science to coach guys.

In an episodic experience with one of her BC athletes, Nancy described how she had to rely on her biography to effectively coach Jenna with an artistic, "outside of the box" approach. Jenna was used to having other coaches tell her what to do. Instead of dictating what to do, Nancy suggested that Jenna could do what she wanted and the two of them simply free skied together.

Jenna is by far the most natural and talented skier I have ever met and ever had the privilege to work with. She taught me patience. She taught me to be open-minded. She taught me to think outside of the box on a daily basis. She taught me the value of silence - of only speaking when there are things to say. She taught me to be humble. She taught me to appreciate the gifts of working with athletes. And in many ways she taught me to trust my intuition: because when I worked with Jenna, I used intuition all the way. It was such an experience to see that out of this little girl, came this amazing woman – this independent, strong willed, intelligent, amazing person started to emerge from this craziness of youth. We had an outstanding time. She was so determined to do things her way.

From Nancy's biography, she did not feel the need to socialize and ask many questions about this athlete's life. She wanted to gain her trust so that Jenna would open up to her. And this did eventually happen. Nancy was able to take the attitude of "thinking outside the box" to help Jenna succeed, and further learned that this was effective in taking an athlete-centered approach.

I remember when we went to a major Junior event, Jenna... was starting second last. It was brutally cold. In the finish area, they were already presenting the medals... I was doing the course report on the radio, but I could not see the whole course to give her an idea of how it was deteriorating after so many racers... I can't remember my course report, but I do remember that she kind of giggled and said "oh yeah, I'll see you in the finish." She left the start, and there was hardly anyone on the hill, but every time she passed a point on the hill, I could hear radios spark up. She went by me, and I couldn't hear her, that's how clean and how fast she was going. And of course, she won. That was what she was all about. She was so determined to do things her way. Starting second last and winning was perfect. It was the perfect analogy of what she was capable of doing.

Perhaps with another coach who had tried to tell her what to do Jenna would not have been able to succeed so well. "It was the one thing that everyone was missing. They assumed that her interest in skiing was what their interest in her was." Nancy explained how her athlete-centered approach was based on athlete's motivation and passion.

I have to be completely in touch with the (athlete's) motivation for doing what they're doing... Once I understand their motivation and what they have a passion for, it might be a passion for speed, it might be a passion for the feeling of the ski on the snow, it might be a passion for the feeling of winning, whatever it is, I can connect to it with the athlete... Then I can start determining their needs. If I have that open line of communication, they will tell me what they need... I would say for Jenna, the passion that fuelled her spirit was her love of skiing, not of racing. Her motivation was the freedom that skiing gave her. The freedom of being outside, of motion, of adrenaline, the freedom of choosing the path down that hill that worked for her.

Because Nancy had earned Jenna's trust and had learned to be patient enough to finally learn Jenna's motivation for racing, Nancy knew that she had to allow Jenna to choose her own path and feel the freedom of skiing fast. Indeed, Nancy observed other world-class athletes with "free spirits" and reflected on their need for independence and how to could coach such athletes.

We need to pay attention to control issues, as control inhibits the ability of the athlete to be self-directed, as well as limits their personal power... If someone out there is

controlling them ... it simply strips this ability of the athlete to reach their potential. Our sport has always had the issue of controlling coaches and controlling environments. If you consider the superstar alpine athletes, often they are out-of-the-box free-thinkers, that are very interested in new technology and of the power of the mind... I wonder if these athletes were studied to look at how much control they have had in their career, how much independence, how much their development coaches allowed them to be those free-thinkers and promoted the power of the mind, I think it would be fascinating to look at that.

Nancy admitted that this independence needed to be learned at a young age.

I do think that athletes, in the base development stage, have to learn to be independent. If they don't learn to be self-directed when they are at the club level, then when they get to the zone or provincial level, that is where they are more apt to be controlled than at any level. That's where that pattern is developed and they start to rely on feedback from coaches, and it becomes who they are.

Nancy teaches her athletes this independence.

Basically I start asking them to give me some answers. I allow them the right to decide, the right to choose. The amount of choices they have in the modern world is mind boggling. As coaches, we tell them when to get up, when to warm up, how many runs to do, how much free time they have. That is a way of operating that I avoided more and more throughout my practice. Yet, I always did what needed to be done in a day... I could give choices so that the athletes knew that they had the right to have some say in the direction of their life. That builds a trusting relationship and puts more onus on the athlete because at the end of the day we're talking about an individual sport where they are alone going out of the start gate. They have to perform the performance themselves. The choices that I allow and encourage them to make, it only adds to that self-confidence and strength that they might or might not have, depending on how they go through the system.

Nancy learned that helping the athletes be independent and discovering the athletes' motivation and passion involved running a program that was balanced in terms of athletics, education, social, family, and even spiritual aspects.

I suddenly realized that we are all capable of delivering a program that offers balance... and pull that into their lives as athletes and make that work. All it took was ensuring I was taking the athlete centered approach and using it in the subsequent program design.

Nancy learned that this balance was important to athlete development due to her experiences in working with the athletes. She also realized that only a very small percentage of athletes make it to the top levels in the sport, and that all athletes must have a life outside of ski racing to fall back on when their athletic careers ended.

I came to understand that their world should not only be the world of the alpine ski team because that leads to some pretty off balanced dynamics. They need that input from the outside world letting them know that ski racing is just one fraction of their life. It may be the most important part at that point in their lives, but they need the balance of school, their friends, a social circle to support them in case the skiing career falls through. I find that when kids have that balance, of course they are much better athletes because they are much happier people. I think we truly take away a lot of the personal power in alpine skiing by trying to have a controlling and oppressive environment in coaching where the ski team becomes everything to those athletes.

Their social realms become the coaches, the technicians, and the other athletes on the tour, rather than having a balance of the outside world plus this inside world.

Nonetheless, as a coach, Nancy found it very difficult to achieve this type of balance for herself. "I have seen so many of my friends and of course my own life turned up side down because of the demands of coaching." She admitted that the sport was not conducive to such balance because skiers were always "chasing the winter. We're chasing the snow to South America, to New Zealand, then we chase the competitions in Europe and all around the world." When asked if she was able to achieve balance, Nancy said:

I don't know the answer to that. I made it work. But it cost me a valued relationship. I became better at communication through my first experience. I realized that it's not that tough to pick up the phone or jump in your vehicle and drive home for a couple of days. I would say that I adapted, but at a great cost initially... I learned that it is a very tough life for a female to do. As I told you before, I think that to be a really good, effective, professional, and ethical coach, as a female, I simply knew I could

not be one of the guys. If you choose this life - and you want to be effective and ethical and successful and all those sort of things - then you have to give up a huge chunk of your social life and you have to accept that. I think that is the commitment each female coach needs to make to herself and that's the one truth that women have to know if they're going to be coaching at a higher level in alpine skiing.

Nancy found fulfillment in working with very talented athletes who made it to the national team under her guidance. She also worked with a number of athletes who went on to compete on their university teams in the United States and she found these different success stories also very gratifying. Indeed, Nancy said that an important learning situation was hearing athletes that she had coached tell her that she had been important to their lives because it brought awareness to the importance of her role as a coach. For example,

A positive learning situation is ongoing to this day. I run into athletes who I have worked with over the last 28 years, and they point things out. It's funny, the things that you do as a coach, and you have no idea of the impact until 25 years later, this person comes up to you and tells you how you changed their life. That's big...

There's a young man that was a skinny little kid in Fernie, years ago, before I knew anything about anything. Apparently I told him that he could do anything, anything that he set his mind to if he could only believe it and see through it. This young man has become a climber and adventurer, and he goes around the country speaking about these wild adventures that he goes on. Apparently, in part of his speech, he attributes this turn in his life to a chat that some little chick ski coach gave to him when he was 13... There are subtle things that you do for an athlete – talking on a chair lift ride or taking the time to go prom dress shopping in Montreal. All of a sudden, they know that you have this caring and true investment in their potential.

Nancy was passionate about ski coaching for two main reasons: because of the difference she could make in athletes' lives, and because of her love for skiing.

The coaches I was exposed to as an athlete had an impact on my life – both positive and negative. As a coach, it is a privilege to help somebody step out there and take the risk to try to become something that they dream of. That is probably my number one motivation. Also, I love the sport of skiing... Every kind of skiing holds a

fascination for me because of this dance with gravity and the challenge of the environment.

Nancy started coaching because she loved the sport, but it took time for her to discover the reason that has become the most important motivator. She explained,

The love for skiing was always there... When I first went into coaching, it was as an injured athlete trying to stay connected with the sport. Bit by bit, the light went on that I was actually helping somebody achieve something... It's something that I believe in. You look at the number of kids that succeed in terms of World Cup and it's not that great. But when you look at the impact that alpine skiing has on the number of kids that go into the development programs, you see this incredible pattern of how the sport experience impacted them down the road in life.

Nancy learned predominantly from informal situations but did continue to learn in nonformal situations, while choosing what to pay attention to. She explained,

Any opportunity to learn is a welcome opportunity. I am still "hungry" to get a hold of new information. What I find, for me, personally, is that we often lack forward thinking in alpine skiing. There are people out there who have a lot to offer us and I don't think we are utilizing them very well. I think we get caught in the same old wheel of thought and go round and round with these things... I haven't been to a seminar for a couple of years now, as I find those offered in alpine skiing are often repetitive and unimaginative.

Nancy explained what she thought of as key information to learn at seminars and conferences.

Our biggest gains in alpine skiing over the last few decades have been due to advances in the equipment and the physical preparation of our athletes. However, when it comes to figuring out the mind, the motivation, the psychological implications upon performance, it's the one component in our sport that the athletes have control over. I don't think we're paying enough attention to our coaches' education with alpine skiers when it comes to the power of the mind. That whole realm of power that we could work with if we could just open our minds to it, make it a priority in our education process, and get busy to become more educated, or better yet, use these professionals in an effective manner.

Nancy felt that there was not enough coaching education that was related to sport psychology, and this impacted how coaches were able to help athletes' mental training including helping athletes transition into retirement from the sport.

I know athletes that are close to 30 now that are retiring from the World Cup and they're lost because they haven't developed that other life. There hasn't been proper transition preparation. You need to keep that transitional plan growing in the background, or they will have nothing to move all that energy, passion, and direction in to. One of my most outspoken complaints against alpine skiing, and it could be all sports... is the way that we absolutely do nothing or very little in transitioning elite athletes out of sport... The ones who do transition well, it's not due to our system, it's due to those individuals having been proactive about preparing to transition out. Some of them work with great sport psychologists that have made the difference for them. But in general, for most of them, it's like hitting a brick wall.

***What's next?***

In 2009, Nancy stopped working with the BC team. Currently she is working as the program director for a ski club. In this position, Nancy oversees younger coaches who coach both girls and boys. She helps them learn and in the process is reminded and is able to reflect on her own coaching approach and how she changes her approach depending on whether she is coaching men or women. She said,

I have a lot of fun, because now I don't change my coaching approach based on the genders from season to season, I change from run to run. I don't talk to the girls and guys together in the same group. I break it down individually and it's a completely different approach... I had some young coaches working with me with quite a bit of talent, and it just blew them away that there was a different approach for both the girls and guys, and different approaches for each of the athletes that were in the program.

Nancy helped the young coaches learn her approach by having them observe her coaching practice and ask her questions. She would then explain her process. For example, she taught the coaches about "reading" the girl athletes.

I broke it down and explained that I read the girl's nonverbal communication as she entered the race hut. Maybe I overheard a conversation with her parents as she was

dropped off. Maybe I saw the roll of the eyes, the nonverbal communication that athletes are constantly sending our way as coaches, it's phenomenal, once you're aware of it.

Then she explained what strategy she would use for this athlete on that particular day. Nancy's confidence in coaching grew over the years so that she now feels that she could help any athlete to achieve success.

Through my years of experience and the knowledge that I gained through this journey, I developed and grew as a person and as a coach. There were things that I tried that worked, and things that I tried that didn't work. The ability to recognize, to adapt, and to grow my skills of coaching are all part of that evolution. The continuous dialogue with myself about what I would do differently next time ... I prioritized these lessons and applied them, and it led to that self-evolution. Now, when I step out on the hill, I hope this doesn't sound arrogant, but I honestly believe that there is not an athlete that I can't help. Of course it will be different for any of them, but at any level, right now I know I have the knowledge, the skills, and the attitude to help any athlete in some way or another, become a better athlete, perform to a higher standard. That's how my coaching has developed. Being aware of this confidence carries me to another level of motivation and inspiration to try to develop and learn.

Through her experiences in coaching, Nancy learned life lessons.

I think we have to remain open-minded. One never knows the little things that people will share with you and how this information might impart a little piece of wisdom to you. You have to be open to those moments. You have to celebrate those small successes that the people you work with have. I mean small successes, it might be something insignificant that you don't even notice, but for that individual it might be a meaningful success. I need to appreciate all success. My lifetime has taught me that even though it is harsh and difficult, I have to stay strong to my principles, values, beliefs, and ethics... if I can stick to those principles, I can never go wrong. The intrinsic reward comes in the form of peace – knowing that I have remained true to these beliefs and values. I can sleep at night and know that I did the right thing, no matter the cost... I know that I'm very strong, that I can stand on my own two feet

and I'm not afraid to speak up with my opinions, my feelings, my principles. That's probably the biggest thing that I took (from my coaching experiences).

Finally, Nancy admitted that she could learn from everyone in her life world.

Everyone has something that I can learn from. Everyone out there – every athlete, every parent, every administrator, every coach, is a teacher, if you're willing to accept that information. I tumble it around in my mind and choose what's right for me and what isn't.

In her current lifeworld, Nancy's partner, who is involved in professional sport, supports her decision making. She explained how she continues to learn from him.

I am always learning from the way that he approaches his job and the way that he approaches people. I've been fortunate because he is tremendously professional. I can bounce things off him, which is essential, because I don't have too many people that I trust to bounce things off of. I was always assured that I was going to get an honest answer, whether I liked it or not. I value his opinions.

Since Nancy moved from coaching high performance to development level athletes, she noted that her own future is unclear, she said, "I think this is one of those 'what's next?' I'm calling it a pause from high performance sport... I will never say I'm going to leave coaching because it's too much a part of me. It's what I love. It's what I do. It's what I believe in." She said that in being part of this research, she took time to reflect on her life.

I think it's been interesting because my philosophy is "what's next?" and no one has ever, ever asked me about my coaching, my philosophy, my thoughts, and so no one has ever gotten me to pause and think about my career in a global sort of fashion... It's been the first that anyone has ever made me pause and think back and look at what the journey has brought to me. That's been kind of a gift... For the most part, it's been a fabulous adventure – the incredible athletes that I've been privileged to work with, the parents, the volunteers, and the people I've met along the way. I mean, there are always villains in any organization, but as a whole the reflection has made me appreciate the people that I have met.

File Number: H02-09-14

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/08/2009



**Université d'Ottawa** **University of Ottawa**  
 Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

**Ethics Approval Notice**  
**Health Sciences and Science REB**

**Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)**

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**File Number:** H02-09-14**Type of Project:** PhD Thesis**Title:** Exploring the Biographies of Canadian Women Coaches: Their Processes of Lifelong Learning

<b>Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Approval Type</b>
05/08/2009	05/07/2010	Ia

**(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)**

**Special Conditions / Comments:**  
 N/A