

The complexities of coach-athlete dyads and interdependence in an adult female team sport

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Masters athletes (MA)

- **MAs** are adults generally 35+ that are registered in sport for the purposes of performance improvement and competition, often in the presence of a coach (Young, 2011)
- **Benefits** of having a **coach** (Callary et al., 2015; 2017, Ferrari et al., 2016)
- Masters sport involves **significant social interaction** (Callary et al., 2015a; 2017; MacLellan et al., 2017)
 - Social affiliation extends beyond sporting context
 - Quality coach-athlete relationships



C-A relationships and Interdependence

- **Interdependence** frames our understanding of interactions and describes what is happening in **dyadic** relationships (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978)
- Jowett's **3+1 Cs**: Closeness (affective), commitment (cognitive), complementarity (behavioural), + co-orientation (mutuality)
(Jowett & colleagues, 2004; 2007; 2016)
- Research has yet to discuss **C-A relationships in Masters sport**, nor how they pertain to and **all-female** setting



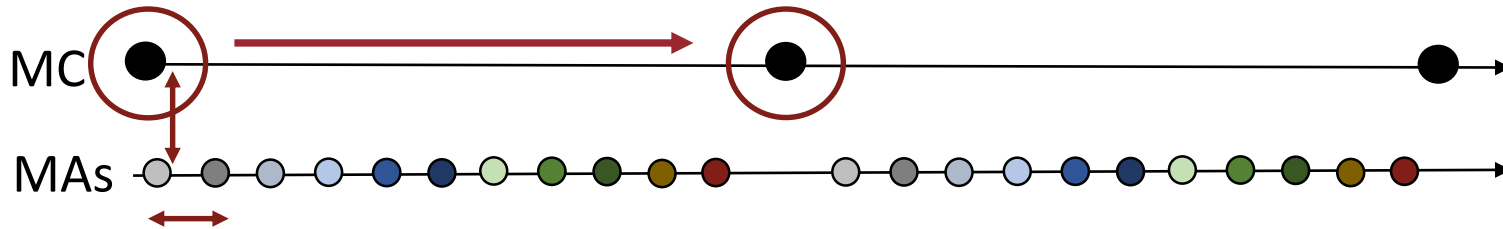
Research Question

- What are C-A relationships like within a women's team sport setting as they relate to the **Masters coach (MC)**, **each MA**, and **the team** as a whole?



Methods

- A team of 20 synchronized skaters and their female coach (MAs ages 18-55; MC age 32)
- Semi-structured interviews (25)
- Participant observation (50+ hours)
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
 - Idiographic process (Smith, 2016)



MA coach-athlete relationships



Deductive Results

- **3+1 Cs**
 - Closeness
 - Commitment
 - Complementarity
 - Co-orientation



C-A DYAD: Closeness

Describe the relationship you have with your coach:

*“I kind of want to have that, that bond where like **I can talk to her about things I notice on the ice** and so that’s more on the professional aspect of things. Um, so I want like, her to trust me with some of the [skating] stuff, and vice versa” –Meghan, 36*



C-A DYAD: Closeness (friendship)

Describe the relationship you have with your coach:

“I consider her to be among my better friends for sure. We do things outside of skating, we train for the half together, we socialize together. So, she just bought a house like a 3-minute bike ride away from me, so we spend a lot of time together.” –Tina, 52



C-A DYAD: Commitment - Sustained and initial

- Recruitment

*“After not skating for almost 5 years— **she’s the one that encouraged me** [to skate here], because I could’ve gone somewhere else. You know, there were other teams [nearby] which is only a half an hour from my house instead of an hour and a half, but to me it’s like I didn’t wanna do that, I **wanted to go back to them.** ” –Sophie, 53*



C-A DYAD: Complementarity

- Reciprocal: different behaviours that the coach and athlete exhibit
(Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016)
 - E.g. Individual feedback– commentaries
- Corresponding: same behaviours that the coach and athlete display
(Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016)
 - E.g. Coach as athlete



*“So, for three and a half minutes or whatever the length of the program, I'm not ‘Ellen the federal public servant, mother of two’– **I'm in position number 17 of 20 people and I'm part of this group** that is delivering this show... for 3 and a half minutes. So I'm not me, I'm the program” –Ellen, 55*



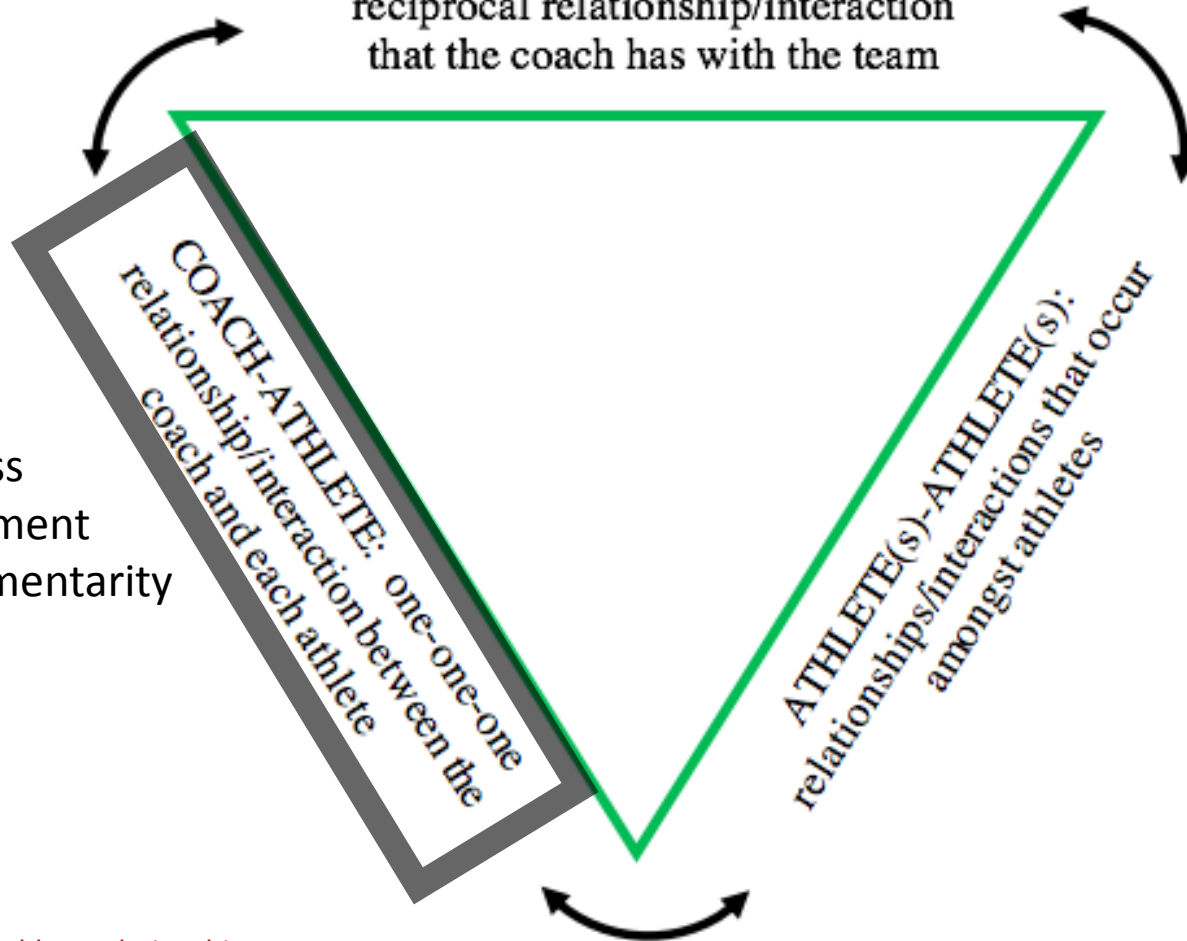
Inductive Results - Beyond the C-A dyad

Co-orientation

- COACH-TEAM: coaching strategies, social opportunities
- ATHLETE(s)-ATHLETE(s): peer mentorship, life experiences



COACH-TEAM: direct and reciprocal relationship/interaction that the coach has with the team



- Closeness
- Commitment
- Complementarity



COACH-TEAM: direct and reciprocal relationship/interaction that the coach has with the team

- Coach strategies
- Social opportunities

COACH-ATHLETE: one-one-one relationship/interaction between the coach and each athlete

ATHLETE(s)-ATHLETE(s): relationships/interactions that occur amongst athletes



COACH-TEAM

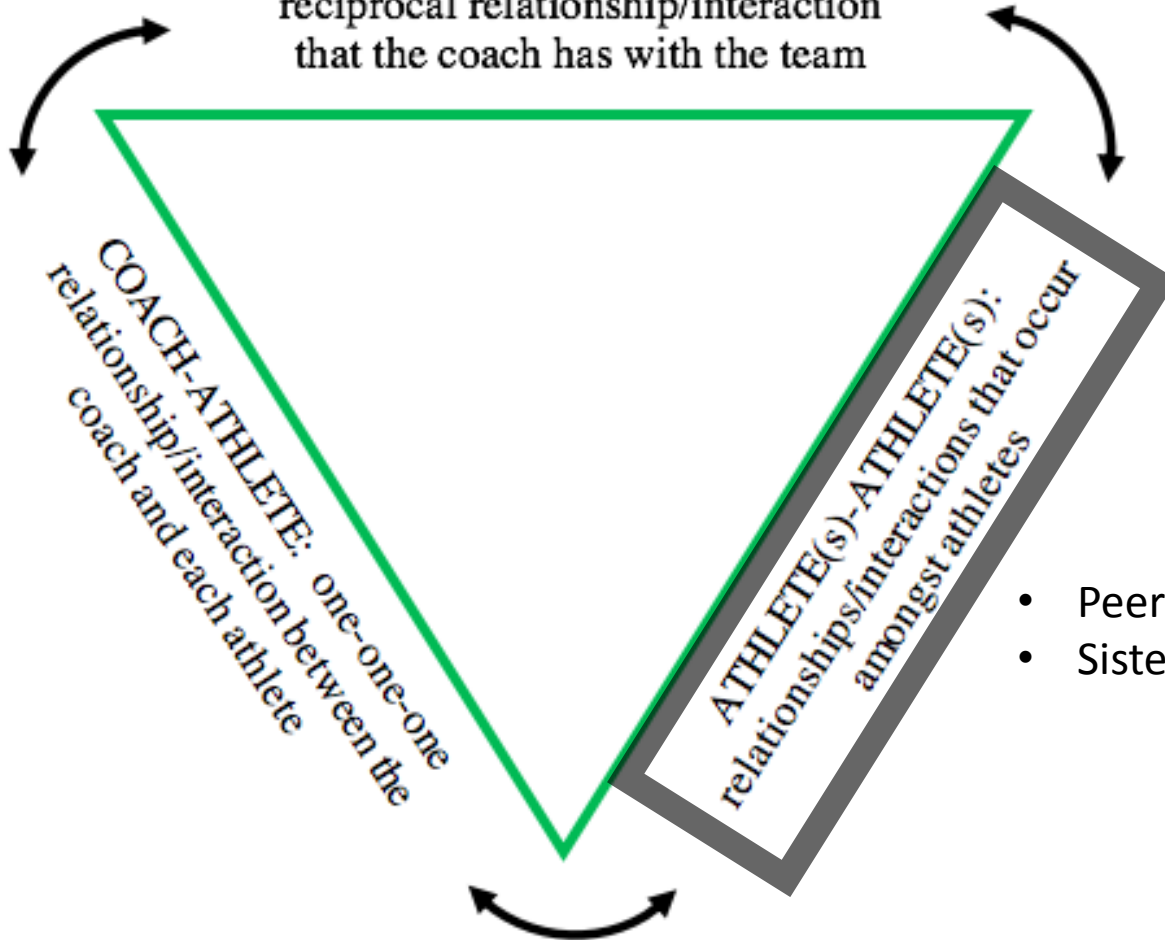
*“I’m convinced that there’s a formula for fitting in on the synchro team. The criteria are **being a good skater, being a really nice person, and being on the team for a long time.** So those are the 3 criteria, and as long as you have 1 of those you’re going to be okay, if you have 2 you’re going to fit in, if you have 3 you’re going to be like everyone’s favorite”*

*“You can be sarcastic, you can be real, and there's like an actual opportunity to **make those relationships.** Like, if I think of the kids I coached for the same amount of time, I coached some kids for like 6-7 years and like, some of them I still don’t know that well”*

–Coach, 32



COACH-TEAM: direct and reciprocal relationship/interaction that the coach has with the team



- Peer mentoring
- Sisterhood



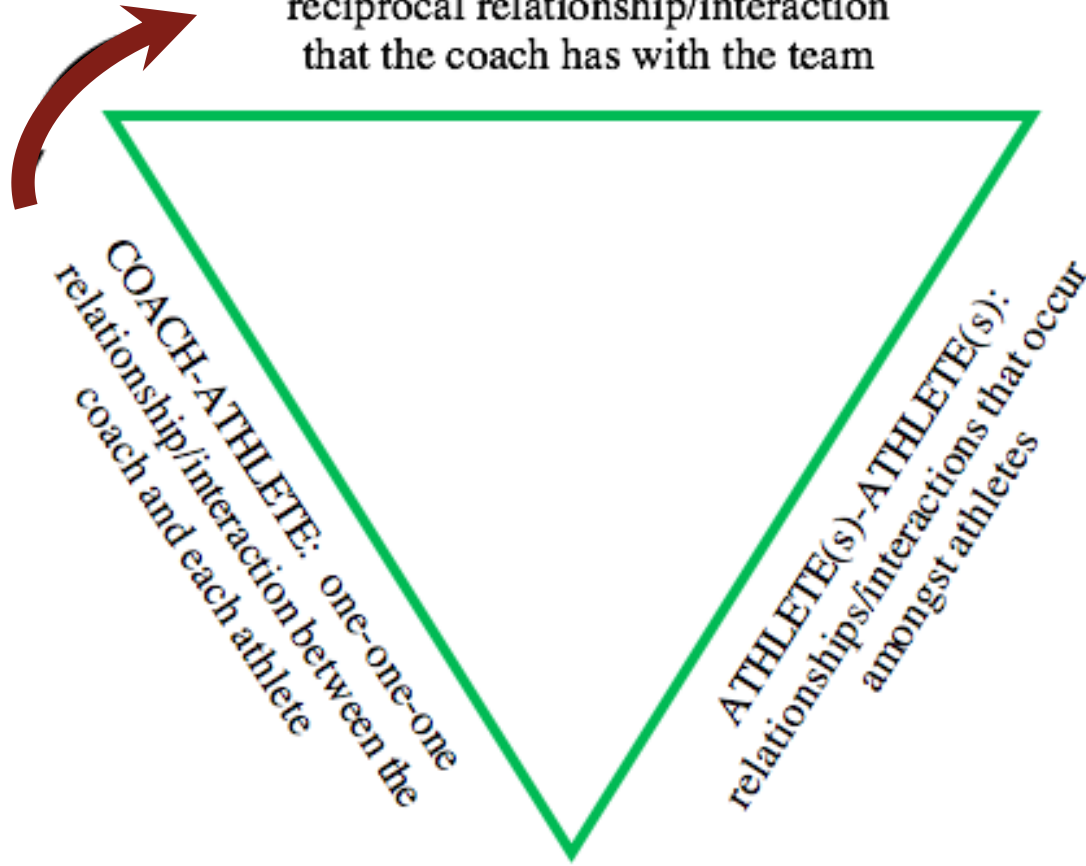
ATHLETE(S)-ATHLETE(S)

*“They talk more about like, stuff that I never even thought of and it’s kind of just cool **seeing the different perspectives** of what [being] an actual adult is like... I find that if I ever need anything, I’ll kind of look to Jane” –Jenna, 18*

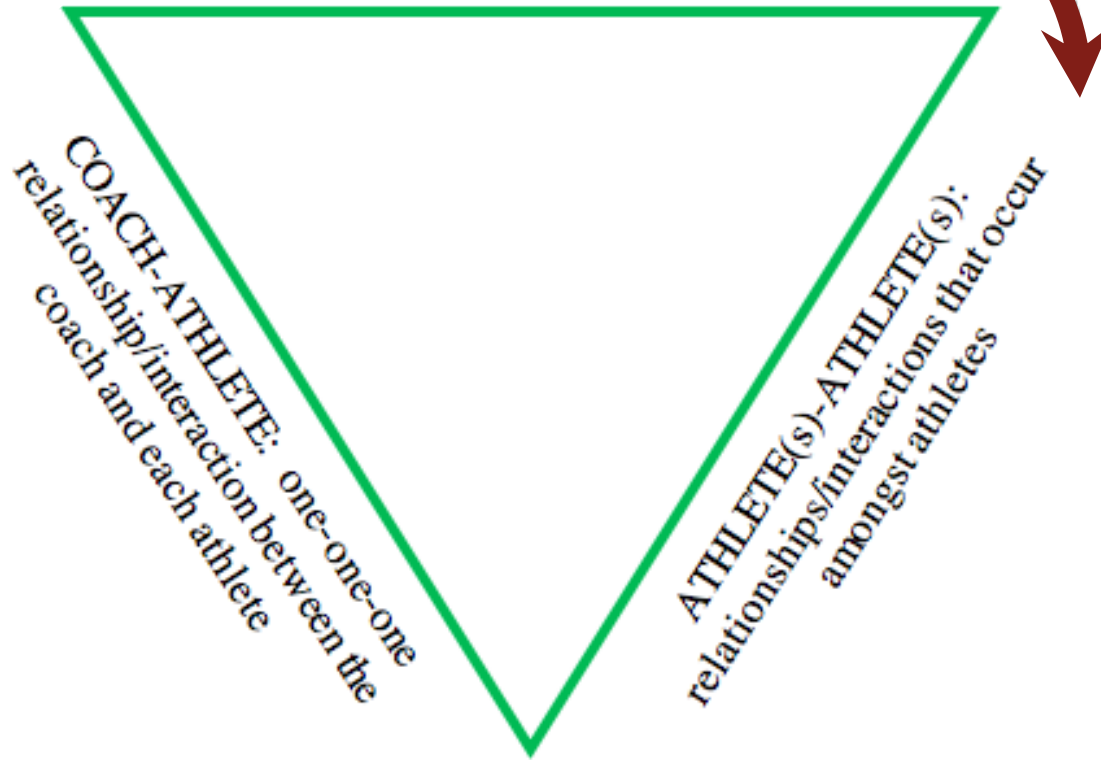
*“I’ve had a **bit of a leadership role** on the team. You know, if people had concerns and they didn’t want to go directly to the coach they would come to me” –Jane, 53*



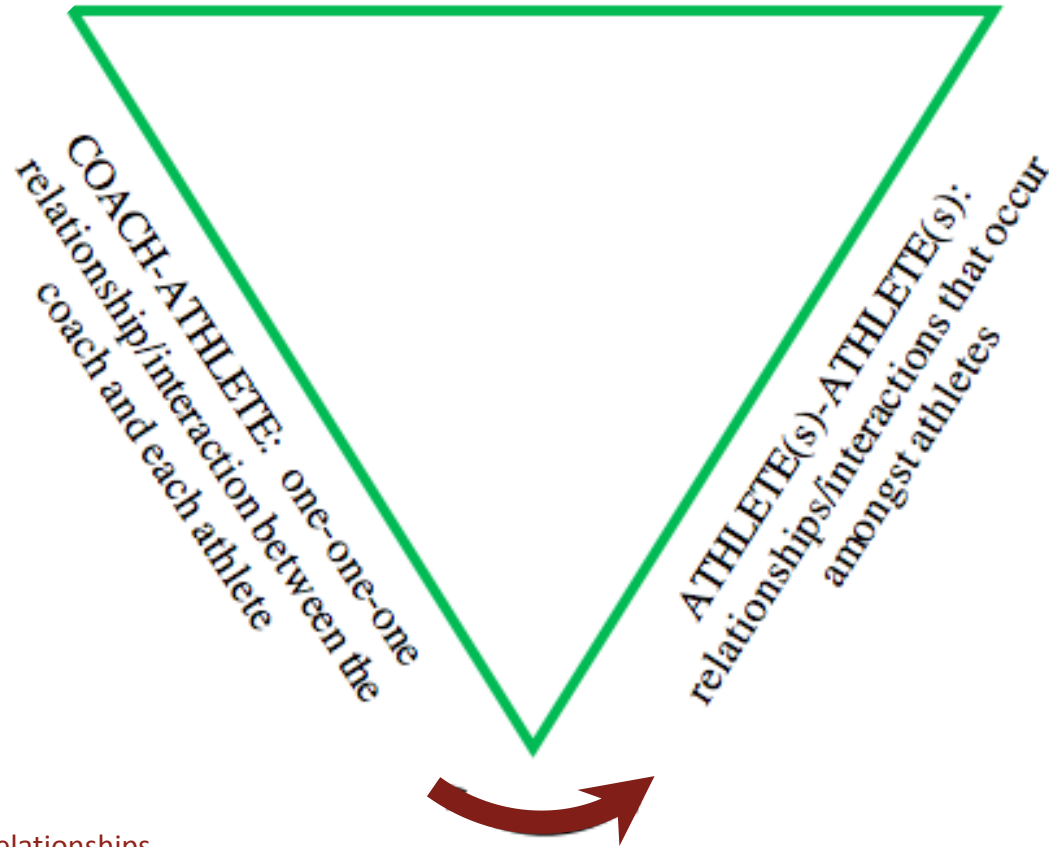
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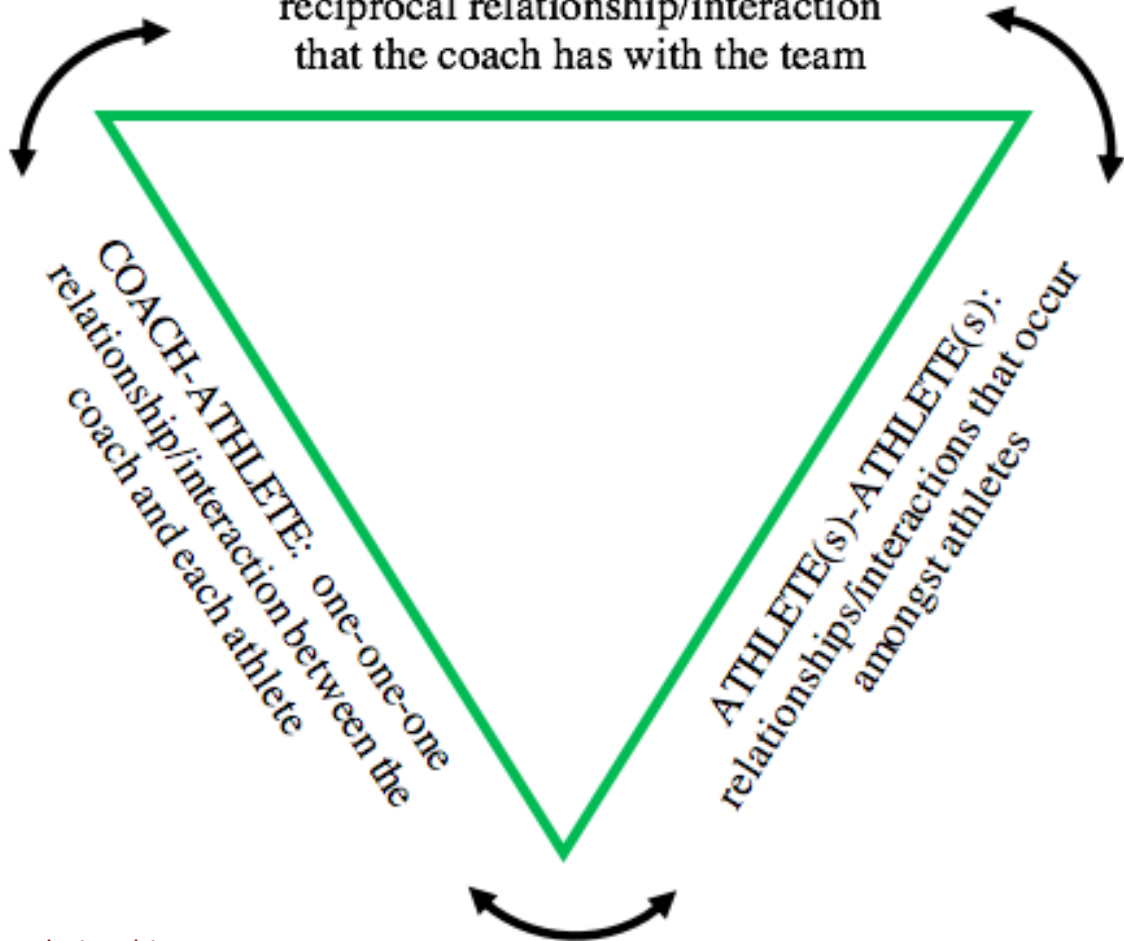
COACH-TEAM: direct and reciprocal relationship/interaction that the coach has with the team



*“I went through a really, really rough period of my life. It **would not have been okay but for the skating team.** Yeah, so. Like **they** just picked me up, took care of me, and its actually **[the coach] that noticed.** People hadn’t noticed, [the coach] did.” –Stephanie, 33*



COACH-TEAM: direct and reciprocal relationship/interaction that the coach has with the team



COACH-ATHLETE: one-one-one relationship/interaction between the coach and each athlete

ATHLETE(s)-ATHLETE(s): relationships/interactions that occur amongst athletes



Discussion and Implications

- Coached adult sport provides opportunities to develop **meaningful interpersonal connections** both in and out of sporting contexts
- In a team, athletes and their coach develop interdependence **beyond the dyad**. This novel interpretation of interdependence could support coaching models that consider a coach's influence on a broader relational spectrum
- **Theoretical:** consideration of 3 + 1 Cs in broader coached contexts (Masters sport, women's team)
- **Practical:** Masters coaches can utilize interpersonal strategies to maximize their C-A relationships and overall sport experience for themselves, as well as their athletes



Thank you Questions?

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