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Parenting styles and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters

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PARENTING STYLES AND SELF-CONFIDENCE
IN HIGH-LEVEL YOUTH FIGURE SKATERS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate Program in Exercise
and Sport Sciences
Ithaca College

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

by

Sarah J. Rowland

December 2007

Ithaca College
Graduate Program in Exercise and Sport Sciences
Ithaca, NY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

This is to certify that the Master of Science Thesis of

Sarah J. Rowland

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Exercise and
Sport Sciences at Ithaca College has been approved.

Thesis Advisor:

Committee Member:

Candidate:

Chair, Graduate Program
in Exercise and
Sport Sciences:

Dean of Graduate
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ABSTRACT

Parents play a major role in their child's sport experiences (Stein et al., 1999). Despite this, many parents are unaware of how they affect their children's confidence. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters. The participants for this study were four female youth figure skaters that ranged from 13-18 years of age, skating at the intermediate, novice, junior, or senior level. Four parents, one for each figure skater, also participated in this study. A qualitative research design and a semi-structured interview guide were used to investigate how parenting style affects self-confidence of youth figure skaters. Three common themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) support, (2) positive focus, and (3) providing autonomy. Results from this study can be used to better educate parents on how their parenting styles might affect not only their child's self-confidence, but also their child's performance in sport.

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in graduate school to complete this thesis. I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful family; a family that I love and that loves me in return, a family that is always supporting one another's hopes and dreams, and a family that enjoys each other's company and always knows how to have a good time. Words cannot express how thankful I am and how much I love you all!

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family:

My father, David, for teaching me that I can accomplish great things if I put my mind to it, for instilling in me “the absence of excuse spells success,” and for being his little girl’s hero.

My mother, Leslie, for always supporting and believing in me...no matter what, for enduring endless hours of conversation and phone calls, and for being one of my best friends.

And my brother, David James, for always being able to make me laugh and bring a smile to my face, for teaching me that a little Ubu can solve any problem, and for being the best brother a girl could have.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years sport has become pervasive in American society. In fact, sport has been embraced to the point that it has become the focus of daily life for many people. For such people, life can be centered around following their favorite team, competing in recreational sports, and introducing their children to sports. According to Connecticut Safe Kids (2005), there are currently more than 30 million children participating in organized sports in the United States. More specifically, the number of Americans participating in the sport of figure skating has skyrocketed from 64,000 members in the late eighties to 158,000 current members (US Figure Skating, 2006). Parents often become so focused on sport that they allow their children to miss school, family functions, or other obligations to attend practices, games, and tryouts with the hope that their child might become the next Michael Jordan or Mia Hamm. This is often due to parents' belief that the possibility of a college scholarship is contingent upon their child's participation in every possible sporting event and that they must train hard and attend countless practices in order to make it big (Hellstedt, 1990).

Throughout their early years, a child's parents play an important role in their sport experience (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). Whether it's providing financial support for equipment, practice facilities, lessons, club team funding, uniforms, or transportation to and from games or practices, parents often strive to be in control of their child's sport participation (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). This can be beneficial as parental control during childhood is needed and required as a foundation for growth (Woolger & Power, 1993). However, parents should be aware of the extent to which they can influence their

children. The type of parenting style and family environment surrounding a child can have a significant influence on a child's self-confidence and social experiences (Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002a, 2002b; Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993a; Woolger & Power, 1993). Parental actions can also have an impact on a child's perceptions of a particular sport and their performance in that sport.

Parents play an important role in shaping their child's sport beliefs (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985). Within team sports, athletes are influenced by countless factors such as their coach, teammates, and various group dynamics (Gould et al., 2002b; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985). These factors are further enhanced due to the time spent with teammates on buses, in locker rooms, and on the playing field. In comparison, within individual sports athletes are influenced by a limited number of individuals, predominately their parents and coaches, both of whom spend a great deal of time with the athlete either on the playing field or traveling to and from practices (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Thus, a parent's "influence" can be even greater when their child participates in an individual sport such as figure skating (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

Parental involvement can also be mediated by the amount of time and money devoted to a sport. In the sport of figure skating, the time and money that a parent contributes is quite large. As skaters advance through the higher levels of figure skating, the costs, time spent practicing and competing, and family commitment also increase (Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989a). It is estimated that high-level figure skaters' (e.g., those skating at or above the intermediate level) annual costs are between \$20,000-\$30,000, which can add pressure on the skater to justify the money spent on skating, through good performances and consistent practices (Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993b;

Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1991). Such monetary obligations may lead a parent to feel that they have a “right” to be more involved in their child’s sport. Therefore, parents may want to see positive results due to the fact that it is their money “at work” (Silby, 1994). Individual sport parents also have the obligation of committing their time to their child and his or her sport. For example, parents involved in figure skating have to be willing to give their time to driving their child to and from the rink for their regularly scheduled practice and lesson times (parents often stay at the rink during this time), driving their child to any outside lessons such as ballet or to work with a choreographer, taking their child to testing sessions, and accompanying their child to competitions (which can range from one day to one week in length). Again, parents may feel that since they are sacrificing for their child, that the child, in turn, should be winning and excelling in their sport. Unfortunately, this type of attitude from the parent may add unwanted pressure on the child (Woolger & Power, 1993), and ultimately impair the athlete’s self-confidence and overall performance.

High levels of self-confidence and perceived competence have been shown to be qualities that separate successful athletes from their less effective peers (Gould et al., 1993a; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, Strickland, Lauer, Chung, & Peterson, 2000; Gould et al., 2002a). Research has revealed that one of the most important factors in determining enjoyment for youth sport participants is the athlete’s perception of competence and self-confidence (Wankel & Kriesel, 1985; Wankel & Sefton, 1989a). Thus, it seems important that a child participate in an environment that provides him or her with an experience that increases self-confidence and feelings of competence. Parents are critical in molding the environment that will help increase their child’s self-

confidence, by providing congratulations, support, and encouragement regardless of the performance of their child athlete (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). On the other hand, a parent that criticizes and pushes their child beyond his or her limits can create an environment that decreases that child's self-confidence and feelings of competence (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). In the end, parents can have a profound impact on their child's overall feelings of confidence and competence.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters.

Research Question

What parenting styles affect the self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters?

Delimitations

The following delimitations were recognized:

1. Only high-level youth figure skaters were interviewed.
2. The age group of the skaters ranged from 13-18 years old.
3. The level of experience and competition of the figure skating participants included only intermediate, novice, junior, and senior levels.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized:

1. The results are limited to a particular age group.
2. The results are limited to the specified competition levels within figure skating.
3. The results are limited in application to sports other than figure skating.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined for the purpose of this investigation:

1. High-level figure skater – A figure skater that is skating and/or competing at the level of intermediate, novice, junior, or senior level (US Figure Skating, 2006).
2. Self-confidence – Belief in oneself and in one's power and abilities (Vealey, 1988).
3. Competence – The feeling that a task can be accomplished successfully (Flint, 1999).
4. Parenting style – The parental use of different levels of control and involvement. Parental style is defined by the athlete's perception of control and involvement (Silby, 1994).
5. Perception – Gaining awareness through any of the senses, especially sight or hearing; a neurological process of recognizing and interpreting stimuli (Merriam-Webster, 2006).
6. Qualitative study – Research design that allows the researcher to understand the human experience by assessing the perceptions, experiences, feelings, and emotions of the participants (Gorbett, 1985).

7. Rigor– Deals with one's discipline, adherence, and accuracy in identifying the problem, designing the research, and analyzing the data. It entails objectivity and conciseness on the part of the researcher (Shelley, 1999).
8. Semi-structured interview– An interview process that uses an interview guide, listing questions, topics, or issues to be explored and probed throughout the interview; the same general questions or topics are asked of each of the participants involved (Bogdan & Beklin, 2003; Patton, 1990).
9. Phenomenology– Focuses on how human beings make sense of an experience (Quinn, 2002).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Despite the significant role parents play in their child's sport experiences (Stein et al., 1999), many parents may be unaware of how their parenting behaviors impact their children. Children can perceive their parents' behaviors as either positive or negative which can, in turn, impact their sport confidence (Whitbeck, 1987). This confidence can have a significant affect on the child's performance (Gould et al., 1993a; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a). Thus, it appears that parenting style may have an affect on a child's self confidence and subsequently, their performance. What follows is a review of the literature on figure skating, parent behaviors in sport, effects of parent behaviors on athletes, athletes' perceptions of parents' behaviors, and parental impact on self-confidence and performance.

Figure Skating

Figure skating has been gaining popularity in the United States over the past 15 years with current membership in US Figure Skating, the United States' governing body of figure skating, exceeding 158,000 members, compared to the 64,000 boasted in the late eighties (US Figure Skating, 2006). According to US Figure Skating (2006), there are nearly 600 figure skating clubs and 800 basic skills programs in the United States. Figure skating has gained so much popularity that it is currently the highest-ranked sport watched on television in the U.S. among fans 12 years of age and higher (US Figure

Skating, 2006). US Figure Skating offers nearly 1,250 sanctioned events across the country every year, including competitions and exhibitions (US Figure Skating, 2006).

Figure skating is both competitive and recreational. For those that skate competitively, there are eight levels that a singles skater can compete in, they include: pre-preliminary, preliminary, pre-juvenile, juvenile, intermediate, novice, junior, and senior (top championship figure skaters such as Michelle Kwan and Scott Hamilton skate at the senior level). Before skaters can advance to a higher level, they must pass two tests. One must first pass the Moves in the Field test before taking the Free Skate test. Both tests must be passed in order to advance to the next level. The Moves in the Field test consists of edgework or footwork, that is, patterns that require the skater to shift between the inside and outside edges of their skate blades while also moving forward and backward. As the skater moves up in levels, the patterns become more complicated and intricate and more patterns are added to the test. The Free Skate test consists of jumps, spins, and connecting footwork that are set to music for a certain length of time; this is very similar to a skater's competition program. As with the Moves in the Field tests, as a skater moves up in levels, the Free Skate test requirements become more challenging as more difficult jumps, spins, and footwork are added, and the length of the program becomes longer.

Competitors within the top five levels (juvenile, intermediate, novice, junior, and senior) are able to qualify for the U.S. National Championships where skaters have the chance to compete against athletes representing various regions and sections of the United States. To do this, skaters must first qualify at one of nine Regional competitions (US Figure Skating, 2006). The top four juvenile and intermediate competitors in each

Regional automatically qualify for the U.S. Junior Championships, while the top four novice, junior, and senior skaters advance to a Sectionals competition (US Figure Skating, 2006). There are three Sectional competitions in the U.S. and the top four skaters from each sectional advance to the U.S. Championships (US Figure Skating, 2006). At the U.S. National Championships, the top two or three novice and junior skaters go on to represent the United States at the Junior World Championships. The top three senior women and men represent the United States at the World Championships and the Olympics if it is an Olympic year (US Figure Skating, 2006).

Parent Behaviors in Sport

Youth athletes can be significantly influenced by their parents' behavior in sport; in fact some children cite their parents as a contributing factor in burnout and their decision to discontinue participation (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Kidman, McKenzie, & McKenzie 1999). Parental influence on children's sport participation is pervasive. In one study, 32% of children stated that they participated in sports because that is what their parents wanted (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). In a similar study, 29% of athletes reported that their parents yelling or screaming, walking away from competition, or hitting them caused them embarrassment (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997). In the same study, 20% of parents thought they had exhibited inappropriate sport behaviors (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997). Clearly parents have a significant influence on their children; sadly many parents may not realize the extent of their influence.

Hellstedt (1987) has adapted a model, originally developed by Minuchin (1974), for describing the emotional and behavioral involvement of family members in the sport environment. Hellstedt's (1987) model attempts to illustrate the involvement of

parent/guardians in their child's sport in the following three categories: over-involved, moderately involved, and under-involved. According to Hellstedt (1987), under-involved parents show a "lack of emotional, financial, or functional investment" (p.153) in their child's sport. Behaviors of under-involved parents include:

"lack of attendance at games or events, a minimal financial investment in equipment, few volunteer activities such as car pooling or other assistance with transportation, minimal interest in conferences with the coach in regard to the quality of their son's or daughter's participation or skill development, and little or no assistance in helping the athlete set realistic outcome and performance goals" (Hellstedt, 1987, p. 153).

Moderately involved parents typically exhibit parental direction that is firm, but also flexible, allowing the youth athlete to be actively involved in decision-making (Hellstedt, 1987). These parents are supportive, but the ultimate decision-making regarding sport is in the hands of the youth athlete (Hellstedt, 1987). Moderately involved parents display behaviors that include showing interest in coach feedback, setting goals that are realistic for their child's achievement, supporting their child financially but not to the realm of excess, volunteering with their child's sport organization, sponsoring or supporting the sport organization, and allowing the coach and their staff to be in charge of their child's skill development (Hellstedt, 1987).

As the name insinuates, over-involved parents are excessively involved in their child's sport experience (Hellstedt, 1987). Over-involved parents "have a need that is satisfied through their children's participation, or they have a hidden agenda, hoping the children's success will provide later opportunities in education or career... and are not

able to separate their own wishes, fantasies, and needs from those of their children” (Hellstedt, 1987, p.154). Hellstedt (1987) described the behaviors of over-involved parents as “excessive attendance at practice sessions, standing next to the coach, yelling, frequent disagreements with game or race officials, excessive financial support without requiring the athlete to share the cost, and frequent attempts to ‘coach’ the child” (p. 154). Other characteristics of over-involved parents include setting unrealistic goals for their child, communicating disapproval when goals are not met, placing emphasis on winning, an unwillingness to accept improved performances, and becoming disapproving and angry when their child does not perform well or does not perform up to their expectations (Hellstedt, 1987). All three types of parent involvement, and the associated behaviors, are present in today’s youth sport environment. It is important that these behaviors and their influence on youth athletes be identified and addressed to make the most of young athletes’ enjoyment and success in athletics.

An additional factor influencing parental behavior can be an individual’s goal orientation. Goal orientation is a component of Achievement-Goal theory which relates to one’s beliefs about the causes of success and failure (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and their cognitive and affective responses to success and failure (Ames, 1992; Covington, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Goal orientation refers to the types of goals that individuals set for themselves. According to this theory, individuals can be either task or ego oriented. Task oriented individuals set goals for personal improvement, whereas ego oriented individuals are concerned with out-performing peers or even performing as well as others with less effort (Duda & Hom, 1993). Both task and ego orientation can have affects on performance and the motivation of athletes. Task orientation has been linked

to success in sport, greater sport enjoyment, an increase in intrinsic motivation, and beliefs that one's effort, hard work, and cooperation lead to success in sport (Duda & Hom, 1993). Ego orientation has been linked to impaired performances after objective failures in sport, beliefs that condone unsportsmanlike conduct, a belief that success in sport increases one's social status, and that superior ability is of great importance (Duda & Hom, 1993). In this same study by Duda and Hom (1993), it was found that a child's goal orientation was "significantly related to their views concerning the goal orientation adopted by their parents" (p. 234). Simply, a child's goal orientation can be heavily influenced by their parents' beliefs. Similarly, Collins and Barber (2005) found parents often verbalized high expectations for the outcome of their child's game or competition. Such a focus can influence a child to develop an ego orientation. Since parents are instrumental in influencing their child's goal orientation, it could be detrimental if a parent puts emphasis only on the outcome of the event, rather than on task or skill mastery. Emphasizing ego oriented goals can only lead to an increase in cognitive anxiety in athletes, whereas an emphasis on task oriented goals can lead to an increase in confidence (Collins & Barber, 2005).

One last parental behavior that may affect children in sport is directiveness. According to Woolger and Power (1993), directiveness refers to the "degree to which parents actively instruct their child about what to do (or not to do), with a particular emphasis on areas in need of improvement" (p. 181). Parents may have low or high directiveness depending on how and when they give advice. Low directiveness might include giving a child advice when he or she asks for it, while high directiveness can include telling a child what they need to improve upon and/or remember before a

competition (Woolger & Power, 1993). In a research study by Kidman et al. (1999), results showed that the most frequent negative comments (from parents) in youth sporting events were those comments that corrected the child athlete's performance, or areas in need of improvement. Parents also frequently made these negative comments during a performance rather than after or before performance, causing the child to attempt to change focus (off sport) in order to hear what the parent was saying (Kidman et al., 1999).

Although parents may not perceive their actions as inappropriate or have intentions to harm their child, athletes all too often perceive their parents' actions differently (Kidman et al., 1999). Further research into how child athletes perceive their parents' behaviors would be beneficial in identifying how these behaviors affect the child athlete and their performance. Research indicates that educating parents, athletes, and coaches on sport-appropriate behaviors may help eliminate the potential physical and psychological abuse caused to the child athlete (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997). Parents should focus on positive and appropriate sport related behaviors to ensure their child's enjoyment and persistence in athletics.

Effects of Parent Behaviors on Athletes

Parents can have a strong influence on their children's sport activities. Within the athletic environment parents can have a positive impact by encouraging their child, or they can have a negative impact by causing anxiety and/or burnout (Stein et al., 1999). When parents become too involved or overbearing they can become a source of pressure and stress (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). This can lead to increased anxiety, increased conflict between the parents and the child, a loss of desire to continue participating, and

possible exhaustion from the sport (Hellstedt, 1990). This parental involvement may also lead to a type of anxiety called Competitive Trait Anxiety (CTA) (Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989). CTA is defined as an individual's tendency to perceive threat and experience stress in situations that involve sport competition (Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989). In one study, unrealistic parent expectations and negative parent behaviors, such as criticism, providing little positive support, and placing pressure on the child to perform well, were found to be predictors of child CTA (Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989). Effects of CTA on children include lower self-esteem, negative affect and psychological distress after a poor performance, developing a focus on failure and its consequences, and a tendency to drop out or even avoid competition altogether (Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989).

Some studies show that a parent's expectations for a child's achievement may override the child's own expectations for success (Gould et al., 1993b; Gould et al., 1996b, 1997). However, there have been conflicting findings regarding how parents' expectations affect children. For example, some studies have shown that high parent expectations correlate positively with sport attitudes and satisfaction (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985, 1986), whereas other research has shown negative correlations between sport enjoyment and parental pressure (Gould et al., 1993b; Gould et al., 1996b, 1997). These equivocal results have led to suggestions for further research examining how different aspects of parental expectations, such as type, amount, and in different settings, affect child athletes (Woolger & Power, 1993). Not only can parental expectations and pressure affect a child, but also the parents' attitude, goal orientation, and emphasis on sport in general. In research by Wankel and Sefton (1989a), it was

found that parents often emphasize winning as the most important aspect of a game, while the child sees enjoyment as the most important factor in participation. This same research indicates that children feel it is more important that they are successful through personal mastery of skills and overcoming realistic challenges, rather than winning alone (Wankel & Sefton, 1989a). These conflicting views could potentially lead to parent/child conflict (due to parental expectations of winning) or even the discontinuation of sport on behalf of the child due to a failure to meet their parents' expectations (Gould et al., 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Kidman et al., 1999).

Based on their performance, another behavior that children are often subjected to is feedback or punishment from their parents. Feedback, if in the form of high directiveness and criticism towards the child's performance, has been negatively correlated with a child's later achievement (Woolger & Power, 1993). According to Kidman et al. (1999), negative comments from parents contribute to increased competitive stress and a decrease in the perceptions of self-worth in children. Negative comments that correct a child's performance or provide instruction for the child during athletic performance can also undermine the child's decision-making ability, therefore inhibiting the learning process (Kidman et al., 1999). If parents' negative comments persist, research suggests that the child will have a decrease in motivation to participate in the activity and may even lead them to discontinue participation (Kidman et al., 1999).

Punishment can be physical, deprivation of privileges or objects, or nonverbal expressions of disappointment or anger (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997; Kidman et al., 1999; Woolger & Power, 1993). Unfortunately, all these types of punishment may have a negative affect on the child athlete. Negative effects include guilt, self-punishment, fear,

resentment, anxiety, stress, or frustration (Kidman et al., 1999; Woolger & Power, 1993). Punishment, because of poor sport performances, is certainly considered inappropriate and should be discouraged (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997; Kidman et al., 1999; Wood & Abernethy, 1991; Woolger & Power, 1993).

While punishments are clearly negative behaviors, rewards are more complex in that they may be perceived as either negative or positive. Rewards are often extrinsic factors such as trophies, medals, or other material items given by the parents that may undermine or increase intrinsic motivation in children (Woolger & Power, 1993). Extrinsic rewards do not always have to be tangible items. For example, pleasing others and receiving support and positive feedback can become a reward for a child (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). Rewards may be perceived as positive by the child if they feel it increases competence information and provides them with positive feedback, thus enhancing their intrinsic motivation to continue with the activity. Providing rewards for activities when individuals have low levels of interest has been shown to increase enjoyment in children over time (Woolger & Power, 1993). On the other hand, studies have shown that children may perceive rewards as controlling and may even lose interest in an activity that they once enjoyed, as a result of a reward (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985; Woolger & Power, 1993). In short, rewards may be perceived as negative if the child feels that the reward is not sufficient.

In addition to the aforementioned parent behaviors, the level of parental involvement can also have an affect on a child. One study has indicated that if parents are under-involved, the child's competence, self-perceptions, and psychological well-being can be compromised (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Yet,

Gould et al. (1996b) found that parents that were perceived to be overly-involved (higher incidence of parental criticism, pressure to satisfy expectations, pressure to perform well, and pressure to practice) by the athlete contributed to their child's burnout in junior tennis, with their children expressing that if their parents would have "backed off" and "mellowed out," they may have continued playing tennis. On the other hand, one study reported that some children enjoyed their family's involvement in their figure skating, stating that they enjoyed being close to their family and enjoyed bringing pride and pleasure to their family through good performances (Scanlan et al., 1989b). Similarly, in a study on coping strategies used by U.S. National Champion figure skaters, one of the athletes' reported coping mechanisms was finding support in family and friends (Gould et al., 1993c). Thus, it is important that family be there to support the child athlete, but not to the extent that the athlete sees the family as too involved.

Athletes' Perceptions of Parents' Behaviors

Research by Hellstedt (1990) stated that the changing environment of the family can cause an increase in pressure on children. Parental pressure is defined as "the amount of motivational influence the parent exerts on the child-athlete to compete in sports, perform at a certain level, and continue sport participation" (Hellstedt, 1990, p. 136). Within youth sports today, more time is being invested in training, the expenses are rising, and the amount of energy spent by both parents and children is increasing (Hellstedt, 1990). This is leading to increased parental pressure in what is now being called the "athletic family" (Hellstedt, 1990). The "athletic family" is one where children often feel that their parents push them to participate, which leads to a negative interaction

between the athlete and the parent (Hellstedt, 1990). Children also feel that if they quit the sport their parents would become “very upset,” thus they often reluctantly stay involved in sport (Hellstedt, 1990). In one study, 60% of junior tennis athletes stated that if they do not try their hardest to win, their parents will become disappointed with them for lack of effort (DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997).

In a study by Wood and Abernethy (1991), youth athletes ranked parental behaviors that they perceived to be the most desirable and those that they perceived to be least desirable. Accordingly, behaviors perceived by athletes as most desirable included receiving encouragement after a poor performance and congratulations after a good performance, receiving support from parents through provision of equipment and finances, and families adjusting to the athletes’ training schedule. Behaviors perceived as negative and undesirable included judging athletes’ self-worth, pushing them to excel, pushing them to train hard, and not allowing them to participate in activities outside of their sport. Also, athletes did not perceive it to be positive when parents tried to give sport specific information to them when neither parent had experience in that particular sport (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Behaviors that are perceived by youth athletes as undesirable can lead to excessive parental pressure, eventually leading to decreased enjoyment of sport or burnout for some youth athletes (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). It should also be noted that many behaviors could be perceived as either positive or negative depending on how they are used. For example, acceptance is a behavior that can be related to sport in either a positive or negative context depending on the individual parent-child relationship (Woolger & Power, 1993). Acceptance may be expressed in a variety of ways, ranging from affection and praise, to simply creating an environment

where an athlete feels open to share his or her feelings with an understanding parent (Woolger & Power, 1993).

In addition to perceiving behaviors as undesirable and desirable, athletes have perceptions of their parents' expectations and goal orientations. In a study by Collins and Barber (2005), female athletes that perceived their parents to have high expectations and placed an importance on succeeding exhibited higher competitive anxiety than those athletes who perceived their parents to place less importance on success. In regards to task and ego orientation, athletes and parents that were perceived as task oriented were positively linked with success in sport and greater sport enjoyment (Duda & Hom, 1993). On the other hand, those athletes and parents that were perceived as ego oriented were linked with impaired in performance following failure in sport and the belief that deceptive tactics and unsportsmanlike conduct were acceptable sport behaviors (Duda & Hom, 1993).

A study by Balazs and Nickerson (1976) profiled top U.S. female athletes from the 1972 Olympics in an attempt to establish psychological and social sources of outstanding athletes. Those factors the athletes perceived to contribute to their success were receiving encouragement, sympathetic understanding, and positive attention from parents and friends (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976). The study also revealed that Olympic athletes did not feel pressure to meet the goals of others, but were able to concentrate on meeting their own goals and their own success (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976). This study indicated that the positive and supportive parental behaviors reported by the athletes were perceived as beneficial to the athletes' performance and success (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976).

Research has shown that athletes may also have varying perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' actions based on the level of involvement from each parent (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Stein et al., 1999). In one study, athletes' views of their parents' participation was comparable between their mothers and fathers (Stein et al., 1999). The athletes recognized that both parents were moderately- to highly-involved and interested in their sport, and both parents were making their performance more satisfying than nerve-racking (Stein et al., 1999). However, in the instance that "stress" was placed on the child, fathers were identified as the source more often than mothers (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein et al., 1999). This is particularly true for males, who reported sensing more pressure from their fathers (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Leff and Hoyle (1995) believed that because the father is often generally viewed as the principle parent in athletics, they may place more aggressive pressure on their child athlete. However, in some cases, high levels of paternal influence have been shown to be more positive than maternal involvement, suggesting that paternal influence can also be positive (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). A study conducted by Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) reported that when male athletes experienced fewer negative interactions with their mother, that their sport enjoyment increased and their feelings of overall parental pressure decreased; leading the researchers to believe that sometimes mothers, not fathers, can be a main source of stress and dissatisfaction. In contrast, female athletes often point to both their father and mother as sources for encouragement, as well as parental pressure (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). Furthermore, Leff and Hoyle (1995) stated that females generally reveal lower levels of self-confidence in achievement situations and thus need more straightforward support from their parents. Overall, male athletes more

than female athletes have distinguished both parents as causes of perceived pressure (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986).

Parental Impact on Self-Confidence and Performance

Research has found that there is a relationship between an athlete's perceived sport competence and the appraisals of his or her peers, parents, coaches, and teammates (Amorose, 2003; Daley & Leahy, 2003; DeFrancesco & Johnson, 1997; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985; Whitbeck, 1987). An athlete's self-perception can be greatly affected by how he or she perceives the way others view or assess them (Gould et al., 1993a, 1993b; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a, 2002b; Wankel & Sefton, 1989a; Wankel & Kriesel, 1985). Furthermore, if the athlete has a positive perception of their own abilities, they are more likely to experience increases in motivation, sport enjoyment, and success and a decrease in sport anxiety (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976; Gould et al., 1993a, 1993b; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a, 2002b; Wankel & Sefton, 1989a, 1989b; Wankel & Kriesel, 1985). However, it is important to understand how these athletes come to a decision about their own level of sport competence. Research highlights the importance of "significant others" as a factor in an individual's judgment of their competence level (Amorose, 2003; Daley & Leahy, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987). Some of the most influential "significant others" in a child's life are his or her parents (Whitbeck, 1987). Therefore, it is not surprising that research has shown a child's enjoyment of sport increases with perceived positive parental satisfaction (Scanlan et al., 1989b). Thus, if the parent feels satisfied with their child's performance, the athlete therefore feels satisfied and more self-confident. Research has also shown that simple parent behaviors such as being warm, loving, and having open communication with a child can

increase the child's feelings of self-confidence and competence (Baumrind & Black, 1967).

The reflected appraisals process is a method by which an individual comes to view him or herself as they believe others see them (Amorose, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987). This is determined three ways: first, the individual's self appraisals; second, the appraisals of others; and third, the reflected appraisals (the individual's perceptions of others' appraisals) (Amorose, 2003). It is assumed that if others have a positive perception of the athlete's ability, the athlete is more likely to have a positive self-perception of their own ability. If others have a negative perception of the athlete's ability, the athlete is more likely to have a negative self-perception of their own ability and thus a lower self-confidence (Amorose, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987).

Reflected appraisals of an athlete's parents and significant others may predict the athlete's self-perceptions of ability (Daley & Leahy, 2003). In short, "parental behaviors of support and inductive control positively affect self-esteem" (Whitbeck, 1987, p. 167). A parent that expresses positive evaluation, support, and inductive control (allowing the child to be active in the decision-making process) positively communicates that they are confident in their child's abilities and competence; allowing the child to take these reflected appraisals and positively apply them to their feelings of self-confidence and competence (Whitbeck, 1987). Still, these studies indicate that parents do not demonstrate as great of an influence on an athlete as the athlete's significant sport-others (e.g., coaches and other athletes). However, when considering figure skaters as individual sport athletes, it is important to remember that their significant sport-others

may be more limited as compared to team sport athletes, giving their significant others more room for influence (Amorose, 2003).

Reflected appraisals have been shown to strongly relate to the athlete's self-perceptions of competence (Amorose, 2003). Clearly, the appraisals of significant others can have a strong affect on athletes' self-perceptions of competence (Amorose, 2003). Athletes' self-perceptions can affect their level of enjoyment in a sport; the more self-confidence they have in their abilities, the more they will enjoy the sport (Wankel & Sefton, 1989a; Wankel & Kriesel, 1985). Also, if an athlete has an altered sense of their competence and ability, their performance can be compromised. As mentioned earlier, athletes with high levels of self-confidence and competence have shown to be more successful (Gould et al., 1993a; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a, 2002b).

Summary

It is evident that a parent's behaviors can have a strong and direct affect on a child athlete. Whether the affects are positive or negative however, depends on how the behavior is perceived by the child. Furthermore, it is apparent that a child's self confidence, and thus his or her performance, can be affected by parents. However, it remains in question if there is a relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters and also if parents and children have similar perceptions of the parenting style employed.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters. A qualitative research design was used to assess athlete self-confidence and to assess what parenting styles were perceived as having an affect on athlete self-confidence by parents and athletes. The following chapter outlines the rationale and justification for the qualitative research design, selection of participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design

A qualitative design was chosen to provide the researcher with the opportunity to obtain insight into the “experiences” of youth figure skaters and their parents. To date, only one quantitative study (Silby, 1994) has investigated the affects of parenting style on self-confidence in elite youth athletes, but no studies have been conducted on youth high-level figure skaters and their parents/guardians in regard to perceived parenting style and self-confidence. A qualitative design allowed the participants to explore their experiences and to verbalize these experiences by way of thoughts and emotions.

A qualitative semi-structured research design was used to produce descriptive data using the participants’ own spoken words, based on the concept of phenomenology. Phenomenological research seeks to describe the human experience by examining the lived experiences of the individuals being studied and to further understand the

viewpoints of these individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Hatch, 2002). There are many different phenomenological methods of inquiry used to gather experiential data, which include but are not limited to, protocol writing, observing, studying literature, examining diaries, and interviewing (Hatch, 2002). The researcher chose to adapt the concepts of phenomenology and the methods of interviewing to collect information that would provide knowledge about the every-day experiences of the study participants. This allowed the researcher to explore concepts and experiences that might otherwise be lost if researched by way of traditional quantitative means (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Interviewing also allowed the researcher to learn more about participant experiences that may not be directly observable, as well as, to examine “commonsense assumptions” that one might possess about reality (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Qualitative researchers and phenomenologists believe that it is the participant’s experiences and the *meanings* of those experiences that constitute reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Also, what people say and what people do is a direct product of how people interpret their world (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Thus, two people that have had the same experiences but interpret them differently may have two completely different views and assumptions of reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). For this reason, it is important that the researcher seeks to understand not only the experiences of individuals, but also their thoughts, feelings, and their *process* of interpreting each experience, in order to fully understand the human condition (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

It was very important throughout the research process, that the researcher keep personal biases from interfering with the interview and data analysis processes.

Researchers must be able to “stand back” from the participants’ perspectives and not judge the participants as to whether their behaviors are right or wrong, but rather *understand* the participants and their behaviors (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). It was the goal of the researcher to capture the participants’ experiences as accurately as possible. Thus, the researcher attempted to be objective (i.e., rigorous) throughout the entire study, ensuring that data collection and analysis was as accurate as possible. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggested a researcher avoid personal biases by reflecting on his or her own opinions and subjectivity as it relates to the study, both prior to and after the interview process.

One method utilized to identify biases of the researcher was the use of a bracketing interview. Bracketing interviews allow a researcher to reflect on personal assumptions, feelings, and knowledge about the subject matter, thus allowing the participants’ perspectives to be unaffected by the researcher’s biases (Hatch, 2002). The bracketing interview process was conducted in a similar way to the interviews used for data collection, having a qualified individual with experience in qualitative bracketing interviews ask questions regarding the researcher’s experiences in figure skating, her parents’ parenting style, and self-confidence. The bracketing interview was transcribed and from this interview a bias statement was formed. The researcher further attempted to manage her biases by recording her biases from the bracketing interview in a research log and sharing her biases with her study auditor prior to the start of the interview process (Caroleo, 2002). During the research process and data analysis, the researcher recorded any new biases (i.e., feelings and/or thoughts) that emerged as they related to the study.

In this way, the study auditor acted as a means to help identify the emergence of potential researcher biases during data analysis.

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected from a figure skating club in Central New York. Eight total participants were selected for the current study (N=8). Four ($n=4$) high-level youth figure skaters were purposively selected based on their age and level of skating. To be considered for the study, each participant was required to meet the following criteria: (a) the athlete had to compete at the intermediate, novice, junior, or senior level, (b) be 13-18 years of age, and (c) a parent/guardian of the youth figure skater had to agree to participate in the study ($n=4$).

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) was followed to maintain interviewing consistency across participants. The semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to probe the participants, but also provided the interviewer control over the interview process (Patton, 1990). The interview guide also enhanced the qualitative research design by allowing the participants an opportunity to discuss their experiences and emotions. Questions for the semi-structured interview were developed by the primary researcher based on a literature review, her own experiences as a competitive figure skater, and her educational background in sport psychology. Questions were designed to assess the parenting style perceived by both the youth participants and the

parent/guardian participants, self-confidence of the youth participants, and what parenting styles affected the youth participants' self-confidence.

Procedures

Initially, the principle investigator contacted a coach at a local figure skating club in Central New York to identify potential participants. After identifying all the potential participants who met selection criteria, the principle investigator contacted each via e-mail. Through e-mail, the principle investigator was able to explain the scope of the study, to secure subject selection, and to schedule interview times for both the youth and parent/guardian (see Appendix B for the recruitment statement). All participants were interviewed at their home rink in Lansing, New York.

Prior to the start of each interview, the participants were again informed of the scope of the study, their right to withdraw from the study and end the interview at any time, and the need for their signing of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendices C and D). Parents provided consent for their child if under the age of 18. Participants also consented for their interview to be audio taped and later transcribed. Confidentiality was assured for all participants. Names of the participants were not associated with any interview. Rather, participants were able to choose a pseudonym for themselves. For example, participants choosing the name Leslie and David instead of their real names ensured their anonymity. Lastly, a record was kept as to which pseudonyms belonged to the same family set (i.e., parent/child).

After consent was secured, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant. Each interview, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, was audio taped to be later transcribed.

Each youth figure skater was interviewed using a series of open-ended questions that were designed to assess their perception of their parent's parenting style and behaviors, their perceptions of their own self-confidence, and what parenting styles utilized by their parents affected their self-confidence. Each parent was also interviewed using a similar series of open-ended questions that were designed to assess their perceptions of their own parenting style and what parenting styles they utilized that had an affect on their child's self-confidence. Demographic questions were asked of both the youth and parent participants in regard to age, level of skating, number of years skating, days per week spent skating, time devoted to skating competitions, etc. Demographic questions can be found at the onset of the interview guide (see Appendix A).

Following each interview, and prior to the start of data analysis, each interview was transcribed verbatim. The researcher then met with each participant a second time, allowing the participants time to review the transcribed interviews and make any changes to or clarify various aspects of their interview, or withdraw from the study if they felt the interview inaccurately represented their thoughts and ideas. Changes made to the transcribed interviews were written directly on the original transcribed document.

Data Analysis

Final data analyses included the transcripts of interviews with four ($n=4$) female, high-level youth figure skaters and four ($n=4$) parents (all mothers), for a total of eight

participants (N=8). Data analyses were conducted in accordance with the phenomenological analyses presented by Shelley (1999). A visual example of the data analysis process can be found in Appendix E:

1. Each transcribed interview was reviewed and read (in full) several times by the researcher to allow her to recall the information gathered during the interview process.
2. Each transcribed interview was examined for significant statements, identified by statements and/or phrases that were directly related to the research question. Significant statements were then grouped into “categories” based on content.
3. Meanings were then formed from these grouped significant statements as they related to parenting style and self-confidence. Meanings were derived from comments, words, or phrases provided by the participants.
4. The formulated meanings units were then synthesized into clusters of lower-order themes. A single lower-order theme was formed from multiple meaning units. Again, lower-order themes were derived from participant’s own comments, words, or phrases and were formulated by grouped meaning units.
5. Lower-order themes were then synthesized into higher-order themes. Higher-order themes provided the initial answer to the research questions as related to parenting style and self-confidence for both the child participant group and the parent participant group.
6. a.) Higher-order themes for each child participant were compared across participants to find common child themes.

- b.) Higher-order themes for each parent participant were compared across participants to find common parent themes.
7. After this process was completed for each participant in the child and parent groups, child group and parent group common themes were then compared in regards to what parenting styles affected self-confidence (i.e., across group comparisons). These common themes are presented in Chapter 4 and provide the results to this study and the answer to the overall research question.

Examining the data using the above process allowed the researcher to explore self-confidence in youth figure skaters and the perceptions of what parenting styles affected the self-confidence among youth figure skaters and their parents. The results provide a more thorough description of what parenting styles affect self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters. This chapter presents common themes from across group comparisons of athlete and parent higher-order themes (see Appendices F and G). Three common themes emerged, thus providing the answer to the outlined research question: What parenting styles affect the self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters? The common themes included: (1) support, (2) positive focus, and (3) providing autonomy. All common themes were supported by significant statements made by the eight participants. Each common theme is reported below.

COMMON THEME #1: Support.

Participants described parent behaviors as supportive. Both athlete and parent participants suggested that athletes' confidence was enhanced through parental support and behaviors such as attendance at practices/competitions and providing financial support for skating. This theme was represented by the following statements:

Everyone is just so supportive, so that really helps. My parents are really supportive, especially my mom...just all of the family members and coaches and friends they, you know, like the supportiveness, that like boosts your confidence also. That helps a lot. (Athlete 3)

Their [my parents] behavior has always been supportive, you know, this is my fun thing to do. (Athlete 2)

I [mom] have always been there to try to support her whenever possible...we've [parents] always done everything we can to support the sport...my job is being a parent and trying to be supportive. (Parent 1)

Attendance at practice and competitions was cited by both athletes and parents as an important way for parents to show support. The following statements demonstrated this supportive behavior:

One of them [my parents] has always been there...I'm never left by myself, she's [mom] always there and it's a good feeling to know that you know there's always somebody rock-solid there to fall back on no matter what. (Athlete 1)

...my mom comes to all my practices, she's always out there watching whether its inside like watching from the window or out there on the bleachers, but she's really involved and she always supporting me...like out on the ice. (Athlete 3)

I [mom] was always there. Um, either my husband or I would take her to the rink...I'll watch her skate and encourage her. (Parent 2)

...we [parents] try and support her in getting her where she needs to be...we've just always been there. (Parent 3)

Both athletes and parents also indicated providing financial support for skating as a means for parents to show their support. Financial support was indicated in the following statements:

...they [my parents] pay for all my sports...they pay for all of the, uh skating stuff. (Athlete 4)

...we [as a family] spent a lot of money...but I work really hard at it and you know, they [my parents] are paying the money. They want me to work hard. They want me to succeed...they try to get me like the best for like it's, what they can handle [afford]. (Athlete 3)

Overall, I [mom] try to support her as much as I can ...moral support, financial support, getting her where she needs to be. (Parent 3)

...we've [parents] spent so much money on skating for her. She doesn't have a car and the boys [brothers] had cars in high school, so you know, and she's fine with that. She's like, 'Well, I know mom, I've had skating.' (Parent 2)

COMMON THEME #2: Positive focus.

Participants suggested that athletes' self-confidence was enhanced through their parents' positive comments, encouragement, and an overall emphasis on having fun and enjoying skating. The athletes stated that their parents were positive in regards to their skating and their skating performances. Parents also indicated that they tried to encourage their children and focus on the positives related to their daughter's skating.

This common theme was clearly exemplified in the following statements:

...I might have the worst skate ever and I'll come off the ice and she'll [my mom] tell me that she is still proud of me. (Athlete 1)

I definitely feel really confident in my parents telling me I do well with something. (Athlete 4)

And then, we [parents] go in and give her a hug and just try to talk it out a little bit. Usually it's more 'Hey you know, you put a lot of work into it and okay, things didn't go the way you wanted, but what was good in it?' And there were some good things and you [the parents] try to find the good in it. (Parent 3)

...I [mom] think we [parents] do, just based on your comments that you make. You can focus on their negatives, everything they did wrong or you can focus on everything they did right. So I try to focus on everything she does right. (Parent 4)

...we [parents] would have influence on, um always encouraging her whether she did really um, well or not so great. I think we're very, we're her greatest encouragers. (Parent 2)

Parents' positive parenting styles, and subsequent positive influence on their child's self-confidence, were also reflected in what they emphasized when it came to their daughter's figure skating. Athletes saw their parents as placing an emphasis on having fun and enjoying themselves. Similarly, parents indicated that what they tried to

emphasize most with their children was having fun and enjoying what they were doing.

This theme was supported by the following statements:

...what's important to them [my parents] is just that I push myself enough to still have fun... (Athlete 2)

They [my parents] just want me to find something that I really enjoy. (Athlete 3)

...I [mom] want this to be fun. (Parent 2)

That she [as a child] needs to love it...you [as an athlete] have to love it...if you don't love it then, then you want your other things [interests]. It's a sport, so go try something else if you want to. (Parent 3)

COMMON THEME #3: Providing autonomy.

The last common theme that emerged from this study was providing autonomy.

The athletes and parents indicated that participating in figure skating was the athlete's choice and that any final decisions, in regards to skating, were left up to the child. The following statements reflected this theme:

...they [my parents] let me make the final decision but they obviously, we talk a lot you know, we'll have family sit-downs and we just discuss the different possibilities that I would have. So they help me think of different ones that might change you know, my future...they like to give me my life, give me the chance [to make my own decisions]. (Athlete 3)

I'd say [my parents are] really supportive. Not over bearing, not pushing me, not stage-mom kind of thing...they [my parents] never push me; it's always been my choice to keep skating or how much I should skate or what competitions to do. (Athlete 2)

And it was her [our daughter's] choice because we [her parents] weren't going to force her into it, you know, but she wanted to do that [start an ice dance partnership]. (Parent 3)

This is not, we're [parents] not beating her over the head to do this, you know. This is her thing and we are supportive. (Parent 2)

Athletes and parents also reinforced this theme with comments about the degree of parental involvement with lessons, coaching, and practice. More specifically, they stated that parents left the coaching to the coach. This theme was again supported by the following statements:

They [my parents] sit in the stands, they cheer. They don't try to get down right before I go out and tell me what to do or try to get involved with the coaches before or right after [I compete]. (Athlete 4)

I'm her mother. I'm not her coach and I try not to be. I'm the mom, yeah. I wouldn't want to be the coach. (Parent 3)

I've um, kind of left the coaching to the coach...the coaching needs to come from the coach not the parent. (Parent 1)

And skating, I try not to coach her...[I've learned] not to...say anything to tech-about technical aspects...like we skated together the other day and I got her to help me with my skating. Really, she's passed her senior moves [highest level of skating] and...there's nothing for me to say about her skating. (Parent 4)

Summary

This chapter presented common themes, which emerged from interviews with youth figure skaters and their parents. These themes provide an answer to the research question, "What parenting styles affect the self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters?" The common themes include: (1) support, (2) positive focus, and (3) providing autonomy. These themes not only indicate *what* types of parenting styles and behaviors affected self-confidence in youth figure skaters, but also *how* they affected self-confidence. These themes will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters. A qualitative analysis of interviews with athletes and parents revealed three common themes: (1) support, (2) positive focus, and (3) providing autonomy. Each of these themes is discussed below as it relates to existing literature.

COMMON THEME #1: Support.

Athlete participants indicated that their parents were very supportive of their skating. The parent participants also viewed their own behaviors as supportive. Research has indicated that supportive and positive parental behaviors are beneficial for a child's performance and success in athletics (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976). In this study, the supportive behaviors that emerged included attendance at practices and competitions and providing financial support. These same behaviors have been indicated in previous research as being desired by child athletes (Wood & Abernethy, 1991).

These supportive behaviors are consistent with characteristics of moderately-involved parents. According to Hellstedt (1987), a moderately-involved parent allows his or her child the ultimate decision-making authority in regards to their sport, support their child financially, and show interest in the sport. Furthermore, a moderately-involved parent avoids over-involvement which may cause their child to discontinue sport due to parental criticism, pressure to perform well, or pressure to practice. They also avoid

being under-involved; showing little interest in their child's activities, which may compromise their child's well-being and feelings of self-worth. A moderately-involved parent is able to provide the ideal amount of support for their child's athletic participation and create less stress than over or under-involved parents (Stein et al., 1999). Thus, a moderately-involved parent provides the healthiest level of involvement for their child athlete (Gould et al., 1996a; Lamborn et al., 1991).

While the participants in this study perceived their parents' behaviors as positive and therefore moderately-involved, one skater identified some behaviors that were characteristic of an over-involved parent. These behaviors included creating a rule that the athlete be forbidden to quit skating because of the time, money, and effort the family had put into skating, pushing the child to reach the highest level of figure skating, and organizing family life around skating. Other over-involved behaviors included negative comments, trying to coach the child (directiveness), and getting upset after a poor performance. These over-involved behaviors subsequently negatively influenced this particular athlete's performance and feelings of self-confidence. These findings further demonstrate the belief that moderately-involved parents positively influence their child's self-confidence, whereas parents that display characteristics of over-involvement often negatively influence their child's self-confidence. In sum, it appears that, whether positive or negative, parents can have a significant influence on athletes' feelings of self-confidence.

One of the most consistently cited supportive behaviors in the current study was attendance at practices and competitions. Athletes perceived attendance as one way that their parents showed support for their skating. Parents also believed that their presence at

the rink was one way, sometimes the most important way, that they could show support for their child.

This is consistent with the belief that parental attendance at practices and competitions can help create a positive athletic environment for youth athletes (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). However, as with all parental behaviors, children may perceive their parents' behaviors very differently from the parent's intentions (Kidman et al., 1999). Thus, if a parent's attendance at practices is coupled with trying to coach the child on the ice or making negative comments about the child's performance, the attendance may be seen as an undesirable behavior. For instance, the previously mentioned skater stated that although she liked her mother to attend all practices and competitions, she would rather not have her father attend practices due to the fact that he "plays coach" and that "he cannot just sit in the stands and support me." In fact for this skater, her father was no longer allowed to attend practices because her skating suffered when he was present. This is consistent with research stating that children who perceive their parents as being too involved report less enjoyment in their sport environment and more stress (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein et al., 1999). These statements from the above participant help to further endorse this theme that parent behaviors, such as support, affect self-confidence. For the other skaters it was positive support that positively affected self-confidence, on the other hand, for this skater, it was negative or limited support from her father that negatively affected her self-confidence.

It is interesting that in previous research, attendance at all practice sessions was considered to be a characteristic of overly-involved parents and thus often considered to be an unhealthy parent behavior (Hellstedt, 1987). Yet in the current study, participants

indicated that parental attendance at all practices and competitions was a desired, supportive behavior. In fact, parental attendance at all practices and competitions was preferred by most of the participants. This coincides with previous research stating that children generally enjoy their family's involvement in their figure skating (Scanlan et al., 1989b). Athletes in this study stated that they liked the feeling of support they had when their parents were at the rink. In addition, it was comforting to know that their parents were there for them if they needed help with something. Perhaps this is because figure skating is an individual sport in which athletes often lack teammates to rely on for support. This may also result from youth figure skater's reliance on parents as a source of transportation to and from the rink, especially if they do not have a license to drive or live far from the rink. Taken together, the results of this study combined with previous research suggest that while attendance at practices and competitions may have a minor affect on an athlete's confidence, it is the parents' behaviors while at these events which more directly affect the child's confidence and performance. As such, supportive, moderately-involved parents should not only attend practices and competitions, but also display appropriate supportive behaviors while observing.

Providing finances to fund the athlete's skating was another behavior suggested by the participants that exemplified parents' support. As previously mentioned, providing financial support is a characteristic of the moderately-involved parent, the most preferred parenting style of child athletes (Hellstedt, 1987). This is also consistent with existing research that cites parental financial support as a desirable behavior among athletes (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). As previously mentioned, one athlete participant not only mentioned parental financial provisions as a means that has allowed her to skate,

but also mentioned finances in regards to her father's reaction to a bad performance. According to this athlete, her father put additional expectations and pressure on her to perform, in order to ensure that his money was well spent. As previous research has suggested, unwanted parental expectations and pressure can have negative effects on a child and lead to increases in stress and anxiety, decreases in sport enjoyment and performance, and a possible decrease in the child's feelings of self-worth and self-confidence (Amorose, 2003; Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989; Whitbeck, 1987; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005).

It is important to consider that financial support alone does not affect self-confidence, but rather it is the athlete's perception of why that support is being offered which influences self-confidence and in turn motivation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, rewards or material items can either increase or undermine an athlete's intrinsic motivation depending on how this athlete perceives the rewards and/or material items (Woolger & Power, 1993). An athlete may perceive financial support as positive, and thus have motivation to continue an activity, if they feel it provides them with positive feedback and feelings of competence. This athlete might feel that if her parents are providing continued finances to skate, then she must continue to improve and skate well to warrant such support. On the other hand, an athlete might perceive financial support as negative if she feels that such support is controlling or that the degree of financial support does not match her own feelings of self-worth (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985; Woolger & Power, 1993). Thus, it is very important that parents take into account their child's perceptions of their financial support, as it may positively or negatively affect the child's feelings of self-confidence and motivation in sport.

COMMON THEME #2: Positive Focus.

Athlete participants cited that positive, supportive behaviors and positive comments from parents increased their self-confidence. Similarly, parents believed that they positively influenced their child's self-confidence by demonstrating positive behaviors, believing in and encouraging their child, and making positive comments. This theme is consistent with existing literature that indicates parents who exhibit behaviors that are warm, open, and loving towards their children often increase their child's feelings of self-confidence (Baumrind & Black, 1967).

Athletes indicated that parents displaying pride (no matter how they skated), focusing on the positives in a performance, making positive and encouraging comments after a bad performance, and offering positive comments before a performance positively influenced their confidence. This is consistent with findings suggesting that positive attention, encouragement, and sympathetic understanding from parents can contribute to an athlete's success in sport (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976). Consistent with the athletes' comments, parent participants indicated that they tried to be as positive as possible and make positive comments to their children. Parents indicated that they showed this positive focus by encouraging their child, being upbeat, focusing on the good parts of performances, and being happy no matter how their child performed.

These results support previous findings indicating that positive feedback from parents, including encouragement after poor performances and praise after good performances, is perceived by athletes as desirable (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). Parents in the current study suggested that when they avoided yelling and instead focused on positive accomplishments, their children were more satisfied and confident. This further

reinforces the belief that parents can have a positive impact on their child's sport environment by encouraging them and being a source of support (Stein et al., 1999). Such a positive focus is once again consistent with the characteristics of a moderately-involved parent, and thus further supports the notion that youth athletes prefer moderately-involved parents over those who are overly-involved.

Children often use a method called the *reflected appraisals process* in determining their own self-perceptions and thus, self-confidence (Amorose, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987). One component of the reflected appraisals process is the child's perceived appraisals from others, parents included, and the thought that if others have a positive perception of them and their abilities, then the child will in turn have a positive perception of his or her own abilities, resulting in higher self-confidence (Amorose, 2003; Daley & Leahy, 2003). As a result, positive evaluation, support, and positive communication from parents allow children to take these positive appraisals and adapt them to their own feelings of self-confidence and competence (Whitbeck, 1987). Results from the current study further support this notion as positive comments from parents resulted in increased athlete confidence.

If parents exhibit negative behaviors, such as making negative comments or pushing their child too hard and their child perceives these behaviors as negative appraisals of his or her ability, they are more likely to develop a negative self-perception and therefore, lower self-confidence (Amorose, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987; Wood & Abernathy, 1991). As previously mentioned, one athlete stated that her mother was very supportive and this support helped to *increase* her self-confidence, however her father's inability to support her and say that he was proud of her *negatively* affected her

confidence. The athlete even stated that if her father was one day able to say that he was proud of her “then that will give [me] just that extra boost of confidence in my skating that I may need.” This statement once again contributes additional support to the above theme that a positive parental focus can positively affect an athlete’s self-confidence; while negative comments and a negative focus can inhibit an athlete’s confidence.

This theme supports previous research on reflected appraisals and the effects of parental behaviors, both positive and negative, on a child’s self-confidence. Parental support, positive comments, and encouragement were all stated as positively influencing a child’s self-confidence by parents and athletes alike. Thus, it can be said that athletes and parents have similar perceptions of how parents may influence self-confidence in their children.

Athletes stated that their parents generally emphasized having fun and enjoyment when talking about skating. Likewise, parents stated that they wanted to emphasize having fun and “loving what they are doing” in regards to their child and skating. These statements contradict a previous study emphasizing winning as the most important aspect for parents (Wankel & Sefton, 1989b). In fact, none of the parents interviewed emphasized winning when talking with their child about figure skating. Once again, the parent participants in this study exhibited behaviors of the moderately-involved parent focusing on improvement, athlete support, and positive focus.

Enjoyment in sport is very important to the overall athletic experience. Parental pressure and expectations to win have been shown to correlate negatively with a child’s sport enjoyment (Gould et al., 1993a; 1993b; Gould et al., 1996b, 1997). Thus, if a parent approaches sport with a positive attitude and an emphasis on enjoyment and

achieving one's personal best, the child's enjoyment in sport will likely increase and the likelihood of that child experiencing stress or burnout may decrease (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). When considering sport enjoyment, it is important to keep in mind that if a child has a high level of self-confidence in his or her abilities, it can in turn increase the child's enjoyment of sport, their motivation, and their success (Balazs & Nickerson, 1976; Gould et al., 1993a, 1993b; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a, 2002b; Wankel & Kriesel, 1985; Wankel & Sefton, 1989a).

COMMON THEME #3: Providing Autonomy.

The last common theme to emerge was that of providing autonomy, more specifically that parents left decision making up to the athletes and coaching to the coaches. Athlete participants stated that their parents allowed them to make their own decisions in regards to skating, and that while they would ask their parents for help, ultimate decisions were left to each athlete. Similarly, parents suggested that skating was their child's choice and they were not forcing or pushing their child into making certain decisions. This theme once again exhibits characteristics of the moderately-involved parent, whereby a parent allows the youth athlete to actively make his/her own decisions regarding sport and supports those decisions after they are made (Hellstedt, 1987).

Allowing children to actively participate in the decision-making process, or allowing them to have full decision-making responsibilities, positively communicates to the child that the parent is confident in them (Whitbeck, 1987). Consistent with reflected appraisals, this confidence displayed by parents is then used by the child to increase their own self-confidence.

Participants also suggested that they preferred that their parents not interfere with coaching and that coaching was best left up to the coaches. Once again relating this theme back to Hellstedt's (1987) model of parental involvement in athletics, parents that allow the coaching staff to be responsible for their child's skill development provide the child with the best type of support and chance for success.

As research has previously indicated, parents that make instructional comments to their children during practices or competitions are often perceived as negative, and such behaviors are viewed as undesirable and have been shown to negatively affect a child's later sport achievement (Wood & Abernethy, 1991; Woolger & Power, 1993). These comments can also undermine the child's decision-making ability and inhibit the learning process (Kidman et al., 1999). As already mentioned, one athlete indicated that her father would often try to coach her, and as a result, he was subsequently banned from the rink because his comments were negatively affecting her skating performance and causing unwanted stress. This supports the idea that providing autonomy can directly impact one's self-confidence. In this case, when autonomy was not provided and the father was over-involved in his child's coaching, the athlete's skating performance, and thus her self-confidence, suffered.

Athlete/Parent Relationships

Both athlete and parent participants stated that they had a close and good relationship with each other. The parents indicated that they had close relationships with their children which included playing a role in their child's social and emotional lives, helping their child whenever they could, and being there to talk with their child when

needed. One parent even stated that having a close relationship with her daughter was more important than skating. Athletes had similar comments about their relationships with their parents, saying that they were good friends with their parents and that their parents trusted them. One possible explanation for this close relationship could be the individual nature of figure skating. Without teammates, athletes may view their parents as their primary source of support and encouragement. Furthermore, athletes under the age of sixteen rely on their parents for transportation and therefore, spend a significant amount of time traveling with their parents. Perhaps parents are some of the most influential "significant others" in a child's life, possibly even more influential in an individual sport like figure skating (Amorose, 2003; Whitbeck, 1987). It is even possible that the athletes and parents in the current study had such close relationships that they were able to convey to one another what types of parenting styles worked best for the child.

It is also interesting to note that several athletes interviewed stated that they were closer with their mother than their father, mainly because their mothers would drive them to and from the rink, attend practices, and attend all competitions. According to the athletes, fathers were often unable to come to the rink because of work obligations, or if they were at the rink they waited in the lobby rather than watch their child skate. One athlete even stated she felt that she was not often supported by her father because he would seldom come to the rink (except for competitions) and when he did he would read rather than watch her on the ice. It may also be that the athletes were closer with their mothers because they took a more active role in their child's skating, possibly because of the common notion that skating is a "female sport." Fathers may not see themselves as

fitting into the role of a “skating dad.” It is even possible that these athletes were not close with their fathers because in an effort to avoid becoming an over-involved parent, the father actually became under-involved parents.

Previous research also indicates that fathers are perceived to place more stress on child athletes than mothers; so conceivably, this may contribute to the child participants feeling closer with their mothers than their fathers (Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Stein et al., 1999). For example, one athlete commented that her father placed stress on her by his presence at the rink, expectations, directiveness, and negative comments. This same athlete also stated that she was closer with her mother because her mother did nothing but support her and behaved accordingly, unlike her father. This example not only supports previous research but lends insight as to why athletes may be closer with their mothers than their fathers.

Summary

Parenting styles affecting self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters included support, positive focus, and providing autonomy. Positive support, involvement and attendance at practices and competitions, financial support, positive comments and encouragement, an emphasis on enjoyment, allowing the athlete to make her own decisions, and leaving the coaching to the coaches were all components of parenting styles stated to have an affect on athletes' self-confidence. Interestingly, the parenting styles that emerged were all characteristic of the moderately-involved parent, coinciding with Hellstedt's (1987) model.

Parents that exhibit supportive behaviors are able to provide their children with the healthiest sport environment (Gould et al., 1996a, 1996b; Lamborn et al., 1991; Stein

et al., 1999). This study supports previous research that positive, supportive behaviors are the most desirable parental behaviors among youth athletes as they reinforce feelings of self-confidence and competence (Whitbeck, 1987; Wood & Abernethy, 1991).

As depicted in the current findings, parents that are positive and exhibit behaviors that are open, loving, and warm help to increase their child's feelings of self-confidence (Baumrind & Black, 1967). Also, positive feedback, regardless of the child's performance, is perceived as very desirable, both among study participants and in previous research (Wood & Abernethy, 1991). Lastly, parental emphasis on having fun and enjoying oneself in athletics, rather than winning, may subsequently increase the level of sport enjoyment and decrease the likelihood of stress and burnout that a child experiences (Wood & Abernethy, 1991).

Finally, parents that allow their child to make their own decisions positively communicates that they are confident in their child and her abilities, thus increasing the child's feelings of self-confidence (Whitbeck, 1987). Allowing a child to make decisions, supporting a child's decisions, and not forcing a child into decisions contribute to a healthy level of parental involvement (i.e., moderately-involved), and provides the best type of athletic environment for the child (Hellstedt, 1987). A healthy level of parental involvement, and thus a healthy athletic environment, is also provided by those parents that leave the coaching to the coaches (Hellstedt, 1987). Children often perceive instruction from parents as negative and undesirable which can negatively impact a child's later sport achievement (Wood & Abernethy, 1991; Woolger & Power, 1993). In this study, parents that did not interfere with coaching and did not try to instruct their child on the ice were perceived as demonstrating desirable parenting behaviors.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parenting style and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

Each athlete ($n=4$) and parent ($n=4$) was interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide to determine what parenting styles affected the self-confidence of youth figure skaters. An analysis of the data revealed three common themes. They included (1) support, (2) positive focus, and (3) providing autonomy. Although each participant had unique experiences, similar behaviors and parenting styles emerged to affect athlete self-confidence.

Conclusions

The self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters can be impacted both positively and negatively by many factors. Three themes emerged from this study to help clarify what parenting styles affect the self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters.

Parenting styles such as support, positive focus, and providing autonomy had an affect on the self-confidence of youth figure skaters in this study. Parents that provide support and a healthy level of parental involvement in sport can have a positive influence on their child's self-confidence. Athletes with high levels of self-confidence in their

abilities have been shown to be more successful in sport than their less confident peers (Gould et al., 1993a; Gould et al., 2000; Gould et al., 2002a). Thus, it is important for parents to provide their child with the healthiest sport environment possible, to allow their child to grow, not only as an athlete but also as a person.

Educating parents about the characteristics of under-, moderate-, and over-involved parenting styles and how each can affect a child's self-confidence and performance, may be beneficial for both the parent and child. Special emphasis should be placed on support, positive focus, and providing autonomy. Continued education may help to create a healthier sport environment for athletes, provide them with better opportunities for success, and even help to build better relationships between parents and child-athletes.

Future Research Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested when further investigating parenting styles and self-confidence of high-level youth figure skaters. First, it seems logical to recommend a replication of the present study. Replication can help to clarify and expand upon the current findings. Second, it might be valuable to increase the scope of the study to include male skaters, skaters from other clubs, and skaters of different skill levels. Using a more diversified population would allow researchers to further explain the relationship between parenting styles and athletes' self-confidence.

It might also be important to investigate other significant individuals in the figure skater's life. Many of the participants indicated that coaches, other friends that skated, friends outside of skating, and even other competitors had an affect on their self-

confidence. This might provide a deeper insight into the “significant others” that affect the self-confidence of youth figure skaters.

In this study, only the mother of each athlete was interviewed, because they were the parent that was most involved in the child’s figure skating. Yet, many of the athlete participants mentioned their fathers (and their behaviors) in regards to figure skating. It would be interesting to interview fathers in order to gain greater insight concerning the effects of parenting styles on self-confidence. It would also be interesting to explore any differences between mothers and fathers and their parenting styles.

Finally, a longitudinal study over several years might also be beneficial. Longitudinal studies may provide varying results as compared to studies that only examine a participant’s experiences at a given moment. It would be interesting to follow figure skaters over several years, as they age and move through the various levels of figure skating, to examine how their experiences and confidence might change.

Although the results of this study provide insight into the relationship between parenting styles and self confidence in high-level youth figure skaters, more research is needed. It is suggested that these recommendations be considered in order to further investigate the interesting dynamic of parents and athletes, in both figure skating and in the general athletic population.

This study, along with previous studies, have revealed practical implications for the youth sport community, such as creating workshops and seminars for parents to better educate them on the effects of parental pressure and behaviors, encouraging their child-athlete, as well as, educating sports administrators and coaches on parental issues athletes may face (Amorose, 2003; Daley & Leahy, 2003; Hellstedt, 1987; Hellstedt, 1990;

Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985; Wood & Abernethy, 1991; Woolger & Power, 1993).

Continued research into how child athletes perceive their parents' behaviors would be beneficial in providing a greater understanding of how these behaviors affect the child athlete. Parents should also realize a need for greater awareness in terms of how their children perceive their own parenting styles and how these parenting styles affect the child's self-confidence (Hellstedt, 1990).

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide Questions

Athlete Questions: Interview Guide

Demographic Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been figure skating? How long have you been competing?
3. How did you first get started in figure skating?
4. At what level do you currently compete in figure skating?
5. How far have you gone in competition (Regionals, Sectionals, Nationals, International, Junior Olympics, Olympics, etc)?
6. What is your highest placement in these competitions?

Self-Confidence Questions:

1. Discuss your confidence in your figure skating ability?
 - Tell me about a time when you've felt really confident? Not confident?
 - Tell me about your confidence during practice and competition?
 - Pressure- big competitions, test sessions
2. Can you think of anything that influences your confidence? How?
 - Can you think of anyone who influences your confidence? How?
 - Parents/family members
 - Coaches
 - Friends
 - Other skaters
 - Significant others
3. Rate your confidence on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning very low and 10 meaning very high.
4. Overall, what do you think about your self-confidence? Explain?
5. Is there anything that you would like to share about your confidence that we have not discussed at this time?

Parenting Style Questions:

1. Overall, how would you describe your parents' behavior in regards to your skating?
2. Tell me about your relationship with your parents
 - In general
 - Skating
3. Tell me about your parents' parenting style
 - In general
 - Skating
 - Discuss your parents' involvement in your life

- School/Grades
 - Friends/Free time
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Financial support (allowances, spending money, job—make you have one or not?)
 - Control/decision making
 - Discuss your parents' involvement in your skating?
 - Practice (times/wk, # of lessons, how you utilize ice time, offering advice)
 - Competition
 - Lessons/Coaching/Program decisions
4. Describe your parents' behaviors before/during/and after practice?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your parent before/during/and after practice?
 5. Describe your parents' behaviors before/during/and after competition?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your parent before/during/and after competition?
 6. Describe your parents' behaviors after a good/average/and poor performance?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your parent after a good/average/ and poor performance?
 7. Tell me about ways your parents do or do not support you? Explain?
 8. What do your parents emphasize most when talking about skating?
 9. Overall, how would you describe your parent's behavior in regards to your skating?
 10. Is there anything that you would like to share about your parent's involvement that we have not discussed at this time?

Parent Questions: Interview Guide

Demographic Questions:

1. How long has your child been figure skating?
2. How did they get started in figure skating?
3. How many days per week does your child skate? How many times per day?
4. How many times per week does your child receive lessons?
5. How many days per week do you drive them to practice? How many times per day?
6. How much of your time do you spend each week at the rink/practice/competition?
7. How many competitions do you attend with your child per year?
8. Have you ever coached your child?

Self-Confidence Questions:

1. Describe your overall confidence in your child's skating ability?
2. Describe your child's own confidence in his/her skating ability?
3. Describe what you think most affects your child's self-confidence?
 - Can you think of any people who influence your child's confidence?
How?

4. Rate your child's confidence on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 meaning very low and 10 meaning very high.
5. Is there anything that you would like to share about your child's confidence that we have not discussed at this time?

Parenting Style Questions:

1. Overall, how would you describe your behavior in regards to your child's skating?
2. Tell me about your relationship with your child
 - In general
 - Skating
3. Tell me about your parenting style
 - In general
 - Skating
 - Discuss your involvement in your child's skating?
 - Practice (attendance, watching, critiquing, offering advice)
 - Competition
 - Decision making (coaching, programs, competition, wardrobe)
4. Describe your behaviors before/during/and after your child's practice?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your child before/during/and after practice?
5. Describe your behaviors before/during/and after competition?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your child before/during/and after competition?
6. Describe your reactions to your child's good/average/and poor performances?
 - Describe a typical interaction between you and your child after a good/average/poor performance?
7. Tell me about ways that you do or do not support your child?
8. When it comes to skating, what do you try to emphasize with your child?
9. Overall, how would you describe your behavior in regards to your child's skating?
10. Is there anything that you would like to share about your involvement that we have not discussed at this time?

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Statement

5 October 2006

Sarah Rowland
118 Prospect St., Apt. 1 S
Ithaca, NY 14850
Srowlan1@ithaca.edu
215-421-5602

Dear Potential Research Participant,

My name is Sarah Rowland and I am contacting you because you qualify to be a participant in my Masters Thesis Research Study conducted through Ithaca College. Both children and parents are asked to participate in this study. Children must be between the ages of 13-18 years old and competing at the intermediate, novice, junior, or senior level in figure skating. The parent that takes the most active role in their child's figure skating (i.e., drives the child to and from rink, attends competitions with the child, volunteers with skating organization, etc.) is asked to be the parent representative in the study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and self-confidence in high-level youth figure skaters.

We are asking that you, the parent/guardian(s), provide consent for you and your child/children to be participants in this study. Involvement requires the completion of a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Separate interviews will be conducted for parents and children. Interviews will take approximately 30-45 minutes each. Any questions regarding the interview process or the study may be directed to the above listed researcher.

Data will then be analyzed on the Ithaca College campus. Results will be available to all participants upon request and completion of the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration as a participant in this important study. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Rowland

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form- Athlete

Title: Parenting Styles and Self-Confidence in High-Level Youth Figure Skaters

1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if parenting style is related to self-confidence in high-level figure skaters and if parents and children have similar perceptions of their parenting style.

2. Benefits of the Study

The benefits of this study include helping parent/guardian(s) realize their parenting style, how their child perceives it, and how it relates to their child's self-confidence in figure skating. With this information, parent/guardian(s) can adapt their parenting style to positively impact their child's future figure skating experiences. Benefits for the child include greater self-awareness of their own self-confidence and how their parents influence their self-confidence. The researcher hopes to promote children and parent/guardian(s) working together to improve overall sporting experiences.

3. What You Will Be Asked to Do

The time of your participation will be approximately 30-45 minutes to complete a semi-structured interview with the researcher. You will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form. You will sign a form, along with your parents, if you are under the age of 18.

4. Risks

Potential physical and/or psychological risks are minimal, such as negative life stress from discussing your parents' parenting style and your self-confidence. To minimize this risk you can discontinue your participation in the study at any time. Confidentiality of your responses will be maintained as your name will not be used in the study.

5. Compensation for Injury

If you suffer an injury that requires any treatment or hospitalization as a direct result of this study, the cost for such care will be charged to you. If you have insurance, you may bill your insurance company. You will be responsible to pay all costs not covered by your insurance. Ithaca College and the researchers will not pay for any care, lost wages, or provide other financial compensation.

6. If You Would Like More Information about the Study: you may contact the following researcher before, during, and/or after the study:

Sarah Rowland
srowlan1@ithaca.edu
 215-421-5602

7. Withdraw from the Study

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, by stopping the interview process while participating in the interview or contacting the researcher via phone or email after the interview process is complete.

8. How the Data will be Maintained in Confidence

All interviews will be kept confidential. Real names of the participants will not be associated with any interviews or data. Rather, each participant will choose a pseudonym for themselves. Record will be kept as to which pseudonyms belonged to the same family set (i.e., parent/child). For example, participants choosing the name Leslie and David instead of their real names, Barbara and James, will ensure anonymity.

I have read the above and I understand its contents. I agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in the study. I acknowledge that they are younger than 18 years of age, and verify that I am their parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Print or Type Name (Parent/Guardian)

Signature (Parent/Guardian)

Date

Print or Type Athlete's Name

Signature (Athlete)

Date

I give my permission for my child's responses to be audio-taped during the interview process.

Print or Type Name (Parent/Guardian)

Signature (Parent/Guardian)

Date

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form- Parent

Title: Parenting Styles and Self-Confidence in High-Level Youth Figure Skaters

1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if parenting style is related to self-confidence in high-level figure skaters and if parents and children have similar perceptions of their parenting style.

2. Benefits of the Study

The benefits of this study include helping parent/guardian(s) realize their parenting style, how their child perceives it, and how it relates to their child's self-confidence in figure skating. With this information, parent/guardian(s) can adapt their parenting style to positively impact their child's future figure skating experiences. Benefits for the child include greater self-awareness of their own self-confidence and how their parents influence their self-confidence. The researcher hopes to promote children and parent/guardian(s) working together to improve overall sporting experiences.

3. What You Will Be Asked to Do

The time of your participation will be approximately 30-45 minutes to complete a semi-structured interview with the researcher. You will be asked to read and sign an informed consent form. You will sign a form for yourself and for your child, if under the age of 18.

4. Risks

Potential physical and/or psychological risks are minimal, such as negative life stress from revealing your parenting style and the results that follow. To minimize these risks you have the right to discontinue your participation at any time. Confidentiality of your responses will be maintained as your name will not be used in the study.

5. Compensation for Injury

If you suffer an injury that requires any treatment or hospitalization as a direct result of this study, the cost for such care will be charged to you. If you have insurance, you may bill your insurance company. You will be responsible to pay all costs not covered by your insurance. Ithaca College and the researchers will not pay for any care, lost wages, or provide other financial compensation.

6. If You Would Like More Information about the Study:

You may contact the following researcher before, during, and/or after the study:

Sarah Rowland
srowlan1@ithaca.edu
215-421-5602

7. Withdraw from the Study

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, by stopping the interview process while participating in the interview or contacting the researcher via phone or email after the interview process is complete.

8. How the Data will be Maintained in Confidence

All interviews will be kept confidential. Real names of the participants will not be associated with any interviews or data. Rather, each participant will choose a pseudonym for themselves. Record will be kept as to which pseudonyms belonged to the same family set (i.e., parent/child). For example, participants choosing the name Leslie and David instead of their real names, Barbara and James, will ensure anonymity.

I have read the above and I understand its contents. I give my consent to be a participant in the study.

Print or Type Name

Signature

Date

I give permission for my responses to be audio-taped during the interview process.

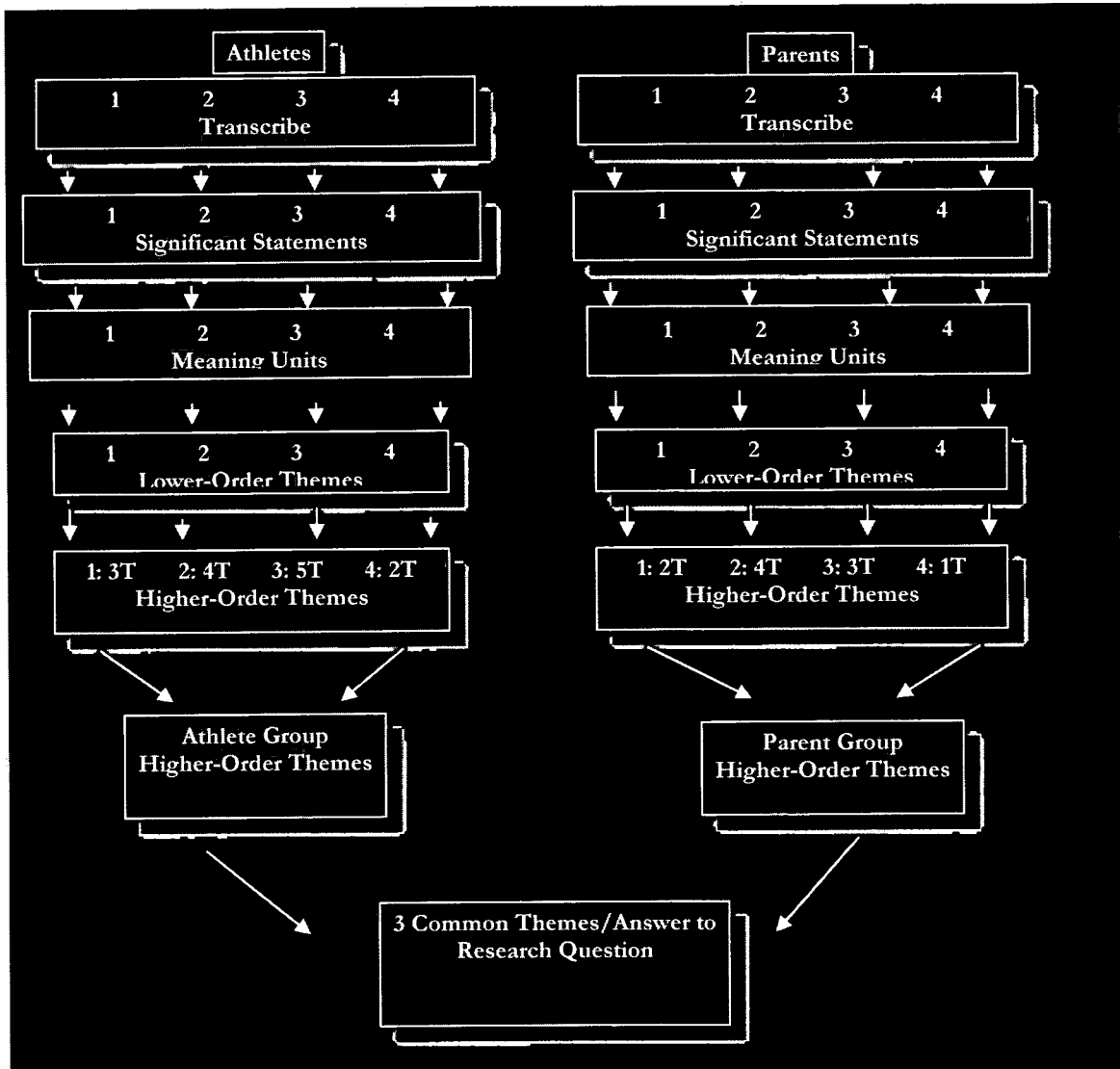
Print or Type Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E

Visual Example of Data Analysis Process



APPENDIX F

Athlete Higher-Order Themes

- Parents' support increase self-confidence
- Parents' positive comments increase self-confidence
- Parents are supportive through attendance at practice and competitions
- Parents are positive towards skating
- Parents never yell at child or are negative
- Parents provide skaters with financial support
- Skaters are allowed to make their own decisions
- Parents do not push or force child to skate
- Parents focus on the skater having fun and enjoying skating

APPENDIX G

Parent Higher-Order Themes

- Parents feel that they influence self-confidence of skater through:
 - Support
 - The comments they make
 - Encouraging child
 - Believing in child
- Parents feel that they are supportive
- Parents feel that they are supportive by attending practice and competitions
- Parents try to be positive and encouraging
- Parents feel that skating is their “child’s thing” and do not push or force child to skate
- Parents focus on having fun and loving skating
- Parents focus on trying your best
- Parents focus on learning from skating experiences
- Parents try to not coach, “leave coaching to the coach”
- Parents say that they are always there to help if needed
- Parents recognize that if they are “right on top” of child, it can negatively affect child and their self-confidence