

Ens, Georgia

University of Calgary

Dr. Dave Paskevich

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Skate Canada Body Positive Guidelines: A qualitative stakeholder assessment

Background: Figure skating creates a unique setting for body image concerns to arise in athlete participants due in large part to training and performance demands specific to the sport. Recognizing the deleterious effects of body image concerns on athlete development, sport engagement, and health, Skate Canada has worked to prioritize athlete well-being through the creation of the Body Positive Guidelines. This document acts to foster positive body image in the sport of figure skating through education and resources on body image, nutrition, communication and language, strength and conditioning, and SafeSport policy.

Objective: In partnership with Skate Canada, the ongoing research attempts to understand how the current Body Positive Guidelines meets the needs of Skate Canada stakeholders by providing opportunity for stakeholder feedback on the current document and insight for future iterations.

Methods: The ongoing research is a qualitative study that takes a pragmatist approach given the application-focussed nature of the project. The research consists of eight semi-structured focus groups with key stakeholders (i.e., athletes, coaches, judges/officials, and parents) (N=48). Focus groups conducted over zoom will last approximately 60-120 minutes in length and will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. Using the software NVivo to assist with analysis, data will be analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Results: Meaning and interpretation of the themes identified using IPA will be outlined in a narrative throughout the results section. In the narrative, results from the ongoing research will be discussed alongside the current literature as well as any implications the results may have for the Body Positive Guidelines and other aspects of body image and sport research. Results from the stakeholder assessment will be consolidated and presented back to Skate Canada. Any potential changes to the Body Positive Guidelines will be discussed with the SafeSport team and updates will be made to the document should there be a need.

Conclusion: The ongoing research attempts to bolster the current Skate Canada Body Positive Guidelines while also addressing the need for deeper stakeholder involvement around positive body image and body image concerns in the sport of figure skating. Results from this ongoing research work to create body image resources that not only meet the unique concerns of a specific athlete population but also ultimately aim to foster a positive environment for athlete engagement, performance and well-being.