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# Athletes' Experiences of being coached by their Partner

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## **Abstract**

The professional relationship between an athlete and coach is a unique relationship due to the large quantity and intensity of time spent together. When athletes engage in consensual relationships with their coach, the professional and personal spheres within this relationship interact together. Previous high-profile sporting examples within the media, highlight the unknown area of athletes being involved in both personal and professional relationships with their coach.

Within the professional relationship, the coach is viewed to hold power compared to the athlete; therefore, previous literature links consensual sexual relationships between an athlete and coach with abuse literature. The aim of this recent study was to separate the coach-athlete personal and professional relationships from abusive literature within sporting literature. To help gain an enriched understanding of athletes' experiences of being coached by their partner.

Five female athletes, who were married to their coach, participated in an individual open-ended semi-structured interview. Their responses were analysed to explore their experiences of being coached by their partner, creating an enriched understanding of the interaction between the home and sporting domain.

Thematic analysis indicated four themes within the data analysis: emotional connection, power dynamics within the interaction of the personal and professional domain, pragmatic issues within the interaction of the personal and professional relationship and having your coach with you at all times. Findings suggest that through the interaction of the personal and professional relationship, athletes' experience an additional component of being emotionally connected to their coach. The power which coaches hold within the professional relationship is viewed by the athletes to be at a diluted level. Within the interaction of the personal and professional relationships blurred boundaries arise which creates pragmatic issues for the athlete. Lastly, athletes suggest positives that occur from having their coach with them at all times.

The results of this study point to the positive aspects of the interaction of the personal and professional relationship, for athletes who are coached by their partner. Future research could include the perspective of coaches to understand their experiences. Additionally, future research could explore gender differences between athletes and coaches' perspectives.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: A VIEWPOINT OF SPORT**

Sport has become a significant part of many societies; with sport and exercise deemed to be determinants of health (McPherson et al., 2016). Sport and exercise are linked to the reduction of obesity; subsequently, decreasing the associated risk factors of obesity such as high blood pressure and diabetes (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2017). Additionally, sport has an association with positive development, joy and excitement (Jacobs, Smits, & Knoppers, 2016; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Vanden Auweele et al., 2008). These positive factors have helped give sport a highly visible place within society, leading to sport being regularly portrayed within the media in both a positive and negative light.

Some research trends within the literature are highlighting a small shift within some aspects of the sporting domain, with a slight focus towards the darker side of sport (Teasley & Gill, 2015). The 'dark' side of sport refers to the power that coaches, officials and managers can hold within sport, with some individuals using this power in negative ways (Kavanagh, Brown & Jones, 2017). Negative use of power within sport can undermine the positive effects gained by individuals through decreasing their self-esteem leading to increasing feelings of depression and guilt (Garrett, 1997; Teasley & Gill, 2015).

A recent example showing the negative use of power in sport, occurred within the American Olympic Gymnast team, where their team doctor was found to be sexually abusing young athletes (Vaidyanathan, 2018). When the athletes started opening up about the abuse, only then was the doctor legally charged, subsequently found guilty and sentenced to 125 years in jail (Vaidyanathan, 2018). Discoveries from this case showed how the gymnastic environment within the sporting domain created



an atmosphere for this negative behaviour to occur over an extended period of time (Vaidyanathan, 2018b). Highlighting how certain sporting environments can foster or hinder the positive impacts from sport.

The topic for this project arose from my interest in the gymnastic case example, and in particular, the power that individuals in different roles can hold within the sporting context. Once I started to do further research for this topic, I quickly discovered the complexities that arise through the sensitive topic of sexual abuse. Due to these complexities and the discovery of the multiple different power dynamics that can occur within sport, my topic was further shaped to focus on the power dynamics (the potential cause) rather than abuse.

Through my background research, I discovered that coaches are viewed to hold the power within the sporting culture; yet, not all coaches use this power negatively (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Additionally, through coaches' almost daily interaction with their athletes, they can be seen to be contributing towards shaping the athlete's thoughts and behaviour (Foucault, 1995; Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). I became interested in the impact that the power that coaches hold can have on athlete's lives outside of sport as well as within the sporting domain. As I have a background within sport, I was interested in further exploring the power dynamics within the context of personal relationships between a coach and athlete. These factors resulted in my background reading for this project taking the direction of further exploring the power dynamic between an athlete and coach; through the lens of their professional and personal relationships.

While doing background research for this topic I came across an interview with an athlete (Diane Modahl) who was married to her coach (Rowbottom, 1995). Within

this interview, the home and professional domain were interacting, which created an additional level of power dynamics. This coach-athlete relationship underwent significant public scrutiny with Modahl's coach/husband being accused of giving her (without her knowledge) performance enhancing drugs, which was allegedly done through having access to her home domain (Rowbottom, 1995). Modahl was initially suspended from the sport and her husband was banned from both the sport and coaching for life (Rowbottom, 1995). Both the athlete and coach were later exonerated in 1996 following an appeal due to irregularities in the testing process in the laboratory (Rowbottom, 1995). Throughout the interview I was interested in the complexities resulting from athletes having both a professional and personal relationship with their coach.

This project will explore athletes' experiences of being coached by their partner. Related to the different power dynamics within sport, there is a small area of research emerging which explores the potential 'dark' side of relationships within the sporting domain, with specific examples examining abuse (Fasting, Brackenridge & Sundgot-Borgen, 2013; Garret, Piper & Taylor, 2013). The slight emergence of this trend can result in consensual sexual relationships between an athlete and coach either being ignored or combined within the topic of abuse (Johansson, 2013; Johansson, Kentta & Anderson, 2016). When these two different areas: personal consensual relationships between a coach and athlete, and abuse within sport are conjoined, the underlying factors within these two vastly different areas can be viewed as similar (Johansson, 2013). Within abuse in sport, the mechanisms behind this abuse are seen to be guided by a grooming technique, which does not occur within consensual personal relationships (Johansson et al., 2016; Vanden Auwelle et al., 2008).

The coach-athlete professional and personal relationship can be highlighted in a negative way, due to the power differentials involved between an athlete and coach (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). An example of this negative light is shown through an athlete named Paula Radcliffe. Paula's husband was her management and race organiser, so although he was not her coach, Paula and her husband provide a good example of sporting and home life interaction. The media exploited a misunderstanding that Paula and her husband had at the athletic track, claiming that the fighting was occurring directly after a race due to her performance (Radcliffe, 2004). However, Paula claimed that the media misinterpreted and over-exaggerated what had happened (Radcliffe, 2004). This over-exaggeration could be seen to be a representation of the view that this personal relationship is not 'appropriate' (Johansson et al., 2016).

The example of Paula Radcliffe and her husband shows the misunderstanding that can occur through people witnessing a personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. This current project exploring athletes' experiences of being involved in both a personal and professional relationship could help increase 'outsiders' knowledge surrounding this relationship. Increasing 'outsiders' knowledge may help decrease misunderstandings and exploitation, such as was seen to occur within the Paula Radcliffe example.

There is limited research within the domain of athletes having both a professional and personal relationship with their coach; showing that this area is a relatively under researched topic. An example of this topic being relatively unknown is through an athlete named Kim Collins who was withdrawn from the London Olympics for staying with his family instead of the team during the Olympics (Watts & Morton, 2012). It was viewed that staying with his family would be a distraction for him;

however, his wife was also his coach (Watts & Morton, 2012). This example suggests that the sporting officials did not believe that home and sporting domains can mix together successfully. Yet, Kim Collins was world champion in the 100m in 2003, showing that mixing the home and sporting realms can be positive for performance (Watts & Morton, 2012).

The sporting world would benefit from more research exploring the impacts of athletes being coached by their partners. Within a coach-athlete professional relationship the boundaries between the home and sporting domains can become blurred, further research would help bring more knowledge and understanding to this area. Further research can help suggest if the personal and professional relationship either maximises or minimises distractions, resulting in the hindering or enhancement of athlete's performances. Additionally, this would help to understand the impacts the professional relationship has, either positively or negatively, on the personal relationship and vice versa.

Within this project, the second chapter will summarise recent literature surrounding athlete-coach professional relationships, with links being made to the personal relationship as well. Due to the athlete-coach personal relationship literature being relatively sparse, this chapter will include workplace literature examining workplace romances. Workplace romances are included as background literature to this topic due to the similarities that can be seen between workplace romances and athlete-coach romances such as the association of individuals working together within the professional domain. Included in this chapter is the rationale and explanation of the theoretical lens which is brought to this project: Foucauldian theory of power.

A description of the assumptions that I bring to this project, the epistemological position this project holds, the methodology and data collection procedure will be outlined in chapter three. Chapter four will conduct the research findings, with chapter five concluding this research project and offering suggestions for further investigations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FOUCAULDIAN THEORY OF POWER**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

Research involving the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is currently quite limited. Within this limited available research, the literature tends to focus more on the negative impacts of these personal relationships, which results from most research merging the personal relationships with abuse within sport (Fasting, Brackenridge & Walseth, 2007; Sartore-Baldwin, McCullough & Quatman-Yates, 2017; Vanden Auwelle et al., 2008). Subsequently, the different underlying factors involved within each area is ignored and the focus is placed on the commonalities. This ignores the positive underlying factors of the personal relationship and how it works within the sporting domain.

The focus of this literature review will be around six key themes: 1) The theories of the personal relationship between an athlete and coach; 2) The behaviours underlying the professional relationship; 3) The issues of power; 4) The coach-athlete personal relationship; 5) The personal relationship and impact on performance; and 6) The interaction of the personal relationship and the professional relationship.

### **Theories of the Personal Relationship between an Athlete and Coach**

There is very limited literature exploring the personal relationship between an athlete and coach; consequently, few theories explain this relationship. One theory that can be applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is Foucault's (1995) theory of power, which states that power is socially produced within a given social situation. Foucault's (1995) theory concludes that power is 'produced and reproduced' which can reflect power within the sporting and home domain. Coaches

are viewed to hold power within their professional relationship. (Stirling and Kerr, 2009). Yet, this power could be ‘reproduced’ within the home domain (Foucault, 1995). Thus, Foucauldian theory of power helps to explain the shifts in power within the home and sporting domain.

Power and knowledge are seen as inextricably linked, which supports previous findings; whereby it was concluded that the coaches hold the power within the coach-athlete sporting domain due to their status and expertise (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017). There are currently no studies published that explore the personal relationship between an athlete and coach through the theoretical lens of Foucauldian theory of power. This would be a useful theory to apply as the theory explains power as occurring within the social situation. In the case of the personal relationship between an athlete and coach it could be used to explore the power dynamics within the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach within the different social contexts.

As there is no theory that has been applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach, theories can be drawn from other research areas. Within this literature review, theories will be drawn from workplace romance literature. The rationale for the decision to draw from workplace romance relates to the superior position that coaches hold within society, which is similar to the position that supervisors hold within the workplace (Cowan & Horan, 2014). In other words, through their role in an organisation the supervisor holds power over their worker with whom they are in a personal relationship with; which is similar to a coach being considered as holding a position of power over their athlete.

Due to the parallels between these two areas, similar underlying behaviours and mechanism may arise. Thereby, using theories from workplace romance literature, creates suggestions for future findings. In addition, future research topics may arise through the parallels between the two areas, highlighting areas to explore and test within the interaction of athlete-coach personal and professional relationships.

Athletes and their coach hold similar values and goals which can be analysed using similarity-attraction theory (Johansson, 2013; Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). The similarity-attraction theory states that individuals are “attracted to those similar, rather than dissimilar to themselves” (Jowett, 2017, p. 156). Linking into this theory is the idea that individuals can hold similar goals, values and beliefs (Van Raatle et al., 2011; Wilson 2015). The similarity-attraction theory can be applied to the personal relationships as the athlete and coach have shared focuses, targets and goals within the sporting domain (Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

The similarity-attraction theory also links into social comparison theory; whereby, individuals compare themselves against others (Van Raatle et al., 2011). This draws from the point that individuals are looking for certain characteristics that others hold and are comparing those characteristics against themselves (Van Raatle et al., 2011). As athletes and coaches can hold similar values and beliefs the similarity-attraction theory is a theory which can be applied to the personal relationships. In addition, coaches and athletes will often share similar characteristics such as ambition, focus and being results driven. Currently, no research has applied this theory to the personal relationship between athletes and coaches.

One of the theories used within workplace romance is the social psychological theory of repeated exposure (Pierce et al., 1996). The key principle of the theory is that



through repeated exposure to events, stimuli or people, individuals' behaviours and attitudes can be altered (Cowan & Horan, 2014; Pierce et al., 1996). Within the workplace, individuals are constantly interacting with their co-workers and supervisors with Furnham (2012) suggestion that a fifth of individuals meet their partners in the workplace. Romances starting in the workplace are often deemed a result of the close proximity and large amounts of time spent together at work (Charles & Herman, 2003; Pierce, 1998; Quinn, 1997; Wheatcroft, 2016; Woodward, 2012). Previous studies find that athletes also spend a large amount of time with their coach, suggesting that the theory of repeated exposure could be applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach (Johansson et al., 2016; Jowett, 2017).

Charles, Donn and Herman (1996) found that repeated exposure to individuals can "elicit positive affect" (p.13) which in turn could eventually create interpersonal attraction. However, Charles et al., (1996) did not use repeated exposure as their theory. They explored individual's attitudes, with findings suggesting that individuals' attitudes changed over time through repeated exposure. Even though Charles et al., (1996) were not studying repeated exposure theory, results supporting this theory did arise.

The findings from Charles et al., (1996) can be related to Foucault's (1995) theory of power, where Foucault (1995) suggests that knowledge and power is linked. The findings suggest that over time individual's knowledge is being shaped through repeated exposure, which can link into the production and reproduction of power (Charles et al., 1996). Foucauldian theory of power is a suitable theory to use to understand not only the power involved in the relationship but to understand individual's knowledge and interpretation of the power within the personal relationship.

Lastly, the theory of planned behaviour can be applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Within this theory, an individual's attitude can shape their behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; Bringer, Brackenridge & Johnston, 2002). For example, an athlete's attitude towards being involved in a personal relationship with their coach can influence their behaviour, such as whether they become involved in this situation.

The theory of planned behaviour is supported within workplace romances where Pierce and Aguinis, (2003) found that individual's attitudes towards workplace romances affected their involvement and behaviour within workplace romance. Kim and Hunter (1993) offer support for this theory through their findings, which found individual's behaviour towards an issue is significantly influenced by their attitudes and beliefs. However, Pierce and Aguinis, (2003) research only examined the link between attitudes and behaviour, ignoring the impact of subjective norms on behaviour. Examining subjective norms would have been beneficial as individuals have opinions on workplace romances; thus, subjective norms can be known to the individual (Ajzen, 1985). These opinions arise from the classification of individuals into society and the knowledge gained within society Foucault (1995).

The theory of planned behaviour is a suitable model for the personal relationship between an athlete and coach as it includes the subjective norms within society (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The use of subjective norms within society, links into Foucauldian theory of power. Foucault states that individuals learn the 'subjective' norms through the knowledge they gain of what is 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviour. This helps suggest the extent to which individuals are influenced by the subjective norms, which can help to understand behaviour such as

whether individuals will engage in the personal relationship and their behaviour within these relationships.

Currently, there is limited research within the area of personal relationships between athletes and coaches which results in there being no theories that have been directly applied to help explore these relationships. Three theories have been taken from workplace romance and applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. Future research can explore these theories further in relation to the personal relationship within the sporting domain. Foucauldian theory of power is a suitable theory to apply to the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach as it explores the power within social situations. Additionally, Foucault's (1995) theory of power links with two of the theories within workplace romances. Knowledge and understanding of the personal relationships can be increased through future research by examining the theories behind the relationship. Matching theories with personal relationships between athletes and coaches is beneficial as it helps to understand the mechanism behind the relationship.

### **The Behaviours Underlying the Professional Coach-Athlete Relationship**

Theories help to highlight the behaviours and mechanisms underlying the coach-athlete relationship. Therefore, even though there are no theories directly relating to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach, the factors which underlie a professional relationship between an athlete and coach are known.

Previous research suggests that a 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach needs communication, trust and respect (Pocwardowski, Barott and Henschen, 2000). Jowett (2017) states that when an athlete and coach have a 'good' relationship then optimal performance will happen. A 'good' relationship is classified as a situation

where the coach and athlete both know what is needed of them Jowett (2017). A 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach also relates to the effectiveness of the coaching that the athlete receives Jowett (2017). The effectiveness of the coaching has been shown to link to the quality of the relationship; whereby, the quality of the relationship is influenced by the three factors of communication, trust and respect. (Jowett, 2007; Jowett 2017; Pocwardowski et al, 2000).

### *Communication*

Communication is a factor which influences the quality of the relationship between an athlete and coach and is considered key to creating a positive professional relationship Jowett (2017). Establishing communication between the athlete and coach is important to help create optimal performance. Optimal performance is gained through the understanding and knowledge which is elicited through communication (Alexandra, Stefanos & Vassilis, 2015; Jowett, 2007; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

The lines of communication are seen to be eased through the large amount of time that athletes spend with their coaches (Jowett, 2007). It is also through spending significant amounts of time together that athletes form a closeness and bond with their coach (Jowett, 2007; Stirling and Kerr 2009). Communication links into repeated exposure theory; however, Jowett (2007) and Stirling and Kerr (2009) did not examine repeated exposure theory. Stirling and Kerr (2009) examined the closeness of the coach and athlete through the lens of examining the coach's power. Whereas, Jowett (2007) examined models of closeness. It would be beneficial for future research to examine repeated exposure theory and communication levels to help understand how the closeness with a coach helps ease and enhance the communication.

Through the established forms of communication, athletes and coaches are able to ensure that they understand what is required of them and what is occurring within the training structure. This helps to foster a ‘good’ relationship between an athlete and coach (Jowett, 2017). Tutko and Oglive (1966) found that coaches take on multiple roles which often go further than their fundamental requirements of teaching techniques and tactics within their sport (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Some roles that coaches are found to take on include counsellor, parental-figure and dietician (Stirling and Kerr, 2009; Westwood, 1976).

Supporting these additional roles is Jowett (2017) findings that the coach is an influential person for the athlete. These additional roles suggest that through the closeness created between the athlete and coach, the athlete is willing to communicate additional information to their coach (Jowett, 2007). These findings support that communication as an important factor in fostering a positive professional coach-athlete relationship.

### *Trust*

Trust is a second factor underlying the mechanisms of fostering a ‘good’ relationship between an athlete and coach. Trust is the “psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of another” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998, p.365). Trust links into communication where athletes allow their coaches to take on multiple roles within the coaching domain, which is created through their closeness and communication with their coach (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Tutko & Oglive, 1976).

Trust also links into the knowledge that the coach holds, with athletes needing to trust and believe in their coach’s expertise (Johansson, 2017; Jowett & Cockerill,

2002). The coach's expertise is demonstrated and effected through the factor of communication; that is, they express their expertise through their interactions so that trust can be deemed to link into the factor of communication (Jowett, 2017). Consequently, when coaches are not confident in their own coaching expertise the level of trust is found to be diminished (Johansson, 2013; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). The coach's power can influence the quality of their professional relationship with their athlete, as their power arises from their status and knowledge (Foucault, 1995). This suggests that these underlining factors do not occur in isolation but are connected.

Trust is one of the main factors involved in creating a positive professional relationship between an athlete and coach (Johansson, 2017; Malachowski, Chory & Claus, 2012). Trust needs to occur mutually between the athlete and coach. The athlete must trust their coach, the knowledge their coach holds and the coaching process; whereby, the coach must trust the athlete to do the work and provide honest feedback (Riker-Fox, 2010). The professional relationship between an athlete and coach is developed through the athlete and coach both expressing the factors of trust and communication (Jowett, 2017). Therefore, within the coach-athlete relationship both the athlete and coach need to experience these underlying factors in order for a 'good' relationship to occur.

### *Respect*

Respect is the third underlying factor which facilitates a 'good' relationship; whereby, respect needs to occur mutually between an athlete and coach. Previous research suggests that some athletes view their coach as only seeing them as "a pair of legs" and not as a person outside of the sport (Balague, 1999, p.93). Athletes that

considered themselves as viewed in this way experienced feelings of betrayal by their coach which impacts their professional relationship (Balague, 1999).

Included within the underlying factor of respect is the suggestion that coaches let their athletes down if they do not aim to produce the athlete as an individual outside of their sport as well as inside their sport (Stirling & Kerr, 2009; Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). Positive variables of appreciation and feeling appreciated are experienced when respect is included within the 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). When respect is experienced positive emotions are elicited by both parties.

None of the underlying factors within the professional relationship can occur through one individual. Both the athlete and coach need to experience and express the factors of trust, communication and respect in order for a 'good' and 'positive' professional relationship between an athlete and coach to occur (Jowett, 2017). Once this 'good' relationship occurs, positive emotions and experiences can occur such as optimal performance (Jowett, 2017).

### *Negative Behaviours*

When only one individual in the relationship experiences these factors or these factors are missing, the positive professional relationship is diminished. Research suggests that the coach-athlete professional relationship is not always positive (Kavanagh, Brown & Jones, 2017; Teasley & Gill, 2015). Findings suggest that some coaches engage in verbal aggression including threats and teasing towards the athletes (Alexandra et al., 2015). These negative experiences such as verbal aggression have been found to have negative effects on athletes including anxiety and learned helplessness (Alexandra et al., 2015). Anxiety and learned helplessness can be

unbeneficial for performance, as well as creating a 'bad' professional relationship between the athlete and coach.

Although athletes need a 'good' professional relationship with their coach in order to succeed, this 'good' relationship does not always naturally and easily occur. A 'bad' relationship between an athlete and coach has been found to impact motivation levels (Alexandra et al., 2015). The decrease in motivation can be created through coaches yelling abuse on the side-line which creates avoidance techniques as a way to deal with this emotional abuse (Kavanagh et al., 2017). Thus, the research within the area of coach-athlete professional relationships suggests that athletes and coaches should aim to create a 'good' professional relationship which ensures that athletes maintain their motivation (Alexandra et al., 2015). Additionally, these factors help to create optimal performance.

Overall, research suggests that the factors of communication, trust and respect help facilitate a 'positive' and 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach (Pocwardowski et al, 2000). Linking into the 'good' relationship is an equal balance by both the athlete and coach experiencing and contributing to these factors. When this equal balance does not occur; athletes report negative experiences which can create significant negative impacts such as anxiety and loss of motivation (Alexandra et al., 2015).

### **Issues of Power**

The three factors: trust, communication and respect are all influenced by the power dynamics that occur within the sporting domain. Gender is an element that influences the power dynamic within the sporting domain. Research suggests that power is uneven when comparing genders (Larneby, 2016). This is influenced by the



traditional sporting culture, of sport being a masculine domain (Larneby, 2016; Pitney, Weuve & Mazerolle, 2016).

Traditionally, sport is associated with masculinity through the attributes of physical strength and aggression, which have been viewed as a positive requirement to achieve success within sport Larneby (2016). Viewing sport as a male domain creates an unequal power balance between males and females in sport (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). Women are altering the view of sport being a masculine domain but men still dominate this area through constructions of being the ‘superior’ athlete (Larneby, 2016). This suggests that the traditional roles of masculinity and femininity are dominant within the sporting realm.

These traditional roles have implications not only for athletes but coaches as well. Research finds that men are selected into powerful positions, such as coaching roles, over women (Brake, 2012; Vanden Auwelle et al., 2008). Previous findings found that even when the athletes to be mentored are female, males were still predominantly chosen ahead of women for the coaching positions; suggesting that women do not occupy these powerful positions within sport (Brake, 2012; Vanden Auwelle et al., 2008). Gender creates power discrepancies between men and women within the sporting domain, which can be demonstrated by the low numbers of females represented within coaching positions in the sporting environment (Brake, 2012). It is important to understand the influence of gender within power to help understand how power affects the coach-athlete relationship.

### *The Coach's Power*

Traditionally, gender has been an issue in power; however, men in coaching positions gain additional power through the attribute of status, which they hold over

their athletes (Brake, 2012). Research suggests that the coach holds all the power through their knowledge and status within sport (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). These findings support Foucault's view of power and knowledge being linked; however, Stirling and Kerr (2009) do not explore the coach's power using Foucauldian theory. Thus, Foucauldian theory of power would be a beneficial theory to use to help gain further knowledge surrounding coaches' power.

A relatively older study suggests that the power a coach holds is similar to a priest's perceived power; whereby, a priest's knowledge is taken to be correct and not challenged Brackenridge (1997). Recent studies support the claim of a coach's power being similar to that of a priest's power, with studies finding that the main source of power for a coach is held through their expertise, with their authority receiving no challenges or questioning (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017). This suggests that society allows coaches to hold their position of 'coach', and due to their position, their knowledge is not challenged. Current research suggests that there has been no real change in perception of power over time, with the coach still holding this unquestioned power and authority which was held in the past.

Although recent findings support the suggestion of the coach's power reflecting a 'priest' power; alternative studies suggest a shift in the reflection of power between an athlete and coach is occurring. Research has shifted power from the view of a 'priest' power towards a view of power representing a master-slave relationship (Jacobs et al., 2016). Within the master-slave relationship the coach holds all the power and control which can be demonstrated through athletes training through injury for fear of missing out from selections for their team (Stirling and Kerr, 2009). Athletes are viewed to hold little power and have no input into their training; hence why athletes train through injury (Lang, 2010; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The master-

slave relationship supports the suggestion of a coach's power linking into a priest power as within both suggestions, the coach is viewed as holding all the power.

The conclusion that coaches hold the power within the sporting domain, can be reflected through the idea that athletes hold little power within the athlete-coach professional relationship (Kirby, Greaves and Hankivsky, 2000). Therefore, the athlete is dependent on their coach to make all the decisions (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002). This supports Brake (2012) suggestion that the coach is irreplaceable for the athlete if they wish to progress within their sport.

#### *Athletes Dependency on their Coach*

The power and authority that the coach holds links into the idea that the athlete is dependent on the coach for success. This is due to the athlete's reliance on their coach's skills and knowledge (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The coach's knowledge influences the factor of trust as the coach and athlete both have to trust the coach's knowledge and subsequently this gives the coach power (Pocwardowski et al, 2000). If the coach or athlete does not believe in that knowledge, then trust is diminished which in turn affects the quality of the coaching relationship between the athlete and coach (Jowett, 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). In this situation the coaches' knowledge is viewed as vital for success.

The view of athletes depending on their coaches' skills and knowledge is supported by research finding that coaches set up the training programmes, make team selections, decide on which competitions to target and hold expectations of the athlete (Fasting, Sand & Sisjord 2018; Hendry, 1974; Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). This suggests that the athlete holds no control or choice within the professional relationship between an athlete and coach.

Contradictory to these findings is the suggestion that through the increased use of technology athletes can gain knowledge independently which helps to minimise their reliance levels on their coach. (Sawicki, 2009). If interpreting power from a Foucauldian perspective, the knowledge that the athlete gains is linked into the power the athlete can hold. This suggests that athletes are able to gain knowledge to increase their power within the athlete-coach professional relationship.

### *The Athlete's Power*

Technology has been found as a way for athletes to gain knowledge and subsequently power within the coach-athlete professional relationship (Sawicki, 2009). Currently, younger athletes may hold higher knowledge of the data and information gained from technology than their coaches; due to younger generations having more involvement with technology (Sawicki, 2009). This suggests that the athlete can gain some power over their coach which results in the coach and athlete being less dependent on each other (Sawicki, 2009). These findings support the view that the dependency between an athlete and coach is mutual rather than only the athlete being dependent on their coach. However, technology may only impact younger athletes' knowledge and power leaving older athletes power levels unchanged (Sawicki, 2009).

It is currently unknown if older athletes, with limited technology skills, can gain knowledge over their coach through the availability of technology and data. Consequently, it is unknown if in the future, with technology becoming more embedded in society, if young athletes will lose their power as coaches gain additional knowledge and capability surrounding technology. Currently, there is a gap in the research when looking at athletes' power and technology which can be further examined. Future research needs to explore the use of technology to help athletes gain

knowledge, control and subsequently, power within the coach-athlete professional relationship further.

Expanding on the idea that athletes can gain knowledge within the sporting domain helps to disclaim the view that the master-slave relationship represents the power within the athlete-coach professional relationship. Athletes hold choices within their decision to participate in sport, suggesting that athletes can leave their sport at any time, unlike in a master-slave relationship (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

The idea of the opportunity of choice links into Foucault's (1995) idea of power; whereby, Foucault (1995) sees individuals as free agents. Additionally, athletes can make the decision to change coaches at any given time; although athletes' performance may be negatively impacted by constantly swapping coaches (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Athletes may not hold the same status and power as coaches within society; however, athletes still have some choice within their professional relationship which elicits a small amount of power to the athlete (Markula & Pringle, 2006). The master-slave relationship may not fully represent the power involved in the coach-athlete relationship as athletes do ultimately have choice within their professional relationship even if the options available are limited. Thus, a new representation of this power should be suggested.

Highlighting the choice that athletes hold within sport creates the emergence of a new representation of the power between an athlete and coach: parent-child relationship (Parent & Bannon, 2012). Coaches invest a lot of their time for the benefit and development of their athlete; which reflects the time parents invest in their children (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Supporting the parent-child reflection is Jowett's

(2017) suggestion that a coach is an important person in an athlete's life; which is similar of a parent in a child's life.

Athletes often see their coach as a person they can go to for advice and help, which is not reflected in the master-slave relationship (Tutko & Oglive, 1966). Tomlinson and Yorganci (1997) suggest that a coach's power spills into other aspects of the athlete's life such as their social plans, eating and sleeping pattern, which can reflect a parent's impact in their child's life.

*Power Relationships within Sporting Domains.*

Current research offers a new representation of the athlete-coach professional relationship within the power dynamics of sport. Findings suggest that coaches hold the power within the coach-athlete relationship; similar to the power parents hold over their children's choices (Witt & Dangi, 2018). Yet, findings also suggest that athletes can gain a small percentage of power within the professional relationship. Within the description of parent-child power relations, athletes can be viewed to be dependent on their coach, consequently, decreasing their small amount of power (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997).

When examining findings from previous research, the parent-child relationship does not fully describe the power within the coach-athlete relationship, as it does not highlight the athlete's power and control (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). Currently, the descriptions of 'priest-power', 'master-slave' and 'parent-child' are limiting towards the athlete as the descriptions suggest that only the coach holds the power within this professional relationship. With Sawicki, (2009) suggesting athletes gain power within the professional relationship as well as the coach. Future research needs

to examine the power of an athlete from an athlete's point of view as currently research is examining the coach's power, which may reflect these descriptions within research.

A new recent trend is emerging within the literature which suggests a change within the power dynamics (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Stirling & Kerr, 2000). Part of this change occurs as a result of the underlying factors of communication, trust and respect which needs to be mutually experienced within the coach-athlete relationship (Pocwardowski et al, 2000; Stirling & Kerr, 2000). It is starting to be recognised that the coach needs the athlete to deliver and perform from the advice that the coach gave, through the coach's knowledge and direction (Stirling & Kerr, 2000). Brackenridge (1997) suggested that the athlete and coach both shape each-others sporting career, with some of the coach's power stemming from their reputation and ability to produce and maintain successful athletes' performances.

Only recently is Brackenridge (1997) idea of the coach being reliant on the athlete, starting to be reflected within research findings. Jacobs et al., (2016) found that coaches who were able to produce elite athletes were more likely to be hired, which reflects the view that coaches are reliant on their athletes to do the work and perform. Subsequently, this is results in athletes gaining power. Research does not suggest why the idea of coaches being dependent on athletes is only recently being discovered, even though the idea was suggested by Brackenridge in 1997. Research is limited within the area of athlete's power, with further research being needed to understand how athletes can gain power which can create a more balanced power dynamic.

Studies suggest that athletes are slowly gaining power; however, when compared to coaches' power, the power athletes hold is limited (Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017). Recent trends in research suggest that athletes are becoming more involved

within the decision-making process (Lassen, 2009). Coaches distribute power to their athletes through allowing athletes to make choices, which helps athletes gain power (Garret, 1997). Having athletes involved in the decision-making process helps to decrease the athlete's sense of powerlessness (Garret, 1997).

Decreasing the athlete's sense of powerlessness can link into the athletes view of trust, communication and respect that athletes have for their coach. Athletes can hold higher trust and respect for their coaches when they are able to share their ideas and thoughts in the coaching process (Jowett, 2017). Communication links into power, through coaches allowing their athletes to communicate their choices and thoughts (Jowett, 2007; Alexandra et al., 2015; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Distributing power to athletes and allowing athletes to be involved within the decision-making process helps to facilitate a 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach in the sporting domain.

#### *Positive Power*

Findings within literature predominantly supports the view that the power which coaches hold is negative; however, some research finds that power can be positive as well (Stirling and Kerr, 2009). Stirling and Kerr (2009) view power as positive which is reflected through the positive qualities that are associated with the coaches' power. Positive qualities that are identified with coaches' power includes: having a successful reputation and knowledge; which is deemed beneficial for the athlete's success (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). By further exploring on the use of the power by coaches, it can be demonstrated that the power can be either positive or negative.

Power dynamics influence the three factors involved in facilitating a 'good' relationship in the sporting domain. Power occurs within the male dominant sporting domain, which can create power discrepancies between male and females. Coaches are



viewed to hold powerful positions within society due to the knowledge and status they hold which reflects Foucault's (1995) view of knowledge and power being linked. However, no studies specifically explore the power dynamics between an athlete and coach in reference to Foucauldian theory of power. Most studies that explored Foucault theory of power examined how policies were implemented or training was structured as a result of the knowledge held.

Discrepancies arise within the research with past research suggesting that athletes held a percentage of power in the past. Yet, the power that athletes hold, is only recently being suggested now. This power links into Foucault's theory by suggesting that the athlete is a 'free agent' within the sporting world as the athlete has a choice to participate in their sport. With athletes' choices influencing coach's reputation, expertise and experience, which reflects their power, suggesting that coaches and athletes are dependent on each other.

#### *Foucauldian Theory of Power*

As evidenced reviewed here suggest, athletes gain power within the professional relationship between themselves and their coach (Sawicki, 2009). There is a demand for a theoretical lens to view the power dynamics which are occurring within the professional relationship. Foucault's (1995) theory of power can be seen as reflective of the athlete-coach dynamic specifically in how power is reproduced within each given situation. As described by Foucault's (1995) theory, the reproduction of power within an athlete and coach's personal and professional relationship is indicative of how power is produced and reproduced within any given social situation.

Within this study, the theoretical lens that will be applied is Foucauldian theory of power, which states that power and knowledge are inextricably linked (Foucault,

1995). Foucault's (1995) view is reflected in the coach's expertise and knowledge which influences their power and status within society (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Within the sporting situation, research suggests that the coach holds power over the athletes (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017). Suggesting that power arises through society's classification and identification of the category 'coach', where a coach is deemed to elicit knowledge and expertise within the sporting situation compared to the athlete.

Individuals gain knowledge within society, which arises from the classification that individuals are given such as the classification of 'normal' and 'abnormal' (Foucault, 1995). These classifications are constructed within society, which impact how individuals act and behave in order to conform to these classifications (Foucault, 1995; Gravey, 2005; Magnusson & Marecek; 2012). Due to negative impacts such as gossiping and stigma, individuals strive to fit within the classifications (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Foucault, 1995). An example of power shaping social control for how coaches should behave professionally is shown through the public trial of the doctor involved in the USA gymnastics organisations (Vaidyanathan, 2018). The public media communication and widely exchanged commentary of the details within this case, shows broader society how to act and behave in accordance with how to act 'professionally'. The media commentary demonstrates behaviours which are deemed 'unacceptable' within society. Thereby, Foucault (1995) views power as being a result of social processes which are created within the social situation.

An example of power being reproduced within the social situation is through both the athlete and coach guiding each other (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Athletes have a choice with regard to their engagement in their sport, specifically their level of commitment they are willing to put into achieving results or if they want to change

coaches (Markula & Pringle, 2006). The athlete's choice in turn guides the coaches behaviour, where the opportunity for freedom governs power (Foucault, 1995; Foucault & Hurley, 1990). Additionally, the coach uses their power to guide the athlete and enable behaviours from the athlete through using strategies such as benching the athlete (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Benching the athlete enables the athlete to change their behaviour to be selected in their sport, which conforms to the identity of 'athlete' (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Therefore, Foucault's (1995) theory of power helps to explain the power that athletes can produce within a given social situation, where Foucault views power as "being everywhere" (Foucault, 1998, p.68),

Throughout society, the use of power is predominantly viewed to be negative. Foucault (1995) views power as neutral; yet how the coaches' uses this power influences if power is negative or positive. Examples of positive and negative use of power includes guiding athletes through their training compared to yelling emotional abuse at athletes (Kavanagh et al., 2017; Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). According to Foucault (1995) power is not positive nor negative which is reflected by the situation in which power can create both pleasurable and un-pleasurable behaviours (Gravey, 2005). The use of power influences athletes' experiences, with athletes respecting and trusting their coach when power is used to help guide and improve athletes (Foucault, 1995, Pocwardowski et al., 2000). Thereby, reflecting how power can influence the factors of a 'good' relationship within the sporting domain. When power is used negatively the professional relationship between an athlete and coach can be hindered.

Athletes and coaches hold knowledge of themselves and their identity as an 'athlete' or 'coach' (Foucault, 1995, Markula & Pringle, 2006). Included within their knowledge is the expectation that in a sporting situation the relationship between an athlete and coach should be strictly professional (Brake, 2012; Kirby et al., 2000). Yet,

the identity of being their coach's partner contradicts this norm. Individuals are shaped through the knowledge of their identity, which then shapes how they act and behave in accordance with this identity (Gravey, 2005; Markula & Pringle, 2006). Through the self-knowledge, power is elicited through shaping individual's behaviours, actions and skills (Magnusson & Marecek; 2012). Which is reflected through individual's attempts to hide their personal relationship between an athlete and coach as it contradicts the 'norm' (Johansson et al., 2016).

Utilising Foucauldian theory of power, it is possible to see how power is produced within a given social situation. Foucauldian theory of power is chosen as the theoretical lens for this project, as the interaction of the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach occurs within different social situations. Thus, the ideas within Foucault's (1995) theory of power being 'productive and reproductive' within each given social situation plays out in the coach-athlete personal relationship. The classification of 'normal' and 'abnormal' link into the classification of 'appropriateness' and 'inappropriateness', which are referred to in research exploring coach-athlete personal relationships (Fasting et al., 2018; Foucault, 1995; Johansson et al., 2016). Thereby, Foucault's (1995) theory of power helps to show the impact that may occur for the athlete/coach when they do deviate from the norm of 'appropriateness' between an athlete and coach.

### **Coach-Athlete Personal Relationship**

Research is relatively limited when examining the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. Within literature when examining the personal relationship between an athlete and coach the term 'coach-athlete sexual relationship' (CASR) is used, which includes; dating, love and marriage (Johansson et al., 2016;

Jowett, 2016). Legal CASR is defined as “consensual and mutually desired between adults above the age of consent” (Fasting et al., 2018, p. 463). The small volume of literature that is available which examines CASR has conflicting findings.

### *Legal Coach-Athlete Personal Relationship*

The term ‘legal CASR’ impacts individuals’ opinion on the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. Brackenridge (2001) and Brake (2012) examine coaches’ opinions regarding CASR, with results suggesting that when the athlete and coach are over eighteen, then the personal relationship is deemed acceptable. Suggesting that age may play a role within individual’s opinions of the relationship. It is currently unknown, as to the impact that age truly has on others’, such as athletes and coaches whom are not involved within the relationship, views. For example, if individuals engage in the personal relationship between an athlete and coach at seventeen; yet, only engage in sexual activities at eighteen, the research does not cover if other’s views of the relationship changes as the athletes reaches eighteen. Another example would be if others attitudes towards the relationship alter if there is a significant age gap between the coach and athlete. Exploring the personal relationship between an athlete and coach further can help to gain an increase in the understanding towards these relationships and the impact on those involved.

Within the term ‘legal CASR’ Kirby et al., (2000) argues that athletes cannot give consent regardless of age. Kirby et al., (2000) believes that as a result of the power that coaches hold, athletes cannot give consent due to the uneven power dynamics. As a result, power has an impact in CASR. Previous research found that coaches hold power over their athletes, which suggests that coaches are exploiting their power over their athletes (Brake, 2012; Fasting et al., 2018; Kirby et al., 2000). The

term legal CASR can be viewed to be untrue as consent cannot occur. Current research findings support the view that coaches can distribute some power to their athletes, suggesting that further research needs to be conducted to assert if athletes are truly able to give consent or not (Sawicki, 2009). The view that athletes cannot give consent can create significant implications for athletes and coaches within the personal relationship as the sexual activity will be viewed as illegal and inappropriate. The athlete and coaches' career will be impacted as a result of the relationship being declared illegal. Thus, there needs to be further research conducted within the area of personal relationships between an athlete and coach to ensure unnecessary stigma is minimised.

A recent trend is starting to separate the areas of CASR from sexual abuse within sport. A common occurrence has been joining CASR with abuse within sport which has limitations on the personal relationship between an athlete and coach as the relationship is viewed as harmful, abusive and negative (Johansson et al., 2016). Jowett and Meek (2000) separate CASR from abusive literature by examining married coach-athlete couples. Jowett and Meek (2000) found the positive variables of genuine concern and caring which then affected well-being and performance in a positive way. Within this study it needs to be considered that Jowett and Meek (2000) only had 5 couples. Due to the view that this relationship is uncommon, the sample size is considered suitable (Fasting et al., 2018)

Separating the two areas helps to further understand the underlying mechanisms behind the personal relationship which can add to the knowledge within society. Additionally, separating these two areas supports and acknowledges that love and sexual relationships can occur within any given social settings, which can help to minimise the stigma surrounding the personal relationship (Johansson et al., 2016).

Examining the personal relationship as its own research subject can elicit new findings which may shape the way the relationship is viewed within society.

*The 'Appropriateness' of Coach-Athlete Personal Relationships*

The small volume of research which does examine the personal relationship between an athlete and coach has conflicting results surrounding the view towards if the personal relationship is 'appropriate' or not. Fasting et al., (2018) findings support the view that the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is 'inappropriate'. Fasting et al., (2018) conducted in-depth interviews with 36 coaches, with their findings suggesting the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is 'inappropriate' through the negative terms used in the interview by the coaches such as 'not good' and 'not acceptable'. This was contrary to the view held within the majority of sporting organisations, where there are no ethical considerations or rules in place surrounding the personal relationship between an athlete and coach (Johansson et al., 2016). Having no ethical considerations in place can suggest that sporting organisations may approve of the personal relationship.

Further research needs to be conducted to understand why there is no ethical considerations in place surrounding the personal relationship. The conflicting results suggest that there is currently no consensus surrounding if the personal relationship is viewed as 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'. Therefore, further research could help to gain a more thorough understanding of this relationship to help understand other's views of the 'personal relationship'.

Power and knowledge are intrinsically exclusive, where the knowledge of 'appropriateness' between an athlete and coach influencing the social processes within society, which deems if the personal relationship is considered acceptable. Using

Foucauldian theory of power allows an understanding into how the view of ‘appropriateness’ is constructed within society. The view of ‘appropriateness’ guides how athletes and coaches act within society; reflecting the choice to keep the personal relationship hidden or not (Foucault, 1995). Utilising this theory can help to understand how power has been shaped and produced throughout time to help shape and change the negative view of personal relationships between an athlete and coach.

The limited research within the personal relationship between an athlete and coach creates a gap within the research. Findings suggest that the consensus is unknown as to how others perceive the personal relationship between an athlete and coach (Johansson et al., 2016; Kirby et al., 2000). Overall, the current limited amount of research surrounding the personal relationships between an athlete and coach is conflicting. The conflicting results within the literature may stem from the ‘personal relationship’ being called CASR. Calling the relationship CASR can be limiting for athletes and coaches as it focuses more on the sexual relationship rather than the emotional and romantic connection between athletes and coaches. Therefore, the current project will be using the term ‘personal relationship’ instead of CASR.

#### *Motives for Entering the Personal Relationship*

Through the limited research, the consensus is unknown surrounding how others; such as athletes and coaches whom are not involved in personal relationships, perceive the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. To add to the knowledge regarding others’ perceptions, findings will be drawn from co-worker’s perceptions of workplace romances. Conflicting views arise surrounding co-worker’s perceptions of workplace romance. Quinn (1997) suggests that these conflicting views



occur as a result of how co-workers perceive the individual's motives for engaging within these relationships.

Three main motives arise within the literature: ego, job and love motives (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989; Quinn, 1997). Job motives interpret the individuals' reason for engaging in the relationship is to increase their job status. An ego motive views excitement and status as the primary motive for entering the relationship (Anderson & Fisher, 1991). Love motives are perceived as individuals having sincere reasons for engaging in a romantic caring relationship (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989; Quinn, 1997). An overall consensus sees love motives as creating positive views of workplace romances (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989; Quinn, 1997). Job and ego motives are perceived negatively through co-workers viewing these individuals as less caring (Quinn, 1997). Thereby, suggesting that the motives that others perceive the athlete/coach to have for engaging within a personal relationship can influence the perception of this relationship which can link into the 'acceptability' of the relationship. If perceptions of the coach/athlete suggest love motives for entering the relationship than the relationship will be viewed more positively.

Power and status can impact on how others perceive workplace romances (Hettinger, Hutchinson & Bosson, 2014). Research suggests that peers dating fellow peers are supported by their co-workers compared to peers dating supervisors (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Hettinger et al., 2014). Previous findings found that peers dating supervisors were viewed as untrustworthy, less caring and lower in character (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Horan & Chory, 2009). When reflecting these findings within the personal relationship between an athlete and coach it is known that coaches hold more power and status than athletes do (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin

et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Suggesting that athletes will be perceived in negative ways if they engage in these personal relationships with their coach.

Currently, there is a gap in the available literature, with research ignoring co-worker's perception of the supervisor within this situation, with research only exploring co-worker's views of their peers. Further research needs to be conducted on other's views looking specifically at the coach-athlete personal relationship as the power dynamics that is involved in this relationship can influence others views creating negative impacts such as gossiping and stigma (Anderson & Fisher, 1991).

#### *Keeping the Personal Relationship Hidden*

There are a number of factors found to be involved in individual's decision to keep their workplace romance hidden or not (Cowan & Horan, 2014). The first factor involved is the perception of how others in the organisation, will view the workplace romance. Other's views within the organisation, on workplace romances can affect if individuals choose to keep their relationship 'hidden' or not. Quinn (1977) found that two-thirds of their respondents in their survey of workplace romances, chose to keep their relationship hidden at the start. Keeping the relationship hidden can have implications for those involved in the relationship. Findings suggest that keeping the relationship hidden can be detrimental to individual's health; causing anxiety and isolation (Quinn, 1977; Wilson, 2015). Contrary to these findings is the suggestion that individuals usually fail to keep their relationship hidden from others (Wilson, 2015).

Even though individuals may struggle with their attempts to keep their relationship hidden; a positive effect through self-esteem increasing has been found to occur once individuals disclose their relationship (Cowan & Horan, 2014). These findings indicate that individuals should not aim to keep their relationship hidden as it

creates negative impacts for them. Applying these findings to the coach-athlete personal relationship reinforces that athletes can experience additional anxiety when trying to keep their relationship hidden which can negatively impact on their performance (Coudevylle, Martin Ginis, Famose, Gernigon, 2008). Currently, there is a gap in research which could explore if athletes and coaches aim to hide their relationship and the impacts which can occur for the athlete's performance due to the additional pressures of keeping the relationship hidden.

Rules implemented by an organisation affects an individuals' decision as to whether to keep their relationship hidden or not. Many workplace organisations do not have rules implemented by the management surrounding workplace romance which is reflected in the findings for sporting organisations (Johansson et al., 2016). These organisation rules may suggest a reason for Wilson (2015) findings, that is, compared to the past individuals do not strive to keep their relationship hidden with "65% going public with their relationship" (p. 6). Cowan and Horan (2014) found that there is less of a need to keep the relationship hidden than there was in the past; suggesting that workplace romances are becoming accepted within organisations and society. Athletes and coaches may not aim to keep their relationship hidden as sporting organisations do not have rules in place governing the personal relationship between an athlete and coach (Johansson et al., 2016). However, this is only speculation based on the workplace romance findings whereas the underlying effects could be different. There needs to be further research exploring if athletes and coaches aim to keep their relationship hidden, why they would choose to keep their relationship hidden or not and the impacts that can occur due to their decisions.

Overall, if others view their co-worker's motive for engaging in the relationship as driven by love motives than the relationship is viewed as positive

(Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Dillard & Broetzmann, 1989). However, research does not investigate how others interpret the motives or how individuals need to act in order to conform to what is deemed to be love motives behaviour.

When linking the above findings with the personal relationship between an athlete and coach, findings from workplace romances suggest that further research specifically investigating the personal relationship between an athlete and coach would be beneficial. Power dynamics are involved in the athlete-coach relationship as demonstrated from findings in previous studies; however, how this power dynamic impacts others' views are under researched. Therefore, further investigation needs to be done as there is no way to avoid the power dynamics within an athlete – coach relationship, unlike in workplace romances research which includes peers dating peers in organisations where a power imbalance is not considered to occur.

### **Personal Relationship and the Impact on Performance**

An important area to understand within the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is the impact that the relationship can have on an athlete's performance. An athlete's performance is important for both the athlete and coach to succeed within their careers, with an athlete's performance upholding a coach's power and expertise (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Thus, it is important to understand the effect this personal relationship has on performance.

Conflicting findings arise in the limited literature surrounding the impact of the relationship and performance. Johansson et al., (2016) states that CASR jeopardizes performance as CASR challenges the discourses related to elite athlete. When Johansson et al., (2016) explores CASR without looking at the discourses of elite-athletes the results suggest that athletes aim to work harder to prove that their personal

relationship is not affecting their performance. Johansson et al., (2016) findings link into impression management theory which suggest that individuals attempt to alter other's perception of themselves. Johansson et al., (2016) did not use impression management as a theoretical background to their study; yet, further research could use impression management as a theory when looking at the impact of personal relationships on performance.

Positive impacts on performance has been found within the literature. Jowett and Meek (2000) found that a personal relationship facilitates a close bond between the coach and athlete which promotes performance. This close bond can be seen to link into the factors of communication, trust and respect (Jowett, 2017). Previous findings suggest that the more time coaches and athletes spend together the more effective the coaching is, which helps foster a 'good' professional relationship between an athlete and coach (Jowett 2007; Jowett, 2017; Pocwardowski et al, 2000). Therefore, the personal relationship could be seen to be positively impacting the factors that create a 'good professional relationship' between an athlete and coach, with findings from these factors suggesting that the more time spent together between an athlete and coach the higher these factors are positively impacted.

Discrepancies occur within the limited research of the personal relationship between an athlete and coach; therefore, research from workplace romances is used to help explain the impact that personal relationships can have on performance (Kirby et al., 2000; Johansson et al., 2016). Current research found that individuals involved in workplace romances have increased motivation/enthusiasm, are willing to work longer and experience higher satisfaction with their jobs (Pierce, 1998). Contrary to Pierce's (1998) research findings is Wilson (2015) suggesting that workplace romance can decrease job productivity through workers taking longer lunches together and arriving

late. Linking into this negative impact that workplace romance has on performance is Malachowski et al., (2012) and Wilson (2015) findings. Wilson (2015) found that productivity may be negatively impacted due to the view from co-workers of individuals involved in workplace romances with supervisors gaining an unfair advantage. From co-worker's perception of this unfair advantage, their motivation is found to be decreased and a negative work environment is created (Malachowski et al., 2012)

Disagreeing with the findings suggesting workplace romance has a positive or negative impact on workplace performance is Charles and Herman's (2003) findings. Charles and Herman's (2003) suggest that workplace romances are not predictive of performance, with individuals' attitudes towards their organisation impacting their performance, not their relationship. Currently, the findings surrounding the impact of workplace romances is conflicting and learnings are not able to be applied further to other types of relationships; whereby, the impact of the personal relationship between an athlete and coach on performance is unknown. Highlighting a gap in research, future studies can explore if personal relationships between athletes and coaches have positive, negative or have no impact on performance.

Currently, the limited available research exploring the personal relationship between an athlete and coach suggests that the relationship can have positive impacts on performance (Jowett, 2017; Jowett & Meek, 2000). These positive impacts are the result of impression management theory; whereby, athletes can attempt to improve their performance which can foster positive perceptions of the personal relationship (Johansson et al., 2016). Additionally, the personal relationship helps to foster the characteristics of communication, trust and respect which helps maintain a 'good' professional relationship between an athlete and coach. However, as research is

limited, confidence cannot be gained from the findings as more research needs to be conducted to either confirm or discredit the findings. Research needs to specifically explore the impact that personal relationships have on performance. The results from workplace romance and the impact on performance are conflicting which can create difficulties when referring to workplace romance to gain an understanding of the impacts of an athlete/coach personal relationship on performance. Therefore, it will be beneficial for research to be done explore personal relationship between an athlete and coach on performance.

Overall, the research examining the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is limited which creates a large gap in research. Discrepancies occur surrounding the appropriateness of this personal relationship which links into the power that coaches hold within the sporting situation. More research needs to be conducted to understand personal relationship within the social situation of uneven power between an athlete and coach.

### **The Interaction of the Personal Relationship and Professional Relationship**

Complications arise within the interaction of the home and sporting lives, which occurs from the boundaries between the two areas becoming blurred (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009). Johansson et al., (2016) found that athletes wanted to keep their sporting and home lives separate, although they acknowledged that this is difficult to achieve. Supporting the interaction between the sporting and home lives is Kanter (1997) argument that the home and work life are inexorably linked. Research suggests that when work and home life conflict arises then negative effects are experienced, with the main negative effects being stress, burnout

and dissatisfaction with their job and home life (Kreiner et al., 2009). Any of these impacts or experiences would be negative for the athlete in the sporting domain.

When looking at work-home balance to find supporting research that can be applied to the coach/athlete personal relationship, the impact of technology on the area of work-home balance is relevant to explore. In this situation the coach/technology is the joining factor between the two spheres. Technology has created a situation where the work can be brought home and conducted at any time or place; whereas by comparison, the coach is brought home in the personal relationship between the athlete and coach (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). Previous research suggests strategies may be required to keep the home and sporting lives separate with workers being able to turn their phones 'off'; however, athletes are not able to switch their coach 'off' (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007).

An additional strategy included within the research is the use of additional support being received in the home environment which acts as a buffer for work-home conflict (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018). Yet, these strategies may not be useful in the home-sporting interaction as the support received at home is mostly the coach. There needs to be further research into how athletes and coaches negotiate their home and sporting lives. Further research will help to understand how athletes and coaches in personal relationships can successfully put strategies in place to keep these two domains separate or if athletes and coaches can allow these two areas to interact without negative implications.

### *Boundary Theory*

The main theory used within the home-work conflict is boundary theory. Boundary theory focuses on how individuals aim to separate their two domains by



creating boundaries (Boswell & Olsen-Buchanan, 2007). Boundary theory can be a theory applied to the sporting and home lives as athletes and coaches may aim to separate their two domains, which Johansson et al., (2016) found in their study of CASR. Within boundary theory, there is the suggestion that individuals vary in their desire and motivations to keep their two domains separate; therefore, individuals can belong anywhere on a continuum from separation of the two domains to complete integration of the two domains (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018). Krenier et al., (2009) added to boundary theory by stating that the home-work boundary is socially constructed which is a useful additional way to consider boundary theory. Examining boundary theory as socially constructed helps give individuals the ability to control and construct their own reality (Krenier et al., 2009). Thereby, suggesting that individuals can control the separation between their two domains (Krenier et al., 2009).

Giving individual's control links into Foucault's (1995) theory of power; whereby, within each social situation power is reproduced. Exploring boundary theory within the personal and professional relationship would be a beneficial way to look at these relationships as it examines the interaction and how athletes/coach reproduce power and gain control, which can help to enforce boundaries.

When examining the sport and home interaction and separation it can be beneficial to use boundary theory to demonstrate and explain how athletes and coaches create boundaries. Including boundary theory as socially constructed will be useful to help understand why athletes and coaches combine their two areas as currently it is considered difficult for the athlete and coach to separate their two domains (Johansson et al., 2016). Looking at the home-life conflict helps to apply a theory to the interaction of the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach.

Overall, research suggest that the sporting and home life interacts even when athletes and coaches try to keep the two domains separate (Johansson et al., 2016). Work-home conflict literature is useful to use to apply a theory to the home-sporting life interaction; however, the work-home conflict literature does not offer strategies that can be implemented in the sport and home life separation. The home-work life and sporting-home life may both have conflicts between the two domains, although different dynamics can occur between the home-sporting life compared to the home-work life. Implying that the sporting-home life should be studied as its own distinct research area.

### **Summary**

There is limited research examining the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Consequently, there are no specific theories that are widely applied to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach, although theories can be adapted from the workplace romance literature. Within the workplace romances theories; similarity-attraction theory, repeated exposure theory and the theory of planned behaviour including knowledge of individuals own characteristics, others' characteristics and societal views are known. All of which can be applied to the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. The knowledge of individuals and other's characteristics along with societal views can link into power through Foucauldian theory of power. Foucault (1995) states that knowledge and power are inextricably linked.

Findings suggest that within the professional relationship between an athlete and coach the factors that help facilitate a 'good' relationship are well known and understood. These factors include; communication, trust, respect and power

(Pocwardowski, et al., 2000). Power becomes an interesting dynamic within creating a good relationship, as the power between a coach and athlete is not equal, where power can shape these factors (Brackenridge, 1997). Thus, Foucauldian theory of power helps to explain the power dynamics occurring within the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Additionally, Foucauldian theory of power states that power occurs within a given social situation which can reflect the social situation of the personal relationship and the professional relationship (Foucault, 1995). Hence, Foucauldian theory of power will be the theoretical background used within this present study.

When the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is brought into the professional relationship, large gaps in research arise. Research shows conflicting views surrounding the ‘appropriateness’ of the personal relationship between the athlete and coach which highlights the relatively unexplored knowledge and evidence within this area (Kirby et al., 2000; Johansson et al., 2016). Linking into the conflicting views is the impact of the coach’s power; thus, Foucauldian theory of power helps to understand power and knowledge within the social situation of the personal relationship (Foucault, 1995). It is unknown if the personal relationship between an athlete and coach can be beneficial for performance, with research suggesting conflicting findings. The limited research within this area of the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach elicits large gaps within the knowledge and research of this area.

Findings suggest that usually athletes and coaches aim to keep their romantic relationship hidden which links to workplace romance (Johansson & Larsson, 2017). Yet, the strategies that athletes and coaches engage in to keep their two domains is unknown as workplace romances struggle to reflect the personal relationship between

an athlete and coach when separating the two spheres. Due to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach being a relatively under-researched area, there are lots of gaps within the area. Some aspects of the research from workplace romance can be applied to the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Yet, it is beneficial to study this relationship type as its own subject area rather than trying to match workplace romance research to the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. Studying the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach will help add to the under-researched area, which will help decrease the gap in knowledge.

### **CHAPTER THREE: ASSUMPTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The assumptions that I bring to the research process are highlighted, as I bring my own biases and assumptions into the research process which can impact how I view my research. Making the assumptions explicit helps me to be critical and reflexive towards the research project, whereby my assumptions plays a role in the epistemological position I hold for this research project, which in turn informs my theoretical framework (Crotty, 1998).

#### **Assumptions**

Science aims to seek to understand the nature of reality, what is seen around us (Crotty, 1998). Within traditional psychology this understanding of the nature of reality arises from observations, from which meaning is then derived in the object. The ‘reality’ that is discovered from observations within traditional psychology can be argued to be un-bias and uninfluenced by the researcher and the participant (Crotty 1998). Traditional psychology creates a guide that allows their research to be ‘replicated’ and ‘valid’ which is part of why positivism is seen to be un-bias (Crotty, 1998). Within traditional psychology a researcher’s assumptions can be seen to be ignored.

Critical psychology arose from an opposition to traditional psychology (Crotty, 1989). Constructionists argue that researchers cannot go into their research without influencing the research process, even if we are explicitly aware of our assumptions Willig (2013). Being aware of our assumptions helps to understand how our research will be influenced by our assumptions and therefore be able to take steps to mitigate the impact.

For constructionist meaning is derived from the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Crotty 1989). Thus, meaning is seen to occur within the given moment, with the nature of reality, being a representation and construction of the interaction (Crotty, 1998). To understand my position within this research process I need to understand the position that I hold within society: A New Zealand European woman, involved within the sporting domain as an athlete, completing her master's degree. The position I hold within society influences the meaning that I derive from the interaction I have with my participants. My background and assumptions play a role in the nature of reality that I take from the interaction between myself and my participants.

Within the research process I acknowledge that my life experiences and values will impact my project. If I do not acknowledge my assumptions, I am ignoring the impact that I have on my research. I cannot enter this project without bringing my own biases; I am invested within my project as I have a genuine interest in the topic. Secondly, the background reading I did for this study influenced the phenomenon I was interested in exploring further. Therefore, my interest shaped the formulation of my research question. As Crotty (1998) states the questions we ask, particular theory and methodology we choose and the conclusions we make are all influenced by our assumptions. In order for these assumptions to be challenged and to be reflexive within research these assumptions must be made explicit (Crotty, 1998).

Due to my background of not only being involved in sport my whole life, but having sport be an enjoyable and important part in my life, I have always been interested in the positive impacts that sport can have. Sport has helped me meet a whole range of individuals; some of whom are amongst my closest friends. Sport has helped me to be 'fit' and 'active'; however, through my academic career I have seen

how these terms are created within society and are a form of classifying individuals. I have also seen how these terms have been used to 'try' to motivate individuals to engage within sport, yet, I think the focus needs to be on the fun and enjoyment of sport rather than the association of 'fit' and 'active' which subsequently, links into the category of 'healthy'.

From my interest within sport, most of my assignments throughout my university career were focused on the impacts that sport can have for individuals on their self-esteem, enjoyment levels, body weight and the obesity levels within society. Most of my assignments were focused on youth, as having youth engage in sport at an early age can create a good routine for later in life.

During my master's degree I completed an assignment based on gender differences within the sporting domain; specifically looking at athlete's online media presentation and the endorsements they receive. Looking at the gender differences between athletes' presentation showed the struggle that athletes; specifically, female athletes face within the construction of femininity, construction of an athlete and their attempts to try and oppose these classifications.

Sport is seen as a masculine domain due to the competitiveness and aggression that is associated with success in sport, which contradicts the view of femininity (Steinfeldt, Zakrajsek, Carter & Steinfeldt, 2011). Therefore, female athletes can be sexualised within the media to try and conform athletes to this idea of 'femininity' (Steinfeldt, et al., 2011). Completing this assignment made me think about the discrepancies between men and women within the sporting domain, which expanded my interest in the power discrepancies between men and women within sport.

Throughout my academic career Foucault was someone whose theory and ideas stood out to me. Especially, his panopticon example, which causes individuals to engage in self-surveillance to abide by societal assumptions and roles (Foucault, 1995). I was especially interested in how the panopticon links into the understanding of masculinity and femininity to create docile bodies.

Expanding on this area of interest led to the desire to further understand the impacts that the panopticon has on sporting athletes who do not fit this view of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Specifically, female athletes whose role of being an athlete, for example, being competitive and strong, which does not fit into societies standard view of being 'feminine' (Steinfeldt, et al., 2011). Thus, my interest in Foucault, played a role in the questions I asked within the interview process and the theory that I chose for this project.

Coming from a sporting background I can see the struggles that women athletes face when wanting to engage in sport to a highly committed and focussed level, yet, are unable to conform to the societal view of 'femininity'. A common example of this is in something as simple as clothing; whereby, a lot of my female athlete friends' shoulders are too big to fit into 'normal' clothing such as blazers; suggesting that women should not have broad shoulders and muscles. Yet, athletes gain muscles from their hard training regimes, with these muscles being a result of their training and classification of 'athlete'.

I am engaged in a sport which is not physically aggressive in the sense that it is not a contact sport and even though it is competitive, this is something that is not outwardly shown. Thus, I could be seen to conform more to the notion of 'femininity' compared to those females in physically aggressive sports. Conflicts arise from



these classifications: am I seen as too feminine to be an athlete? If I'm an athlete, am I not seen as feminine? I may hold the classification of an athlete and fall into the norm of 'femininity'; however, specific knowledge about myself is not known from this classification (Markula & Pringle, 2006). I can see that though these classifications which are still explicit within society that individuals are starting to deviate from the 'norm'. Deviating from the norm helps to challenge societal views (Hendry, 1974).

I have been involved with coaches throughout my sporting career which has shown me the bonds that are created between an athlete and coach. Being involved in competitive sport has shown me how important it is to trust the process that your coach has created. In addition, your coach needs to trust you to work towards the goals that you have both set to achieve success.

I have seen the different power dynamics at play between an athlete and coach. My coach influences my decisions towards the races I target, and his opinion means a lot to me. However, this relationship is strictly professional. Sport can take up a large part of my life; therefore, I know the struggles to balance sport and home life. Through my background of sport, I was interested in how athletes who are in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach navigate these two domains.

Even though the dynamics involved between a parent-child coaching duo and an athlete-partner coaching duo is separate, I was interested in how the play of home life and sporting life interacted. At one stage my mother and I tossed around the idea of her coaching me; however, this idea was discarded when we realised it would potentially result in arguments and impact on other areas of our relationship. I struggled to separate her as someone outside of her role of my mum. I didn't always see her as having the skills and knowledge to be able to coach me, which is the

complete opposite of the truth due to her participation in the sport from a young age, being at my races and understanding my athletic goals and aspirations. This sparked an additional area of interest for me as I have seen parent-child coaching duos flourish. I started asking myself questions such as “how does this relationship work?”, “does their sport come home with them?” and “how are they not having arguments?”

Once I started looking at coaching dynamics, I noticed that some athletes were coached by their partners. Within the coaching dynamic of an athlete being coached by their partner similar questions to the queries within the parenting-coaching dynamic arose for me: “How does this relationship work?”; “Does their sport come home with them?”; “How are they not having arguments?”, and “Is this relationship different than the coaching-parent dynamic?” These questions arose as I have seen both coaching-athlete partnership duos flourish where a stronger bond is created between their personal and athletic relationship, yet I have also witnessed the coaching-athlete relationship create relationship breakups. The break up within the personal domain can be negative professionally for both an athlete and coach through the gossip speculation that can arise from these relationships occurring and then dissolving; as well as a potential loss of trust and respect within the professional relationship.

My experiences, skills and values are a part of who I am, which I recognise as being brought into the research project. I realise that I am not un-bias and I am immersed within this research topic (Crotty, 1998). I came to this research interested in the power dynamic involved within sport, with further reading specifying this power dynamic in an athlete-coach relationship. Doing the background research sparked my interest in athletes’ experiences of being involved in a professional and personal relationship with their coach. Therefore, my prior interest and experiences shaped this project.

## **Epistemological Position**

The knowledge that I bring, and subsequently draw, from this project comes from the epistemological position of constructionism. Within constructionism the knowledge we have is located historically; knowledge is shaped socially through history, and the social setting/context. Due to knowledge; being constructed within the interaction/social setting, there can be multiple nature of reality, which occur within different interactions (Crotty, 1998).

Within this research, knowledge is constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Crotty, 1998). Instead of the nature of reality being objectively observed, truth/meaning occurs within the social setting (Crotty, 1998). Foucault did not develop a theory of epistemology; however, due to his work surrounding knowledge/power operating within social settings, his work can be applied to the epistemology of constructionism. Therefore, the theoretical lens that I apply within this project is Foucauldian theory of power.

## **Research Objectives and Aims**

The research aims for this project is to provide an enriched understanding of athletes' experiences of being in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach. A professional relationship between an athlete and coach has been described as a unique bond, where interacting the personal sphere with the professional sphere can create blurred lines between the two areas (Johansson et al., 2016). The current research aims to understand the interaction and impact of these two domains for the athlete.

Research surrounding the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is limited; with the research within the personal relationship being joined together with

sexual abuse research in sport (Johansson, 2013; Johansson, Kentta & Anderson, 2016). Linking these two domains can highlight the personal relationship between an athlete and coach, with a negative interpretation of the relationship. The aim of this project is to add to the small amount of knowledge publicly available surrounding the personal relationship by separating this area from abuse. The current project aims to explore personal relationships in reference to a positive light, to hopefully help reduce the stigma that can be associated with personal relationships between an athlete and coach.

Athletes are seen to hold little power compared to coaches within the sporting domain, with the coaches' power arising from their expertise and knowledge within sport (Brackenridge, 1997; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The current project is interested in the power dynamics within the athlete-coach personal and professional relationship; however, the project will only look at athletes' perspectives of these relationships. Examining only the athletes' experiences allows for an in-depth understanding of how athletes navigate their experiences within a social situation, which produces less power for athletes (Brackenridge, 1997; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). By only including athletes, this allows for the opportunity to understand their power dynamics within the home and athlete settings whilst focusing on the impact on the athlete rather than the coach.

As athletes can train with a group/team, athletes may have to navigate their peers' thoughts and feelings towards their relationship. Current research suggests that peers who date their supervisors are viewed in a negative light; whereby, co-workers judge their peers negatively for fear of their peer gaining an unfair career advantage (Malachowski et al., 2012). Including only the athletes' perspective can help to show how the athlete incorporates their teammates/peers' views towards their relationship. The decision to only include athletes in this research focuses the research on aiding the

understanding of athletes' experiences within a range of social settings such as the home settings, training settings and settings involving peers/teammates.

## **Methodology**

The process taken within this project involved: ethical considerations, the recruitment process, interview questions, data collection and analysis. This project is conducting qualitative research because the project aims to understand the experiences that athletes have within the social situation of being coach by their partners. Qualitative research is interpretive which helps to give us new insights (Crotty, 1998). Currently, literature is conflicted surrounding the nature of the 'appropriateness' of personal relationships between an athlete and coach (Kirby et al. 2000; Fasting et al., 2018). Thus, qualitative research can help give new insights into this relationship which can aid in the debate surrounding the 'appropriateness'.

## **Data Collection**

### *Sampling and Recruitment*

Potential participants for this project were recruited through three main methods: snowballing, social media and through the head of sport organisations. Snowballing technique is a useful technique to use as it can help access 'hidden' participants; especially in this project where there is no list of potential participants available (Van Meter, 1990). Social media was used via sports organisations who had their own social media page and were willing to share my advertisement poster for this project on their page. Social media also allowed me access to a wider range of participants. Lastly, through contacting the head of sports organisations, my advertisement poster was passed on to potential participants within different sporting domains.

The eligibility criteria for this study involved athletes being over 18 years old. Athletes being over 18 years old was a criterion because of the findings from previous studies that if athletes are over the age of consent (which in NZ is 16), these athletes are seen to be able to engage in personal relationships with their coach (Fasting et al., 2018). Research surrounding CASR is mainly based from America where the age of consent is 18, which contributed to the decision to require athletes be over 18 to participate in this project (Fasting et al., 2018; Johansson et al., 2016). Subsequently, the youngest athlete in the project who was first coached by her partner was in her mid-late 20s.

The participant sample was the result of a convenience sample, due to the small population of individuals involved in personal relationships with their coach. However, all participants from this convenient sample met the requirement of athletes being over 18. No participants had engaged in a personal or professional relationship with their partner when they were under the age of 18. A second eligibility criteria for this study involved athletes being coached by their partner for at least one year. This eligibility criteria allowed for athletes to be involved in the situation for a long period of time which helps to add in-depth knowledge about their experiences to the research area.

It was decided to only include the athletes' perspectives in this study, with coaches being excluded. It is understood within this study that the coach's perspective may vary from their athlete's perspective. As the aim of this study was not to see if the athlete and coaches' experiences match up, the issue of the athletes' experience not matching the coaches' experience was not viewed as an issue. Overall, the aim was to understand the athletes' experience, not the coaches.

The population involved in both professional and personal relationships with their coach is relatively small, which is reflected by the small sample size within this study. Due to the nature of this relationship and society having insufficient knowledge about the underlying mechanisms of this relationship, it was assumed it would be difficult to find participants. The assumption was that athletes involved in this situation may want to keep their relationship and experiences hidden due to fear of judgement. Having a small sample size helps gain a deeper understanding of these athlete's experiences with the professional and personal relationship. Therefore, the sample size was not seen to be an issue within this project.

Even though this project was open to both male and female athletes, I only received interest from female participants. However, as most coaches within the sporting domain are male, and with previous research, most CASR have been found to occur between male coaches and female athletes, this sample was deemed an appropriate representation of the professional and personal relationship (Johansson et al., 2016). Therefore, having a gender balance was not the main criteria for the sample. Five female participants fitted the specific criteria for this project. As this project made use of qualitative research, having five samples allows for an in-depth understanding of athlete's experiences. Thus, within this research project, the sample size was not the main factor to answer the research question, the main factors involved asking the 'right' open-ended questions to facilitate a discussion (Yardley, 2004).

### *Participants*

Participants are all given pseudonyms to avoid any identifying features within their experiences. Specific places they named, along with their partners have been given different names to ensure identifying features are not acknowledged. All

participants are involved in heterosexual relationships, with all participants married to their partner. Due to the small number of individuals within NZ involved in both professional and personal relationships with their coach their specific sport has not been identified. The sports in which participant engage in include; karate, athletes, running, netball and adventure racing (mountain biking, mountain running and kayaking).

### *Demographics*

Charlotte: is 70 years old, she has been married to her partner for 13 years and was first coached by her partner at age 60. She is still coached by her partner today. She is coached within a group of athletes.

Isla: is 45 years old, she has been together with her partner for 21 years and was first coached by her partner at age 30 She is still coached by her partner today. She is coached within a group of athletes.

Olivia: is 56 years old, she has been with her partner for 30 years and was first coached by her partner when she was age 30. She was coached by her partner for 3 years, and has now retired from her sport. She was coached within a group of athletes.

Amelia: is 34 years old, she has been with her partner for 9 years and was first coached by her partner when she was age 29. She is still coached by her partner now. She is the only athlete her partner coaches.

Ella: is 55 years old, she has been with her partner for 28 years and was first coached by her partner when she was age 28. She is still coached by her partner today. She is coached within a group of athletes.

### *Procedure*



Potential participants were given an information sheet which included the aim of the study, what the study would entail and participant's rights (refer appendix A). After reading through the information sheets participants were asked to sign consent forms before they participated within the study (refer Appendix B).

In order to gain an understanding of athletes' experiences of being in both a professional and personal athlete-coach relationship, a one-on-one open-ended semi-structured interview was conducted. The decision for the interview to be semi-structured and not a structured interview allowed the participant to shape the interview. If the participant said something that the interviewer wanted to further discuss, having semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to investigate that further. These interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted either via skype or at local cafes of the participant's choosing. The interviews were recorded with participant's permission via a recorder.

The interview would start off with the researcher introducing herself and sharing her involvement in the sport; followed by the participant sharing some knowledge about their sport, such as how long they have been involved in their sport and how they became involved in their sport. This encouraged the participant to share information about their level of involvement and commitment to their sport and what their training entails to provide some context. Starting the interview off in this way also helps to create rapport between the researcher and the participant through allowing the participant to share something that they are invested and passionate about.

The researcher saw herself holding the role of an interviewer who guided the conversation through listening to the knowledge the participant is contributing to the conversation (Johansson & Larsson, 2017). Even though there was an interview an

interview schedule to help prompt the interview, the direction of the interview was negotiated by the participant and the researcher, depending on the responses of the participant.

The semi-structured interview was structured around four main themes: the athletes' home/personal life, their sporting life, their/others views of the relationship and their athletic performance. These themes arose from previous findings with literature.

Firstly, as this research is interested in the personal and professional lives, the themes of home/personal life and sporting lives helps to investigate the research aims. Current literature suggests that the boundaries between the home and professional domains can be blurred, which is why the interview was structured around these two themes (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009). Literature suggests that co-workers have views, which tend to be negative, surrounding the personal relationship of superiors and peers (Anderson & Fisher, 1991; Horan & Chory, 2009; Quinn, 1997). Including athletes understanding of how they interpret others' views and perception of their relationship allows the understanding of the impact other's view can have on the athlete. Lastly, including the theme of athletic performance helps aid in the understanding as to if this personal relationship is productive for athlete's performance or not. Current research is conflicted towards if the personal relationship aids or hinders performance; hence, this theme can help aid in the discussion (Johansson et al., 2016; Jowett & Meek, 2000). These themes were constructed from conflicts within current research to help aid the understanding and knowledge of personal and professional relationships within a coach-athlete situation.

## **Analysis**

### *Transcription*

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim from the recorder. During some stages of the transcription it was hard to hear the audio due to background noise; especially when the interview was held at a local café. However, notes were written throughout the interview to prompt the behaviour of the participants throughout the interviews which were referred to throughout the transcription process. There was not a specific convention used to transcribe the interviews; however, some conventions from Silverman's (2014) simple notion convention was included, for when pauses and emphasis was used, to help to ensure the authenticity of the transcription (refer to Appendix C). Once the interviews had been transcribed; the audio tapes were listened to again to check the script matched the audio. Once the transcription script was deemed to match the audio tapes, the audio was discarded/deleted.

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method to report athletes' experiences of being in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach. Thematic analysis is broken down into six-steps; whereby, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide for thematic analysis, helped guide the analysis for this project. The data analysis process started off by the researcher submerging herself with the data to become familiar with the information and results. Part of the submerging process was aided by transcribing and listening/re-listening to the audio recordings of the interviews. Continually, re-reading over the interview scripts additional helped the submerging of the data. Once the researcher was starting to recognise/know the data, patterns were searched for throughout the data, with notes being made at the side of each page.

The following step entailed identifying pieces of the data that appeared relevant to the research question to start off initial codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To help complete this step copies of the interview transcript were printed off, with the printed transcriptions being highlighted and notes written in the margin. Within this step there was no limit on the number of codes; therefore, some extracts from the data were coded under numerous different codes. During this coding process an inductive approach was adopted as there was no pre-existing codes framing the process; nor pre-existing codes that the data had to fit into (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To finalise this stage, a list of my initial codes from the data was collated; resulting in 69 codes (refer Appendix D).

Step three involved re-analysing the codes into potential themes through investigating how different codes may contribute to a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Included within this stage was the evaluation of the relationship between each code; through considering the similarities and differences between each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To help with this process, all 69 codes were written onto sticky post-it paper, to be able to easily move the codes between each potential theme pile, when evaluating the codes (refer Appendix D).

Step four involved revisiting and refining each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Part of this stage involved revisiting and ensuring that the codes fit appropriately within the allocated themes. Once satisfied that the codes fitted, the next part involved re-reading over the interview script to ensure the themes are sustained by the text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Re-reading the data ensured satisfaction that no additional data had been missed, from the interviews.

Step five involved summarising the themes, which resulted in four main themes. When analysing the data within each theme, previous research from the background reading for this project and the literature review were reflected in the themes within this study. Thus, the decision was made to include prior research within the analysis to show how the findings relates to previous research. Lastly, step six involved the write up which is reflected in chapter four.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The current project was conducted in accordance with the Code of Ethical Conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants (2017). The project was subjected to the Massey University Ethics Committee, where it was given provisional approval for research, with some small changes needed (Massey University, 2017). Included in the small changes that were needed to be made included the consideration of where the researcher and participant were going to conduct the interview. Having the interview within a participant's home creates potential for harm for the researcher. Therefore, both the researcher and the participant need to be considered within the potential for harm that can occur during research. Having a middle-ground of a café or holding the interviews at training grounds, allows a safe place for the interview to be conducted. Additionally, having the interview over skype minimises this potential harm. After these slight alterations the project was approved.

Participants were given information and consent forms to ensure they understood the project and what their rights as participants are. Allowing participants to read through and understand the information sheet ensures that participants gain autonomy and that respect for the participant is given. Included in participants

autonomy was the participants right to discontinue their participation in the study at any time/stage.

As this topic can be a sensitive subject, confidentiality issues needed to be considered. Within this project, each participant was given a pseudo-name to ensure that their identity was protected. As the number of athletes involved in a professional and personal relationship with their coach is small, the sport that participants are involved in was not mentioned in this project. Not naming the particular sports helps to minimise ways of identifying the participants. The data collected from this study were kept on password protected computers. Hard copies of consent forms were kept in a locked drawer. The audio recordings were deleted once transcribed to script. Once the project has been completed the transcriptions and data will be securely deleted/destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

Potential harm is an ethical consideration, resulting from the link in research between personal relationships and sexual abuse within sport. In the ethical consideration, it needed to be recognised that participants could disclose sexual or physical abuse, vulnerability and control. As the researcher is not qualified within this domain, a clinical psychologist was briefed on the research topic to provide help for the researcher, and to enable the researcher to direct the participant appropriately to receive support if that was required. Additionally, on the information sheet, included in the contact details is lifeline's number which allows individuals access to expert information if the interview brings up anything distressing for the participant. Although disclosure of this domain is not within the researcher's competency; there are points of contact that the researcher was aware of that could be used to provide help to the participant.

The potential benefits which arise from this study balances out the potential harm. Firstly, this research project aims to add to the existing gap within personal relationships between athletes and coaches, by separating personal relationships from abuse literature. The research helps to understand the interaction of home and sporting lives and the impacts of these intersections within both domains. Lastly, this research aims to understand power dynamics within different social situations. By participants engaging in this research they can assist by adding knowledge and their experiences to a limited area, which can help to decrease stigma.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Four main themes were identified within the data analysis: 1) Emotional connection; 2) Power dynamics within the interaction of the personal and professional domain; 3) Pragmatic issues within the interaction of the personal and professional relationship; and 4) Having your coach with you at all times. The first theme discusses an additional component found within the athlete and coach professional relationship as a result of the personal relationship. Secondly, the power dynamics within the interaction of the personal and professional domain is deliberated. Included in this section is the sub-theme of privileged position, dilution of power and the power dynamics involved in the home life.

The third theme explores the pragmatic issues that arise as a result of the dual relationships of personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Included in the discussion is the main strategies that arose within the interviews, which were seen to be successfully implemented to solve these pragmatic issues. A sub-theme involving athletes' decisions to keep their personal relationship with their hidden or not within the sporting domain is included within the pragmatic issues theme. Additionally, the subtheme of childcare is included within this theme.

Lastly, the impact of having your coach with you at all times is explored, including looking at the advantages that arise from this impact. Within the four themes not all the participants had similar experiences; therefore, the contradictions between responses as well as the similarities are highlighted. Overall, there was a positive view elicited from participants surrounding their experiences of engaging in a personal and professional relationship with their coach.

### **Emotional Connection**



Previous research suggests that communication, trust and respect are vital factors in facilitating a good professional relationship between an athlete and coach (Pocwardowski, et al., 2000). When the personal relationship between an athlete and coach is added into the professional relationship a fourth factor arises within facilitating this ‘good relationship’: emotional connection. Three participants noted how they were emotionally connected with their coach through the love they had for their coach/partner. Subsequently, the love held for their partner kept the athletes in their sport.

Ella describes her love of her partner and how this influenced her desire to stay within her sport *“I wouldn’t want to be there if he wasn’t there to be honest, I mean I love it, but I love it because he’s there, we are a lovely team and discuss ideas together”* The idea from Ella of being a ‘lovely team’ between herself and her coach supports previous findings suggesting that teamwork links into the idea of a ‘good’ professional relationship between an athlete and coach (Jowett, 2017). Supporting Riker-Fox (2010), this suggests that the coach and athlete are both important within the professional relationship, with a ‘good’ relationship between an athlete and coach being vital for the athlete to succeed and continue within their sport.

The additional component of emotional support fosters a stronger relationship within the professional relationship between an athlete and coach. *“It’s taught me that he loves me unconditionally and that no matter how much I push or how difficult I am, not that I’m difficult all the time...he’s not going away, he’s not going to reject me, he’s not going to say I can’t come anymore”* Isla describes how being emotionally connected to her coach enables her to still participate in her sport, showing how the personal relationship is positively influencing the professional relationship.

Linking into the additional factor of emotional connection, is the factor of trust which fosters a 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach (Pocwardowski et al., 2000). Within Isla's description is her belief and trust that her coach will not turn her away, which in turn could link into the factor of respect. Supporting the findings of trust facilitating a 'good' relationship between an athlete and coach, trust linking into the additional component of emotional connection, is Charlotte's trust in her partner and coach "*I trust that he knows what is good for me, yeah and in life I trust him implicitly, he's not going to go off running with the milkmaid*". These findings show how trust is evident in both the personal and professional relationship, which suggests that both the sporting and home domains influence one another.

Two of the athletes spoke of how their relationship within their one domain such as their sport influenced their relationship in the other domain, the home domain. The personal relationship is seen to affect the professional relationship, which is shown through the emotional connection the athlete has with their partner. Ella talks about the positive experiences of having her partner coach her "*I think it's very special to have your husband who can coach you and you get on with each other, and it's great for the marriage, you know, we've got something we can share, you know we both love the sport, we both love exercise*". These positive effects of having her partner coach her is seen to spill over into her home domain and positively affect her marriage.

The above findings within Ella's experiences suggest that she has no boundaries between her home and sporting life. Findings can reflect Edwards and Rothbard's (2000) findings of a crossover between the home and working domains creating spill over effects into the other area. Yet, as Ella experiences no boundaries between her home and sporting domain, the causes of the spill-over effect between this study and Edward's and Rothbard's (2000) findings can be different. Ella sees the

professional relationship as being positive for her personal relationship as she has something she can share with her husband, where she can gain support from her husband.

Isla describes the cross over between her two spheres, with her experience supporting previous research within home-work conflict, which suggests that individuals struggle to separate the two domains (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Johansson et al., 2016; Kanter, 1997). Blurred boundaries between the two domains occur for Isla *“the sport is part of who we are and so they are very fluid and so each bleeds into the other, the personal bleeds into the sport, and the sport bleeds into the personal life”*. As both the sporting and home life is a part of Isla the two domains easily cross over. The findings from this present study supports Johansson et al., (2016) findings that athletes involved in personal relationships with their coach find it difficult to separate the home and sporting domains as the two domains interact with one another.

The component of emotional connection links into support for the athlete. Amelia reflects on how having an emotional connection with her coach helps to create a form of support *“They are there for the crappy times, umm\_ and even through the crappy times they still love you and still want to encourage you to do better next time”*. The support received is further emphasised through Olivia. Olivia highlights the support she receives for her coach/partner within her sport *“somebody that cares about you and your partner involved in something, so in other words you spend more time, they are supportive, and they are there which is always nice, it’s nice to have people you care about and be there for your sport”*. These findings highlight the positive variables that arise within the dual relationship of personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach which reflects Jowett and Meek’s (2000)

findings. Jowett and Meek (2000) found that positive variables such as genuine concern and caring occurred within their study of married athletes and coaches. Therefore, suggesting that this dual relationship can elicit positive responses for the athlete.

Contrary to participants highlighting the positive impacts of the component of emotional connection, Amelia highlights the downside of this component on her performance. *“Some races I think it’s actually been a negative, umm because you know they love you and there’s nothing you can do to make them love you less, you don’t have to prove anything to them, so when your racing ugh and if you’re not pushing as hard as you possibly could or you think oh I’m coming third... that’s alright umm he will still love me if I come first, second or last, whereas if you didn’t have that umm you might be inclined to push a bit harder because you feel the need to prove yourself, but I know because he loves me and there’s nothing I can do wrong that I don’t need to prove myself”*. Through the interaction of the personal and professional relationship, Amelia does not experience a need to ‘push’ or ‘prove’ herself within her sport. Through emotional connection created within these dual relationships Amelia knows she will have her husband’s support, irrelevant of her placing. Suggesting that the interaction of the personal and professional relationship can have consequences for the athlete’s performance.

Amelia’s experiences challenge Johansson et al., (2016) findings suggesting that athletes feel a need to prove themselves in their performances when they are engaged in personal relationships with their coach. Additionally, Amelia’s experiences oppose impression management; whereby, individuals attempt to shape others views of themselves as she does not attempt to prove herself to others to shift their views (Johansson et al., 2016). It is worth noting that Amelia’s coach only coaches her which

could elicit different experiences for her compared to the other participants. This suggests that athletes who are coached within a group could experience more of a desire to prove themselves to others when compared to athletes who are their coach's only athlete.

Included within the emotional component is athletes noting additional/heightened emotions they experienced or viewed their partner/coach to experience within their sport. Amelia noted how as a result of blurred boundaries between the sport and home domain, her coach/partner received her emotions towards her race *“living with them after a race, if you haven't had a good race, they cop it and not a direct perspective, it's just because you're flat, you're disappointed and it's just that drop in energy and you're just unhappy with your race and that affects them because you are unhappy, they are unhappy because they are your partner... your partner in everything whatever you feel they will feel it too, they will be disappointed”*.

The sporting life can be brought into the home domain which creates blurred boundaries between the two domains, supporting research suggesting the difficulties that are entailed in keeping work-home realms separate (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Kanter, 1997; Kreiner et al., 2009). Amelia's experience shows the potential for conflict that can arise from the interaction of the sporting and home domains. Through the blurred boundaries Amelia's coach is seen to take on multiple roles beside the coaching role, where Amelia's partner acts as a support person for her. Findings reflect Tutko and Oglive (1966) view that coaches take on additional roles outside of their coaching role. The social situation that is created such as Amelia's perceived bad race creates these additional roles for the coach.

Within the social situation the professional relationship between an athlete and coach is shaped, which creates additional roles for the coach. Ella reflected how her coach took on the additional role of being her motivator through holding belief in her ability *“I didn’t think there was any way I could be as good as the other guys and he kept saying you are faster than those girls...we had spent like two to three months training massively for this road relays series and the big final leg I got to do and I outsprinted everyone, so he was really chuffed”*. Thus, Ella saw her coach taking on the additional role of motivator. The description that Ella gave of her experiences reflects the findings of trust being a factor within a ‘good’ professional relationship between an athlete and coach, where it reflects that the coach needs to trust the athlete’s ability as well as the athlete trusting the coach (Stirling & Kerr, 2009).

Athletes experience heightened emotions through their emotional connection with their coach, Olivia notes the increased perception she had, where she was worried for her coach/partner *“though he was using unusual terminology, his meaning behind the terminology and work was understood, I was probably a bit more sensitive to it than I needed to be... for me I was probably emotionally unsure how everyone would take him initially and actually everyone accepted it totally, they accepted that he was a man and would talk like a man... it was me being sensitive at the time”*. Olivia became worried that her partner would not be accepted as her team’s coach. Thus, additional emotions were taken on as a result of the personal relationship. Isla notes the worry that arose from the emotional connection *“I was worried about injury so I was like “oh coach what about little X, she’s little... and that was kind of like my worry and anxiety as his partner and wife umm second guessing his abilities or his judgement”*. The emotional connection that athletes had with their coach created additional emotions for the athletes. The findings in this study highlight previous research which found that

coach's power is upheld by their expertise; whereby, the athletes view their coach to hold lower expertise reducing their power. These heightened emotions that Olivia and Isla experience link into Foucault's (1995) theory of power, where the lower expertise decreased their view of their coach's power levels.

Through the emotional connection that Isla has with her coach, Isla notes how she noticed her partner's disappointment when she chose to take a break from her sport *"umm\_ basically, you know when it would get pretty clear to both of us that I wasn't coming back, umm a little bit of frustration that I would see from him, but kind of, I would see disappointment from him, which made me feel, you know, I don't want to disappoint him, he's not even disappointed for him, it's like he's disappointed for me, because he knows what a good thing it is and how it keeps you healthy and umm yeah, so disappointed for me"*. Within a 'professional' coach athlete relationship, a coach is considered to have an impact in their athletes' choices; however, these additional emotions such as disappointment are not seen to be experienced. Suggesting that the interaction between the athlete's personal and professional relationship creates judgement within the relationships.

Findings suggest that the emotional connection between an athlete and coach is mutually experienced within the professional relationship, where Isla views her coach to be affected by the emotional connection where he experiences disappointment. Suggesting that when the personal relationship interacts with the professional relationship it is difficult for coaches and athletes to maintain a 'professional' relationship within the sporting domain. Further, findings suggest that the home and sporting domain have no boundaries between the two, where the home domain creates a spill-over of emotions into the sporting domain. Having the spill-over of the home and sporting domains makes it difficult for Isla to stop participation within her sport,

implying that athletes have an additional factor to consider when they are deciding to retire from their sport.

All of the participants described how the emotional component with their coach fostered a different relationship than they would experience with an external coach. Athletes noted how they were closer and more comfortable with their coach/partner compared to an external coach. Amelia describes how she was willing to share private information with her coach such as *“when she had her period”*. Previous findings suggest that athletes who are close with their coach are able to communicate better with their coach, which is reflected in the present study (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002; Stirling and Kerr, 2009). Suggesting that the personal relationship helps to facilitate the professional relationship. Isla notes how she *“had a lot of psychological stuff going on as well that has impacted on my sport and I have shared that with him as my partner and coach... he has been more accommodative of areas where I would have struggled so I can continue in the sport”*. Being able to share with her coach helped to facilitate a ‘good’ relationship with her coach, as her coach was able to adapt her trainings to suit her needs. Having an emotional connection helped athletes share knowledge with their coach, as the athletes were closer to their coach through their involvement within dual relationships. The findings suggest that athletes involved in personal and professional relationship with their coach may be closer and more comfortable with their coach, than an athlete with an external coach.

Olivia describes how the emotional connection with her coach creates a different relationship than she would experience with an external coach, through the use of wordings that her partner/coach would express to her *“having someone there to say ‘great game babe’ which he wouldn’t say to the other players, and it’s nice having that person there supporting you”*. Through the use of the word ‘babe’ it shows how



the personal domain crosses into the professional domain which supports findings that it can be hard to separate the two areas (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Kanter, 1997). Charlotte notes the advantage of the personal life impacting on her sporting life as she is able to be critiqued by her coach in order to improve within her sport *“being able to critique each other without losing your cool, which works pretty well”* Findings support previous research suggesting that it can be hard to separate the work and home domain (Kanter, 2007). Within this study, findings suggest that the cross-over is not necessarily negative within the sporting domain.

Two of the participants note how the interaction of their personal and professional relationship created an increased knowledge for their coach. These two athletes viewed their coach as having a more in-depth knowledge of them as an athlete, with coaches holding ‘inside’ knowledge which is gained from the home life and brought into the sporting life. Further reflecting how it can be difficult to keep the home and sporting domains separate (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Kanter, 1997; Krenier et al., 2009). Amelia describes how she views the knowledge an external coach would hold of their athlete *“I think you need to be with a coach for a really long time, umm for them to know you inside and out, umm, so they can certainly give you a very objective opinion and look at the data, when you report with your speed or distance”* Highlighting that an external coach does not have the inside knowledge of an athlete unless the athlete shares this knowledge. When referring to Foucault’s theory of power, this increased knowledge would suggest that the athlete’s coaches have an increase of power within the sporting domain.

Included in this description that Amelia gave of the professional relationship between an athlete and coach is the importance of communication where the athlete has to be willing to communicate with their coach. Within this description, it could be

viewed that athletes experience an intimate communication style with their coach, suggesting that different communication styles occur within the professional and personal coach-athlete relationship. Findings do support previous research suggesting that communication is involved within the coach-athlete professional relationship (Jowett, 2007; Pocwardowski et al., 2000; Stirling & Kerr 2009). The communication style found within this study could be viewed to be different compared to the professional coach-athlete relationship, as a result of the interaction of the home and sporting domain.

Findings from this study suggest that athletes view their coach as holding the ‘inside/additional’ knowledge, which means athletes do not have to communicate the knowledge to their partner/coach as it is already known. Coaches can experience a power gain through holding this additional information, suggesting that the personal and professional relationship can create additional power for the coach, but not the athlete (Foucault, 1995). Ella describes her husband/coach having knowledge of her *“So if you are feeling flat, it’s been a massive day at work, I can come home and say to my husband ‘oh it’s been horrible’ or he will just take one look at me and say oh we will just do exercises tonight, so you can adjust, you can have that instant contact with your coach and they will adjust accordingly”*. Through her coach gaining more knowledge as a result of the cross-over, he can adjust the training session accordingly which helps to prevent injuries; therefore, benefiting performance. These findings oppose Kreiner et al (2009) discussion of negative impacts such as depression and health issues from blurred boundaries, with the present study suggesting that the cross over between the home and sporting domains can be beneficial for athletes’ sport. These results suggest that it can be limiting to take findings from workplace research

as those findings contradict the research findings within the effects of blurred boundaries.

Previous research suggests that the professional relationship between an athlete and coach is a unique relationship which involves the factors of trust, communication and respect in order for a 'good' professional relationship to be fostered (Pocwardowski et al., 2000). Findings from this study support these factors; yet, suggest a fourth factor within the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. This fourth factor arises from the personal relationship impacting on the professional relationship. With findings suggesting that having the personal relationship impact the professional relationship is positive for the athletes involved within these situations as athletes are comfortable with their coach and their coach gains 'inside' knowledge.

### **Power Dynamics within the Interaction of the Personal and Professional Life**

Previous research suggests that coaches hold a position of power within the sporting domain, indicating that coaches hold more power than athletes within the coach-athlete professional relationship (Brackenridge, 1997; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The power that coaches hold within the sporting domain, stems from their expertise and knowledge. All of the participants recognised the power that their coaches held, with Olivia highlighting the little control she has within her sport *"I don't think we had much at all, it's more the coach, he has it all in mind, sometimes you got to pick your warm up but that's it, everything else was done, everything we did in a set way, nothing changed"*. Olivia's experience links into the view that athletes are seen to be dependent on their coach for success (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Olivia relies on her coaches' expertise, skills and knowledge for further development within her sport, with

everything being set by her coach. Olivia's experience reflects previous findings that coaches hold power within the sporting domain (Brackenridge, 1997; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Thereby, supporting an unbalanced level of power.

Isla discusses the power dynamics between herself and her coach by noting the expertise her coach holds and the impact that the power dynamic has for her "*I was too intimidated by his expertise...in this domain he really is the expert, he is the expert as not just defined by himself but people all around the world, he is looked up to by people in the sport*". Isla highlights Foucault's (1995) view of power and knowledge being inextricably linked, with the knowledge her coach holds linking into the power her coach has. Isla views her coach as holding appropriate credentials, which is viewed by herself and set by society, with her coach holding the position of a knowledgeable coach. Within Isla's description of her coach's power she is abiding by the classification of 'coach' where she sees her coach to fall into this category set by society (Foucault, 1995; Pope & Hall, 2014). Which reflect the impact these categorisations may have on athletes, such as feeling intimidated.

Charlotte and Olivia refer to their coaches' position of power within society, where coaches are viewed to hold status through their knowledge (Foucault, 1995). Through her coach's position in society Charlotte notes her actions and behaviours within her professional relationship with her coach "*I don't question or interact anything that he does when he is coaching, he's the coach I just do what he says*". Charlotte's experiences reflect the normalising judgements within disciplinary power; whereby the questioning of her coach would be viewed as 'unacceptable' behaviour towards her coach (Foucault, 1995). Olivia highlights her coach's position within society "*he was the boss when coaching, you had to do what he said, if he said*

*something or questioned what you were doing*". Findings from this study support the view that coaches hold the power within a professional coach-athlete relationship (Brackenridge, 1997; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009).

The coaches' power, in turn, influences how the athletes behave within the sporting situation. Charlotte and Olivia's experiences support Brackenridge (1997) suggestion that the power the coach holds is similar to a priest's power, in which this power is never challenged or questioned. With Charlotte explaining *"I wouldn't criticize his coaching, it's not fair to do that"*. Athletes are seen to uphold their coaches' power, where athletes are abiding by disciplinary power of acceptable behaviours within a 'professional' coach athlete relationship. Findings show how Foucault's (1995) theory of power impact how athletes behave, through their knowledge gained within society of coaches upholding the power. Thus, athletes behave in accordance with the 'norm' of their coach holding power, through making sure they do not challenge their coach's power.

Some of the athletes within this study described the power that their coach holds within the sporting situation, where athletes are seen to maintain the power imbalance that their coaches hold. Some athletes within this study described how they did not challenge their coaches' power. Ella describes how she does not view her coach's power as negative which results in her upholding his power and control *"I don't need the control and I'm not looking for control in my training... I need someone to say this is what I am doing, I don't need the control, I like someone to direct me and tell me this is what we are doing and what we need to do"*. Therefore, Ella is allowing the power to occur for her coach as she has a preference to hold little control over her training. Ella is conforming to the 'norm' of her coach having power to enable her to perform to her needs. Suggesting that her conformity is a choice rather than

disciplinary power occurring within society (Foucault, 1995). Ella describes her coach's power as being beneficial within her coach-athlete professional relationship, suggesting that power can be a factor involved in facilitating a 'good' professional relationship between an athlete and coach.

Rather than being forced to engage in sport through physical punishment athletes engage in self-surveillance which impacts their participation (Foucault 1995). Olivia describes her self-surveillance "*I suppose you just want to play well enough that he didn't take you off*". Olivia had the knowledge that if she was not playing well, she would be taken off. Olivia would engage in self-surveillance to ensure she trained and played to a sufficient standard "*I mean everyone trained hard...you know otherwise you screw it up for everyone*". The knowledge of the requirements for an 'athlete' helped Olivia engage in self-surveillance to ensure she fitted this identity of 'athlete' (Foucault, 1995).

Charlotte reflects how her coach never forced her to train "*If there was anything I really did not want to do, he would never push me, he would never force me*" which reflects the shift in power from a physical punishment to disciplinary power including self-surveillance (Foucault, 1995). Amelia noted how when she had a hard session she would "*grumble like anything but still do it*". Amelia's example shows the impact of disciplinary power, where she engages in self-surveillance as she knows she must finish the session and so she ensures that she completes her training (Foucault, 1995). Amelia holds the knowledge of the classification of 'athlete' and conforms to the behaviour that is considered the 'norm' for athletes such as finishing hard sessions (Foucault, 1995; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Steinfeldt et al., 2011). Therefore, alongside the power that coaches hold within the sporting environment is the power within society which guides athletes' thoughts and behaviours.

### *Privileged Position*

Findings within this study support previous findings of coaches holding the power within the coach-athlete professional relationship (Brackenridge, 1997; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Yet, the dual relationships; personal and professional relationships, is found within this study to impact the power dynamics. Athletes within this study viewed their coaches to have a diluted level of power, which is elicited from athletes viewing themselves to hold a privileged position within sport. Charlotte describes her privilege position “*because at the end of the day I thought oh god I’m your wife, you should look after me first... I probably think I have more right, so oh I’m not going to do that, or I am going to do that {laughter}*”. Thus, the power within the social situation of dual relationships, of personal and professional relationships, reshapes the power that coaches hold. Within the interaction of the personal and professional relationship a diluted level of power is viewed to occur.

Three out of the five participants noted the privileged position that they held, with each of these three participants highlighting the different impacts this position had on their sport. Ella describes her privileged position as being an advantage for her sport “*he was more focused on me because I was his girlfriend*”. The advantage that Ella receives from her personal relationship with her coach reflects Malachowski et al., (2012) findings which found that peers involved in relationships with their supervisors are perceived by others to hold an unfair advantage. The advantage that Ella receives within her sport from the interaction of her personal and professional relationship supports Jowett and Meek’s (2000) findings that positive variables arise for the athlete as a result of the personal and professional relationship. Contrary to the positive variables for the athlete and coach, other athletes within the training squad can experience negative effects as the attention is going to Ella, instead of the whole

training squad. Implying that the personal relationship between an athlete and coach can be negative for other athletes within the team or training squad.

Further supporting Jowett and Meek's (2000) findings that positive variables arise from the dual relationship is Amelia's experience of her coach taking on additional roles and tasks "*I mean it's different when you are at the track, your coach can see you go round and round in circles, but when you're out for three hours, I don't know many coaches that can be out there with you, umm and that's often when you are fatiguing and when you will do something strange with your technique*". Amelia's coach was more invested within her sporting career which could reflect her privileged position of being her coach's partner which elicited more attention and investment within her sport.

Contrary to Ella's experience of her privileged position being an advantage, Isla highlighted how this privileged position created a pressure for her to succeed. "*My feeling that he expects more of me and feeling a pressure to perform because I'm his wife, so I represent him*". Isla's position of being her coach's wife interacted with her position of an athlete, which resulted in her feeling a need to succeed. These findings reflect Foucault's (1995) theory of power, where Isla's coach is not physically forcing her to perform to a sufficient standard, yet, his power as a coach is guiding her thoughts and behaviour to perform highly. Implying that the coach's power can shape an athlete's thoughts and behaviour. Isla's experience reflects Johansson et al., (2016) results of athletes involved in personal relationships with their coach feeling a need to prove themselves and their relationship through their performance. Isla experienced additional pressure through not wanting to let her husband/coach down through performing poorly; viewing her performance as having the ability to negatively impact on her partner's reputation and expertise.



### *Diluted Power*

Four participants compared their coaches' power to external coaches, where in this comparison athletes reflected the diluted level of power which they viewed their coach to hold compared to external coaches. The diluted level of power which was described within the interviews was referred to through athletes' behaviours towards their coach. Ella describes her behaviour towards her coach and the impact her behaviour had on her training "*I guess I could be lazy and not do what he says because he's my partner and I can say I'm not interested. And say I'm too tired today, I'm not going to go out, whereas if it was another coach, I might go oh I'll make the effort to go out. If you have an external coach you're not going to dip out*". Ella highlights the impact of being involved in a personal and professional relationship with her coach, where her training is impacted as she does not feel pressure to train with her coach but would with an external coach.

Ella's experiences conflict with Pierce (1998) findings, which suggested that being involved in workplace romances increased the individual's motivation within their work. Ella proposing that a pressure to train only exists when external coaches are involved suggests that external coaches may hold more power and a higher position compared to coaches involved in the personal and professional relationship.

Through the athlete's eyes their coach is viewed to have a dilution of power, with athletes seeing their coach as an 'unofficial' coach compared to external coaches who are viewed as 'official'. As a result of this view, athletes saw themselves as having flexibility within their training compared to an external coach. Amelia describes how she would feel if she had an external coach "*if I had an official coach and had a set session I would feel a lot of pressure to get that done, then and there,*

*umm cause you don't want to let them down by not doing what they have set you, but yeah having your partner as your coach, you just have that flexibility, it just takes that pressure off*". Through having her partner coach her Amelia notes how she experienced less pressure compared to the pressure she would experience with an external coach. Thus, Amelia's experience of being involved in dual relationships minimises the pressure she experiences compared to Isla's experiences, where Isla felt an increase in pressure due to her privileged position "*I am a representation of him*".

The flexibility that both Ella and Amelia experience within their dual relationships of personal and professional relationships could minimise the disciplinary techniques which shape docile bodies. Ella and Amelia are engaging in flexible timetables and routines which opposes the use of disciplinary technique within docile bodies (Foucault, 1995). The diluted level of power that coaches are viewed to hold could minimise the effect of self-surveillance as athletes are not conforming to their training, suggesting the effect of disciplinary power is minimised within this social situation (Foucault, 1995).

Isla describes her behaviour towards her coach, reinforcing the idea that her coach holds a diluted level of power "*I would not behave in that way to another coach, it's really disrespectful, you just don't do it*". Suggesting that the power resides in the dual relationships, which supports Foucault's (1995) theory of power of power occurring within the social situation. Within this social situation of dual relationships, the power is reproduced at a diluted level for the coach, creating implications for the coach and athlete. The coach has implications through the athlete misbehaving. The athlete has implications through their misbehaviour where they are not training to a sufficient standard or professionally which can impact their performance. Through previous research suggesting that a coach's expertise is linked into their athletes'

performances, the coach could further be impacted with a decrease of power being deemed by other athletes as well as their partner.

Overall, participants describe their coach to hold less power in comparison to external coaches within sport. Ella notes that an external coach would be beneficial for her commitment to her sport; yet, notes how an external coach would not suit her “*I would probably be more committed to an external coach, but I’m not willing to have an external coach because if you’re going to ask someone to be your primary coach then you have to show 100% commitment...because of the work I’m doing...I can’t prioritise my own training and that’s why having my husband as my coach, he knows and understands the conflicts and he won’t be upset, but I would very quickly piss off an external coach*”. Reflecting how the power varies with each individual partnership, suggesting that the coach’s power is not the only factor within creating a ‘good’ professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Therefore, alongside the factor of power, findings suggest that teamwork helps to foster a good and suitable relationship between an athlete and coach (Jowett, 2017).

Athletes suggest that within the diluted level of power, their coaches still hold power over them, with Olivia describing how her coach “*made the decisions... who went on/off, he came up with the strategies and team plays*”. Yet, Charlotte states that she does have choice within her sport “*I have all the choice, whether I want to go or not is entirely my choice*”. Charlotte’s experiences reflect the idea that athletes are ‘free agents’ within the sporting world, where power cannot occur without this opportunity for freedom (Foucault, 1995). The idea that athletes have choice and the view of athletes seeing their coach as having a diluted level of power suggests that the views of Kirby et al., (2000) do not hold true. Kirby et al., (2000) states that athletes are unable to consent to sexual activity within the personal relationship due to the

power coaches hold over their athletes. Yet, findings from this study suggest that athletes have some power through their privileged position and that coaches have a diluted level of power within this situation.

Part of the diluted level of power which athletes' view their coach to have, stems from the emotional connection that athletes have with their coach. Emotions arise within the sporting situation which affects how athletes' view their coach. Amelia describes this emotion "*I mean a different way to look at it, other coaches he's kind of your boss, you've got this job to do so go and do it, but umm yeah, when it's your partner you get to be emotional a wee time and umm kick the bucket, but at the end of the day you will still go out and do it*". The emotion that arises within the sporting world could be a consequence of the personal domain influencing the sporting domain, where Charlotte describes this emotion "*I think when you are apart from them emotionally, you probably listen to them better and whereas with your partner you probably think oh yeah, yeah ill just do it*".

Amelia's and Charlotte's experiences link into the impact of blurred boundaries with their home life encroaching into their sporting life which affects the power that they view their coach to have. Subsequently, these findings support Foucault's (1995) idea that power is 'produced and reproduced' within each social situation. Power is shaped within the social situation of dual relationships of personal and professional relationships between an athlete and coach, which enables power to become diluted.

Athletes' note how they consider their coach to hold a diluted level of power within the professional coach-athlete relationship. However, the impact of this diluted level of power is not necessarily viewed as negative, with coaches gaining advantages in other areas of the relationship such as gaining knowledge from the personal

relationship. Ella and Amelia describe how their partner knows their other demands such as job demands, through their personal relationship impacting on their professional relationship. Ella notes how her coach's inside knowledge allows her to feel "*less guilty*". With Amelia highlighting how she would feel guilty when her home life interferes with her training if she had an external coach "*it depends on the relationship you have with your official coach, but you sometimes wouldn't tell them you had... a monster week studying, you almost feel a bit guilty telling them, this is why I haven't done your programme*".

Even though athletes view their coach to hold a diluted level of power compared to external coaches, Ella and Amelia note how their coach holds 'insider' knowledge of themselves, which can help to minimise the impact of guilt. Guilt can occur as a result of athletes viewing themselves to not be conforming to the identity of 'athlete' (Foucault, 1995). However, when the personal relationship impacts the professional relationship, the guilt which can occur is minimised,

#### *The Power Dynamics in the Home Life*

When examining the home life, findings suggest that the power dynamics between an athlete and her partner changes compared to the sporting domain. Findings suggest that equal choices and a balance of power occurs within the home domain. Olivia describes this shift in power "*when he was there, he was the boss at the sporting domain, he was in control, but when we were at home, we have an equal partnership*". This reflects the production and reproduction of power within social situations (Foucault, 1995). Charlotte describes this equal power within the home domain "*money decisions is equal, everything we do we discuss before we do it, trips everything really*". The power within the home is viewed as equal between the athlete

and her partner; whereas, the power within the sporting domain is viewed to be uneven between the athlete and coach. Reflecting that within given social settings power is produced (Foucault, 1995).

Isla and Ella describe a shift in power from the sporting domain into the home domain; yet, they describe themselves as holding more power and control than their partners. Ella describes the power dynamics in her sporting domain compared to her home domain *“when it comes to being a coach, he’s far more assertive and more directing and more organised, he’s incredibly efficient and organised, he has everything planned and fitted together beautifully, yet, when he gets into the house he’s like not interested, I mean he loves the house and the home, but he wants me to direct, so it’s completely reversed actually”*. Ella’s experiences can be seen to reflect gender roles, with Ella and her partner acting in accordance to societal gender roles (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014). Ella’s role reflects how the home domain is her area of control which reflects gender construction within society (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014). Foucault’s (1995) theory of power helps describe the reproduction of power within each social situation, whereas in the sporting domain Ella’s partner is willing to make all the choices, but power is reconstructed in the home domain, where her partner does not want to make the choices.

Isla describes the change in power from her sporting domain to her home domain which reflects gender roles *“one way to look at it is, my coach is my boss and the power dynamics in our personal lives are much more umm interchangeable and fluid and flowing. In fact, I would go so far in saying that some parts of the relationship, you know I’m the boss in some domains {laughter}”*. Thus, when it comes to the power dynamics within the home domain, power can be seen to be

reproduced and shifted, within social situations, which can reflect traditional gender roles within society (Foucault, 1995; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014).

Findings from this study support previous proposals that coaches hold the power within the athlete-coach professional relationship (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Athletes within this study were found to uphold their coaches' power; suggesting that athletes do not question the power their coach holds. Yet, athletes were found to hold a privileged position within the sporting realm by being their coach's partner. Thus, findings support that within a given social setting power is produced and reproduced, where within the interaction of the home and sporting domain, athletes were able to produce some power. Through their privileged position, athletes viewed their coach as having a diluted level of power. Suggesting that within the interaction of the professional and personal relationships, athletes see themselves as gaining power; whereas, athletes view the coach's power to be at a decreased level.

### **Pragmatic Issues within the Interaction of the Personal and Professional Relationship**

Through the dual relationships of personal and professional relationships, which athletes experience with their coach/partner, the home and sporting domains are seen to interact together which creates pragmatic issues for the athlete. One of the main issues that arose within the interviews was the issue of time, with all participants noting this as an issue in their experience. Charlotte noted how it was hard to balance the sporting and home lives as time was limited "*sometimes trainings are late and by the time you get home it's too late to eat and you've got to go to bed to get up to go early to work*". Training takes up a lot of time which causes the sporting life to encroach into the home domain, which supports Johansson et al., (2016) findings that

it can be difficult to keep the two domains separate. The findings from this study support Edwards and Rothbard (2000) findings that working long hours creates work-home conflict which is supported by Charlotte's long training hours.

Olivia notes the difficulties of balancing the home and sporting lives; "*on the way home the last thing I wanted to do was think about dinner, so it often meant that there was a place on the way home that would do burgers, I think we lived twice a week off burgers and chips, because you know you finish training at 8:30 drop someone off, whatever, it's just too late*". The issue of time creates an interesting dynamic in which Olivia is contracting the identity of 'athlete' through eating unhealthily (Scott, Haycraft & Plateau, 2018). Suggesting that the issue of time means normalising judgements within disciplinary power are minimised as she is unable to conform to healthy eating within the identity of 'athlete' (Foucault, 1995). Additionally, the findings support Johansson et al., (2016) view that CASR hinders performance, through being unable to eat to a standard suitable for performance.

Some participants highlighted strategies to overcome this issue of time. Charlotte noted "*it's just rescheduling time, it's the big thing in life, negotiation in life and getting a programme that suits me and what I want to do*". Athletes try to plan their sporting lives into their home lives to create a balance between the two areas, through getting a programme that suits her Charlotte can help to reinforce the idea that she does not want her sporting live to encroach on her home life. Thereby, supporting Kreiner et al., (2009) findings that some individuals fall towards the separation of the work-home continuum with these individuals making efforts to keep the areas separate. Isla notes her strategy to ensure that her home life is not neglected as a result of the sporting domain encroaching into her home life, is through a change in her role at home "*I have more time, I'm more at home so I've really stepped into that,*



*everything that is thought of as the traditional role at home*". Isla steps into the traditional home domain to help ensure that her home life is not neglected and influenced by the sporting domain, which creates a way to separate the two domains.

Reflecting the view that individuals fall upon a continuum of either keeping their two domains separate or allowing the two domains to interact is Amelia's attempt at negotiating the issue of time. Amelia holds the strategy of reconstructing her use of time by reshaping her views "*you know we often go for a run and we talk about our day, when we are out on our run, so yeah instead of doing that over the dinner table we do it while we are out on a run, so yeah, having that there makes a big difference because you're still being really constructive and using your time well*". Through reconstructing her view of time, Amelia reflects Krenier et al., (2009) addition to boundary theory through stating that boundary theory is socially constructed which helps to give Amelia control within either separating the two domains or allowing the two domains to integrate. Through gaining control over her integration of the two domains, Amelia does not view the integration as a negative effect. Thus, her strategy helps her to negotiate the issue of time.

Within this study four out of the five participants noted their attempts to keep the home and sporting domain separate to ensure that blurred boundaries do not occur between the two domains. These findings support Johansson et al., (2016) findings that athletes attempt to keep the two areas separate. Ella highlights her strategy to keep the two domains separate "*it's not like every day we are discussing him coaching me. It's not a big element in our day to day life*" thereby suggesting that it is not difficult to keep the two domains separate.

Charlotte notes her strategy *“I don’t take my home life to the track, when I’m there, I’m there to do different stuff, I don’t talk about what happens at home”*.

Charlotte is engaging in a conscious effort to keep her two domains separate which reflects boundary theory (Boswell & Olsen-Buchanan, 2007; Kim & Hollensbe, 2018).

Olivia’s strategy involved ensuring her emotions did not cross over between each domain *“one was sport and one was home, nothing would go to the other side, if I was shitty at him with something at home, you know when we came to the sport that was different, I wasn’t going to be shitty with him in the sport”*.

Olivia’s strategy goes against Edwards and Rothbard (2000) findings that positive effects from work can spill over into home life and vice versa. Therefore, suggesting that her strategy does not acknowledge spill over effects. Isla’s experiences note how she can see spill-over effects cross between the two boundaries. *“The sport bleeds into the relationship and the relationship bleeds into the sport... those more negative times in our athlete relationship were mirrored in our home relationship and umm when our personal relationship is in a good space... so when we are in a good space our sporting relationship is in a good space”*. Thus, the two spheres within Isla’s experiences are influencing each other, which supports strain-based conflict, which suggests that stress from one domain can influence another domain (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018).

Within Olivia’s and Charlotte’s strategies to keep the two domains’ separate, they are both trying to keep their home domains separate from their sporting domain which can link into to impression management (Johansson et al., 2016). Ensuring they act professionally by keeping the two domains separate helps to alter other’s views of their personal relationship with their coach.

Contrary to some athletes attempting to separate the two domains, Amelia acknowledges how she does not make an attempt to keep the two areas separate, reflecting the other end of the continuum (Kim & Hollensbe, 2018). *“I think everything just submerges which sounds really weird, maybe we should get a bit of separation {laughter}, but no it all just melds really well, it all just matches up”*. The integration of the home and sporting life could link into Amelia being her coach’s only athlete which means she will not feel a need to engage in impression management. Thus, each athlete engages in different strategies to either keep the two domains separate or allow the two domains to integrate.

### *Childcare*

Two out of the five participants have had children, with additional issues discussed within the personal and professional relationship when children are involved in the situation. The main support person from the home life was also in the sporting life, which created an issue of childcare for these two athletes. Olivia described her issue of childcare *“there was two of us involved in the team... so you turn up, fed the kid, I would pass her to someone and then the mums/dads/someone in the team would look after her for two hours...but no-body expected him to do anything, when he was there, he was the coach you know”*. The status and power that her coach held, meant that he was not expected to look after his own child within the sporting domain. This reflects Palmer and Leberman (2009) findings that there is a lack of support, related to child-care, within sport organisations for mothers returning to the sporting domain. The difficulties of childcare arose within this study as well. Ella noted how her sporting life ended up being less of a priority in her life *“it’s demanding trying to do your sport, do your day life and have young kids, so unfortunately the training took a backseat when the kids were young, you know you need to focus on the kids”*. Thus,

her home life became the priority. Ella's experience supports previous research which suggests that it can be hard for women to become a mother and continue within sport (Palmer & Leberman, 2009).

Olivia uses the strategy of other people to help balance her home and sporting domain which is supported by Darroch and Hillsburg (2017) findings that using other people is a way to keep the home and work life separate. Olivia notes her use of other people *"when I had my first child my back up support person was actually with me...therefore, my mother-in-law would have to come to trainings... so we had to take a sitter with us, and normally when your with bubs, your husband stays at home or your husband is with bubs or whatever, but I actually, when we went down, there was four of us in the car, bubs, my husband and I and my other-in law"*. Within the dual relationships of personal and professional relationships Olivia notes how she lost her support person within the home domain. Previous findings highlight the importance of having a support system for women engaging in both motherhood and sport, with Olivia having to find this support elsewhere (Darroch & Hillsburg, 2017).

The two mothers within this study noted how through their personal relationship with their coach and their similar interests, the two athletes believed that their partner allowed them to continue in their sport. Ella's sport was not a priority but she was still able to participate in sport *"it's not the same – but he helped me an incredible amount to still get my training in"*. Ella's experience supports Darroch and Hillsburg, (2017) findings that support people are important if athletes wish to engage in sport and motherhood. These support people influence athletes decisions to return to sport, with Ella and Olivia both having support networks available to ensure they could return to sport once they had children. *"It wasn't easy thinking about it now, but it was nice to be able to go back to the sport and do those kinds of things, like I really*

*appreciated the support that he gave me and the fact that his mum was willing to come... I feel quite blessed because without that it wouldn't have happened. He would have gone to training and I would have been stuck with bubs and I would have been much shittier if that happened"*. Olivia highlights how she had to find her support elsewhere, which creates an additional issue when deciding if she is going to return to her sport, compared to participants in Kuchar (2017) findings, as Olivia's main support person is unable to act as support within the sporting domain. Thus, in order to continue in her sport, Olivia has to overcome this issue, whereas she needs to find another support person who has to cross into the sporting domain.

Findings suggest most athletes aim to keep their home and sporting domains separate; however, athletes acknowledge that this is difficult to do which reflects previous findings (Johansson et al., 2016). Thus, athletes engage in strategies to keep the home and sporting domain separate. Additionally, athletes who have had children experience the issue of their support person from their home domain entering their sporting domain. Findings represent Darroch and Hillsburg (2017) results; whereby, athletes who are parents need support to re-enter into the sporting domain. In order for the athletes to stay in their sport, athletes had to bring an extra support person, outside of their partner, into their sporting domain.

#### *Keeping the Personal Relationship Hidden*

The interaction of the home and sporting domains creates an interesting dynamic for if athletes choose to keep their relationship hidden or not. All participants chose to have their relationship known to others within the sporting domain which contradicts Johansson et al., (2016) findings of her participants choosing to keep their relationship hidden. Isla describes how she did not need to keep her relationship

hidden “*so umm that’s always been pretty easy actually, so people always knew that I was his wife and if they didn’t know they would find out eventually, or the kids will often ask you, you know, so that’s never been hidden*”.

The ‘norm’ of an athlete-coach relationship is viewed as being strictly professional, which is reflected through previous conflicting research surrounding the ‘appropriateness’ of personal relationships between an athlete and coach (Johansson et al., 2016; Fasting et al., 2018). Athletes within this study are seen to be challenging the normalising judgement of ‘norms’ within their relationship, which shows the production and reproduction of power (Foucault, 1995). Charlotte notes how others view her personal relationship with her coach “*I think everyone just accepts it... I’m just part of the group and I do what they do*”. These findings reflect how athletes change the social situation through making their relationship open which minimises gossiping and subsequently, stigma. Contradicting Quinn (1977) findings that workers involved in relationships with their superior’s experience gossiping about themselves. Thus, making the personal relationship open helps to create a positive impact for athletes.

Olivia felt there was no need to keep her personal relationship with her coach hidden “*he was there supporting on the side-line before he coached me...it was never an issue, it was all done*”. Through her partner being on the side-line supporting her throughout her sporting career, the transition into coach was considered easy. However, these findings may not support previous findings as Olivia’s peers most-likely already knew of her relationship with her partner before he became her coach. The example from Olivia does describe how the sporting life influences the home life, as well as the home life encroaching on the sporting life as the sporting domain was already a factor within Olivia and her husband’s personal domain.

Ella notes how she did not feel the need to keep her relationship hidden with her coach which disagrees with Quinn (1977) and Wilson (2015) findings. These contradictions in findings could be related to the participant's age, whereas the participants in this study are older than Quinn (1977) study where the mean age was 33. Unlike Olivia's experience where peers already knew of her relationship; others did not know about Ella's relationship with her coach; yet, she chose to make the relationship known from the start "*no they knew about it and it was a big joke, and everyone was sort of laughing and they thought it was a good thing*". Ella's experience supports Cowan and Horan (2014) findings that when individuals disclose their relationship to others, positive experience such as increase self-esteem can occur as a result. All participants spoke positively of having their personal relationship's known within the sporting domain. Amelia is the only athlete within this study who is her coach's only athlete; thus, different dynamics were involved in this relationship compared to the other participants as Amelia did not need to make a decision surrounding the disclosure of her relationship.

When describing their reasoning behind making their relationship open, participants referred to aspects of their personality as to why they received support from their peers within this situation. Charlotte states how she "*didn't crave the attention and just did what I was told*". Additionally, Ella noted how "*there was no need to keep it a secret. I just wanted to run and relax*". These two participants note how their actions and behaviours within the sporting domain reflected their motives for being in a relationship with their coach; where they were not engaging in the relationship for advantages. Findings support Dillard and Broetzmann (1989) findings where co-workers view the relationship positively when the perceived motives for engaging in the relationship is love motives.

Findings within this study found that athletes do not aim to keep their personal relationship with their coach hidden. Findings support Wilson (2015) findings that compared to the past individuals in workplace romances do not aim to keep their relationship hidden. Yet, these findings disagree with Quinn's (1977) findings that individuals in workplace romance aim to keep their relationship hidden. These contradictions between the present study and Quinn's (1977) findings could arise from the older sample within this study.

### **Having your Coach with You at All Times**

One of the main factors within the sporting domain is brought into the home domain; the coach is brought home with the athlete as Amelia suggests "*you go home with him afterwards, sometimes you analyse the game more than you normally would have done*". Work-home conflict suggests that technology causes work to be conducted at any given time or place, where the coach can reflect technology as questions can be asked to the coach at any time or place (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). As Amelia's coach goes home with her, the boundaries between her home and sporting life can become blurred.

Through these blurred boundaries which are created by athletes having their coach with them at all times, three of the participants noted how they took on additional roles within the sporting domain besides being an athlete. Isla notes her additional roles "*I assist him in class, I take classes when he's not there, and also I'm his book keeper, so I chase up those who don't pay*". Within the dual relationships Isla takes on administration roles to help her coach/partner. Ella notes her additional roles "*I'm in charge of making sure the session takes place...making sure the coaches are all trained up and have the paperwork done, getting volunteers in*". Through the



interaction of the personal and professional relationships athletes take on additional tasks which could impact on their issue of time, which was suggested in their interviews.

Findings from work-home conflict suggest that individuals place meaning on varying domains within their lives; therefore, Ella and Isla may place meaning on their sporting lives which results in them taking on additional roles to help their partners/coach (Araujo, Tureta, & Araujo, 2015). Olivia notes that her additional roles were because of her role of being a 'wife'. Thus, suggesting that her home life is influencing her sporting life. Rather than volunteering to help and take on additional roles like Ella and Isla, Olivia notes how as a result of her personal relationship with her coach she was *"being more involved in the wider issues, because my role had finished but his role as one of the coaches hadn't finished"* such as *"picking her up and take her to training and the after training take her home... that's what you do with players who are at risk of not having family support"*. Olivia's role extended outside of her role in the sporting domain, which created blurred boundaries between her home and sporting domain.

All five participants noted how positive impacts arose from having their coach with them, with Ella describing the ease of this relationship *"just the fact that because we were in a relationship, by virtue of living together, your proximity to your coach and everything can be organised that much easier"*. The use of space helped the Ella have close access to her coach. The close proximity to her coach links into repeated exposure theory, which described repeated exposure as prompting positive affect, which is reflected by the positive description Ella gives (Pierce et al., 1996). The repeated exposure between an athlete and coach helps to increase the communication levels. Amelia notes how her communication style with her coach and understanding

of one-another matched each other *“he can watch me and do corrections and it only end up being one word these days and we will get that technique back into place”*.

Communication is a factor in facilitating a ‘good’ relationship between an athlete and coach; whereby, the close proximity between an athlete and coach helps to increase communication (Jowett, 2017). The increase in communication through close proximity between Amelia and her coach supports previous findings that increased time spent together increases communication (Jowett, 2007; Stirling and Kerr 2009).

Charlotte had an overall positive view of her coach being in close proximity to her *“I think it’s probably more of a bonus than having a drawback, your coach is always with you”*. Supporting this positive view is Amelia’s experience that this close proximity results in her coach having knowledge of her *“they know you through and through, they know your weak spots, they know your strengths, so they can help structure your programme to suit”*. Through Amelia seeing her coach as having an increased knowledge of herself she trusts that her training process is correct, linking into the factor of trust facilitating a ‘good’ professional relationship between an athlete and coach, which helps create optimal performance (Johansson, 2017; Jowett, 2017). The trust viewed by the athlete links into power, where athletes have to trust their coach’s knowledge and subsequently, power (Johansson, 2017; Jowett & Cockerill, 2002). Thus, findings from the present study support Pierce (1998) and Wilson’s (2015) findings that workplace romance can be beneficial for performance.

Ella highlights the positive aspects of having her coach with her at all times; through the benefits that can be created for her sport *“you have more contact time with them, the more contact time the better quality of the outputs, the outputs are going to be more quality the higher the contact time, more contact time means more success because the coach will be analysing what you’re doing”*. The extra contact time that

Ella had with her coach was viewed as beneficial, which supports Jowett (2017) findings that athletes receive more effective coaching when the quality of the relationship is high. Charlotte mentions the benefit of having her coach with her at all times, such as when she goes away on holiday *“when we go away, its good having him there to be able to analyse or just tell me what I’m doing not quite right or wrong or whatever”* which further supports Jowett (2017) view of effective coaching. Athletes within the dual relationships of personal and professional relationships with their coach receive an advantage through having their coach with them, where they gain immediate feedback and can ask questions at any stage which benefits their performance.

Findings suggest that athletes gain an advantage from the personal and professional relationship with their coach. However, Isla notes that she does not necessarily use this advantage *“after class he has said ‘do you want to learn some more advance stuff with me...Now this offer has been made many, many, many times in the past and sometimes I would be like yeah... And other times I would be grumpy and wouldn’t be bothered... so I’m like nah. Any other student in NZ would jump at the chance...To get a one on one with my husband and I’m just like nah”*. Even though athletes are seen to have an advantage from their personal relationship with their coach, athletes are not necessarily using this advantage. Suggesting individuals within workplace romances may be unfairly judged by their peers who perceived the individual to be gaining an advantage (Malachowski, 2012).

Two of the participants noted how through having their coach with them at all times, their knowledge of themselves and their partner increased. Charlotte describes this knowledge *“you know each other so well, you know each-others little faults and so you know not to do that, you know to press the right buttons not the wrong buttons”*.

Olivia acknowledged the knowledge that her partner gained about her playing style and noted how this was beneficial for her as a player “*sometimes he would get frustrated cause what would seem like the obvious thing on the side-line I would not do. I would do the opposite, but I suppose because he knows me, he mostly understood that’s the way I would do it, which he might not have understood if it had been another person*”. The additional knowledge that her coach gained through the integration of the personal and professional relationship suggests that the blurred boundaries are not always negative. Findings suggest that athletes attempt to keep the two domains separate however a cross over between the two domains does occur, which supports Johansson’s (2016) findings. Findings within this study surrounding the cross-over effect does not suggest that this cross-over is negative which contradicts Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007) who found negative effects arising from the cross-over between the home and work domain. Overall, participants described their experience within the coach-athlete professional and personal relationship as positive with benefits arising from this situation. With Olivia describing the experience as “not a bad experience’.

The main reason behind the blurred boundaries is a consequence of the athlete’s coach going home with them. Through athletes’ coaches going home with them, athletes experience additional roles. Previous findings suggest that in the professional relationship between an athlete and coach, coaches take on additional roles. When the interaction of the personal and professional relationship occurs, athletes are seen to take on additional roles. Overall, athletes note their experiences as positive with positive variables arising from their experience such as increased communication, knowledge and extra advantages such as increased training

opportunities. Implying that the interaction of the personal and professional relationship can have positive impacts on performance.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This project aimed to explore athletes' experience of being involved in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach. The results from this project support previous findings that communication, trust and respect elicit a positive professional relationship between an athlete and coach; however, when the personal relationship is involved a fourth factor of 'emotional connection' is involved within the professional relationship.

Findings suggest that athletes involved in the personal and professional relationship help to up-hold their coaches' power; yet, athletes' view of their coaches' power is diluted. Additionally, within this study athletes gain power within the professional relationship through their position of being their coach's wife. Thereby, reflecting Foucault's (1995) view of power being produced and reproduced within a given social situation (Brackenridge, 1997; Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sartore-Baldwin et al., 2017; Stirling & Kerr, 2009).

Pragmatic issues arise for the athlete as a result of the professional and personal relationship with the main issue being an issue of time. Athletes engage in strategies to help negotiate the issue of time. Athletes try to keep their home and sporting domains separate; yet, findings suggest separating the two domains is difficult. Findings also suggest that for athletes, having these boundaries slightly overlap is not necessarily negative for their performance. Overall, findings suggest that athletes view their experiences of engaging in a personal and professional relationship with their coach as mainly positive.

While this research supports the findings that coaches hold power within the athlete-coach relationship, it does not support the findings that coaches hold all the

power (Sawicki, 2009). This project suggests a diluted level of power occurs within the athlete's perception of the coach's power within the professional and personal relationship. Suggesting that Kirby et al., (2000) view of CASR being non-consensual due to athletes having no power is misconstrued. Power dynamics within the professional and personal relationship is complicated as the power within these social situations are being reproduced.

The present research supports Jowett and Meek's (2000) findings that within married athlete's positive variables such as genuine concern and high levels of caring were positive for performance. Athletes highlighted positive effects for their performance which were elicited from their personal relationship with their coach. Factors such as knowledge about their lives outside of their sport, their strengths and weaknesses were all viewed by the athlete as known by their coach. Findings add to the conflicting workplace romance findings; whereby, findings suggest the literature supporting workplace romances having positive impacts on performance (Jowett & Meek, 2000; Pierce, 1998).

### **Implications**

The present research contributes to the limited area of athletes engaged in personal relationships with their coach. This research helps to separate the joining areas of abuse literature within sport by examining personal relationships as its own entity which helps add to the knowledge surrounding the personal relationship between an athlete and coach. Combining these two areas together limits the understanding and knowledge of the personal relationship, the impact of these relationships on the athlete and performance, and the underlying mechanism of these personal relationships. Through examining athlete's experiences of being involved in a personal and

professional relationship with their coach, athletes highlight the positive experience of this situation.

Findings from this present study help to add to the growing research of blurred boundaries between the home and work life, where findings highlight the positives of these blurred boundaries. Findings also suggest new forms of strategies to keep the home-sporting domain separate, which adds to the literature as strategies from work-home conflict do not apply to the sporting-home domain.

Through the increased understanding around personal relationships between an athlete and coach gained within this research, the knowledge gained may help to reduce the stigma and change the view of what is seen as 'appropriate' within the personal relationship. Previous research suggests that contradictions arise within the view of 'appropriateness' within the personal relationships between an athlete and coach (Kirby et al., 2000; Johansson et al., 2016). Thus, this research can add to the discussion surrounding the 'appropriateness'.

By adding to this research area, misunderstandings surrounding the relationship can be minimised, which is done through increasing individuals' knowledge. As Foucault (1995) states power and knowledge are inextricably linked. By increasing the knowledge surrounding the 'norm' within the professional relationship between an athlete and coach, the 'gaze' that is covertly shaping athletes behaviours within the personal relationships with their coach could be minimised (Foucault, 1995).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations within this research project. Firstly, this study only included the perspective of the athlete; excluding coaches. Yet, within this study athletes reflected on how they perceived their coach/partner to be feeling and



behaving. As this study did not include the athlete's coaches there was no way to confirm if the athlete's experiences matched up with their coach/partners views. As the aim of this study was to understand athlete's experiences of the personal and professional relationship the perspective of the coach was not considered a main issue within this study as the aim was not to check if the athletes and coaches' experiences matched up.

Secondly, the sample size for this study was relatively small; however, due to the specific requirements for this study and the population within these requirements being relatively small, the sample size is justifiable for this study. This study only included female participants in heterosexual relationship. Yet, as males hold more power and higher positions such as coach, compared to women within the sporting realm, it was viewed that receiving only women participants still reflects the population within these personal relationships. Most coaches within this population are male with female athletes which reflects Johansson et al., (2016) finding that CASR tends to occur between male coaches and female athletes.

The athletes involved in this study were not international athletes which resulted in the participants having a job alongside their sporting and home lives. Thus, results from this study could elicit different experiences compared to elite athletes whose job is their sport. Elite athletes may experience more pressure compared to the participants in this study; therefore, the positive experiences highlighted in this study by participants may not be reflected by elite athletes.

As all but one of the athletes were over the age of 40 within this study, it is possible that their views are not representative of the experiences of all ages. Yet, most of the participants had been involved within their sport for a large proportion of time,

with most athletes first being coached by their partner during their late 20s – early 30s. Thus, athletes can speak to their experiences across this time period. Yet, within this time period is the limitation of recall, where athletes may recall their experiences incorrectly or forget/misinterpret occurrences within this time period.

### **Reflection on the Research Process**

This research was undertaken in a time where the me-too movement had started to emerge within society, which is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual abuse (Bennet, 2017). A main factor within this movement was the power dynamics that individuals in powerful positions held and used in negative ways. Through the gymnastic case within America and the me-too movement, the current research evolved within a time where power is viewed to be negative. The aim of this project was to examine the personal relationship between an athlete and coach as its own entity, separate from abuse literature within sport, to help minimise the misunderstandings that can occur within the personal relationships of athletes and coaches.

In reflecting upon the results, it is possible that along with the aim to separate the two areas of personal relationships and abuse within sport, athletes may have responded overly positively to ensure that their relationship was viewed positively. Ensuring their relationship is viewed positively helps to ensure that their partner/relationship is not viewed in a negative light. Reassurance was given in the differing answers that participants gave within their interviews, reflecting how their own personalities played a role in their relationships and experiences. Additionally, participants highlighted the challenges within these personal relationships as well as the positives.

The way the interview was structured and the choice of questions were influenced by prior readings and expectations, which could have reflected the way participants responded. Yet, the choice of questions reflected the research aims of this study. It was reassuring how participants noted the useful tool they had from having their partner be their coach, at the end of their interviews. Similarly, an athlete who is now retired from her sport reflected on how she found the experience enjoyable and would repeat it, which helps to assure that participants were not influenced by the questions to respond positively.

The experiences that the athletes drew upon occurred within the social interaction with myself as a researcher and as someone who competes within the sporting domain. Having an involvement in the sporting domain may have helped athletes open up about their experiences within their personal relationship, as they may have viewed my involvement in sport as being able to understand the aspects of sport and the difficulties of balancing sporting and home lives. Additionally, my gender may have helped me to relate more to the women within this study; thus, influencing participants' decisions to open up about their experiences within their personal and professional relationship with their coach.

My choice to exclude the coach's perspective allowed me to explore the participant's view with fresh eyes, which meant I was not influenced by what their partner had said about their experiences. Including only the athletes experienced allowed the perspective of the athletes experience to be examined thoroughly, with an open-ended semi-structured interview allowing the further exploration of any of the athlete's answers.

### **Future Directions**

Future research could include the perspective of male athletes who are involved within the personal and professional relationship with their coach as different dynamics may occur within this situation. Adding in male athlete's perspectives adds to the research of personal relationships between athletes and coaches. It is acknowledged that it can be difficult to find participants; however, differences between male-athletes and female-coaches could be explored against female-athlete and male-coaches. Examining male-athlete/female-coach with female-athlete/male-coach can help to see if gender plays a role within athlete's experiences of the personal and professional relationship. Future research could include the coach's perspective as well as the athlete's perspective. Further research could examine if the coaches and athletes' experiences match up or vary, with further research exploring why these differences arise or not.

The findings within this study conflict with some of the previous findings which may be a result of the participants' age. Future research may want to explore younger athletes' experience of being coached by their partner. Additionally, future research could explore if the time spent in the personal relationship impacts the professional relationship, for example, examining athletes who have been in personal relationships with their coach for a year. This study had the requirement of athletes being in a relationship with their coach for over a year. Most athletes were engaged in a personal and professional relationship with their partner for longer than a year before their partner started coaching them. Thus, different dynamics may occur when athletes are recently starting their personal or professional relationship with their coach.

Lastly, future research may want to explore professional athletes who compete at an international level as elite athletes may experience higher pressure within their relationship with their coach/partner compared to athletes within this study. Therefore,

different dynamics and experiences could arise within the elite athlete's experiences compared to the findings within this present study.

### **Summary**

This project offers an analysis into athlete's experiences of being in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach. The study shows how athletes experience their personal and professional relationship with their coach as positive; yet, struggle to keep their home and sporting lives separate. Athletes engage within strategies to negotiate their two realms. The findings highlight the power that athletes can gain through their privileged position of being their coach's wife. Thus, power dynamics are seen to be affecting the experience within the personal and professional relationship.

The findings highlight the positive aspects for an athlete involved in the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach. Suggesting that the personal and professional relationship should be separated from the abuse literature as different underlying mechanism affect the personal relationship compared to abuse literature. A separation of the two areas can create an accumulation of the knowledge within the personal and professional relationship between an athlete and coach, which can help to decrease stigma through shifting previous and current views of the personal relationship.

Overall, athletes highlighted the positive experience of being involved in both a professional and personal relationship with their coach, with complicated dynamics arising within this situation. Therefore, it is beneficial to examine the professional and personal relationship between an athlete and coach as its own entity within sport research.

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## Appendix A: Information Sheet



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# *The Experience of an Athletes Professional and Personal Relationship with their Coach*

## INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Steffi Burrows. I am a student at Massey University completing my Master of Science in Psychology endorsed in Health Psychology. I am inviting you to participate in a study I am conducting for the fulfilment of my degree alongside my supervisor Dr Richard Fletcher. My Research Project is looking at athletes' experiences of the professional and personal relationships with their coaches; examining how personal relationships affect professional relationships. Your agreement to take part in this study would be greatly appreciated.

### **What is the Aim of the Study?**

The purpose of my research is to examine the experiences of athletes professional and personal relationship (consensual sexual relationship) with their coach, examining how personal relationships impact professional relationships and the athlete's sporting career.

### **What Type of Participants are Being Sought?**

A specific inclusion criterion of this study is that athletes must first have a professional relationship with their coach before their personal relationship. This helps to understand the experiences and change from a professional relationship to a personal relationship and the impact change may have on the professional relationship and sporting achievements.

### **What Will Participants be Asked to Do?**

Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a series of interviews about your experiences of your personal and professional relationship with your coach. The maximum number of interviews will be 5, with approximately 1-3 interviews being required. With your permission each interview will be recorded. Each interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. You will guide the negotiations of where the interviews will be conducted, for example, training grounds or a neutral

ground (such as a cafe) at a convenient time for the you.

### **What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

No personal identifying information will be recorded, with each participant being given a pseudo-name. There will be no information which might identify you in any reports on the study. All data collected will be kept in a password protected computer owned by the researcher and the hard copies will be kept in a locked storage cupboard. Once the study is completed and the results are published, the interview transcriptions will be destroyed. A summary of the findings will be emailed to you, should you request this.

### **What are my Rights as a Participant?**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. Participant in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline to participate or withdrawal from the study at any given time. Completion and return of the required forms implies consent.

If you decide to participate, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question. You have the right to have the recorder turned off at any stage during the interviews. You can ask any questions about the study at any time during participation. You have the right to be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **What if I have any Questions?**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study now or at any stage of the study, please feel free to contact the following Researcher in the School of Psychology, Massey University:

The contact details for the researchers are:

Steffi Burrows: [Steffi.Burrows.1@masseyuni.ac.nz](mailto:Steffi.Burrows.1@masseyuni.ac.nz)

Richard Fletcher: [R.B.Fletcher@massey.ac.nz](mailto:R.B.Fletcher@massey.ac.nz)

#### *Support Services*

Robyn Vertongen (Clinical Psychologist): [R.C.Vertongen@massey.ac.nz](mailto:R.C.Vertongen@massey.ac.nz)

Lifeline 24/7 helpline: 0800 543 354

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Application NOR 18/22. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz) .

## Appendix B: Participant Consent Forms



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### ***The Experience of an Athletes Professional and Personal Relationship with their Coach***

#### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name -  
 printed**

.....



### Appendix C: Transcription Notations

Notation	Example	Description
[	A: Quite a [while  B: [yeah	Left bracket indicates the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk
=	A: it was open = B: = yes, absolutely	Equal signs, one at the end of line and one at the beginning, indicates no gap between the two lines
(2)	I think (2) because	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in seconds
<u>word</u>	said <u>dumb</u> things	underscoring illustrates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude
{laughter}	{laughter}	any other significant behaviour, such as laughter, signing, intake of breath etc.

( )	i went ( ) played fine	empty parentheses indicates the transcribers inability to hear what was said
(word)	sometimes I (will) as him	parentheses words are possible hearings
Word_	umm_	an underscore following a word or syllable indicates an extension or drawn out sound
...	...	Three full stops indicate a small amount of text has been omitted.

## **Appendix D: Thematic Codes**

### **Emotional Connection**

- Positive emotions towards the experience
- Positive emotions towards partner
- Love of sport
- Sport part of who they are
- Sharing experiences
- Support
- Comfortable with their coach
- Working towards Goals
- Coach/partners belief
- Closeness
- Knowledge of self
- Disappointments
- Proud
- Emotions experienced after race

### **Power Dynamics Within the Interaction of the Personal and Professional Life**

- Power of coach in professional relationship
- Athletes choice within training
- Coaches expertise and knowledge
- Ways of enforcing coaches' power
- Coach's role
- Coaches' characteristics

#### *Privileged Position*

- Power of coach within personal relationship
- Power of the athlete
- Pressure to perform
- Holding position of Partner
- Impact of the personal relationship on the sport

#### *Diluted Power*

- External coaches
- Behaviour towards coach
- Emotional attachment to coach
- Control in training
- Athletes role

#### *Power Dynamics in the Home Life*

- Power in the home for the athlete
- Decisions made within the home
- Power in the home for the partner
- Gender roles

## **Pragmatic Issues Within the Interaction of the Personal and Professional Relationship**

- Time negotiations
- Home Life
- Athlete Life
- Food negotiations
- Coaches role interacting in home life
- Training together
- Disadvantages of having partner as coach
- View of Attention levels coaches had for athlete
- Analyse/technique
- Input into training
- Spheres bleeding together
- Additional roles in life
- Similarities between home and athlete personality/life
- Different hats (roles) in life
- Ways to keep home life/sport life separate
- Admin and helping out tasks
- Expectation

### *Childcare*

- Children within the sporting domain
- Priorities within life including change in priorities
- Support person/people
- How to stay in sport

### *Keeping the Personal Relationship Hidden*

- Openness of relationship
- Team members/training squad's views
- Athletes personality

## **Having your Coach with you at all Times**

- Ease of partner coaching
- Motivation to train
- Encouragement
- Differences in coach-athlete relationship and partnership
- Honesty
- Respect
- Holidays
- Access
- Communication
- Trust levels
- Coaches knowledge of athlete
- Athletes knowledge of coach/partner