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PERSPECTIVES OF ADOLESCENT ATHLETES AND MUSICIANS:
EXPLORING THE MEANING AND VALUE ATTACHED TO THE PERFORMANCE

by

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ABSTRACT

Some performers become so consumed by the demands and pressures of performing that they neglect other priorities in their life. However, some individuals succeed in their performance domain and still have their lives together – they approach their performance with a sense of perspective (Brown, Cairns, & Botterill, 2001). Though the perspectives of adult performers have been outlined in the literature, it is unclear what perspective adolescent participants bring to their performance.

The participants were ten young performers (seven athletes and three musicians) selected from a private school in central Canada. They were identified both as top performers and as individuals who had their lives together. In depth interviews revealed the elements that characterize the perspective these participants bring to their performance.

Results indicate these adolescents strive to maintain balance in their lives, build relationships with others that assist them in their performance pursuits, approach obstacles with a positive perspective, grow through learning and improving, use a complete focus to absorb themselves in performing, and find passion in their performance pursuits and live this passion everyday.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As a high level performer, an individual needs to be completely focused to reach performance excellence (Orlick, 2000). Regardless of whether a person is a doctor, lawyer, athlete, musician, astronaut, teacher, or student, he or she needs to be fully engaged in the performance if there is hope for accomplishing tremendous feats. However, many performers' lives revolve totally around the goal of high level accomplishment (Adler, P., & Adler, P.A., 1987; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Hays, 2002; Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Parham, 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). They become so absorbed in the goal of performing well that other areas of their life are not respected. They soon become known as performers, rather than people who perform. Being focused on one particular goal, at the expense of disrespecting other areas of your life, could be detrimental and may cause high levels of stress. Some performers become so obsessed by what they are doing that they fail to see where the performance fits into their lives as a whole. They fail to put the performance into perspective.

The general understanding of perspective involves having "a mental view of the relative importance of things" (DK Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, 1998, p.608) and "the ability to see all the relevant data in a meaningful relationship" (Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1999, p. 985). When applying this definition to the field of high performance, perspective involves the importance the individual places on the performance, as well as the ability to be aware of everything important within and surrounding the performance. Brown, Cairns, & Botterill (2001) explored the idea of perspective within elite sport and conveyed that personal *values* and the *meanings*

attached to different aspects of one's life are components of perspective. Perspective is an awareness of the self in relation to others as well as certain aspects of the self in relation to the whole person. Perspective also involves keeping the most valuable aspects of one's life at the forefront.

Why is perspective important to high performance? Orlick (2000) states that "the key to living closer to your potential both in your performance domain and outside of it lies in developing your ability to carry a positive perspective and to view things in a constructive way" (p. 69). What performers say to themselves about themselves in relation to their performance ultimately determines how they react emotionally to a performance (Orlick, 2000). When faced with a stressful event, the performer first forms a perception, or cognitive appraisal, of the event. Cognitive appraisal involves creating a picture of an event in one's head and labelling it as pleasant or unpleasant (Anshel, Kim, Kim, Chang, & Eom, 2001). Therefore, it is not the event but one's perspective on the event that determines the emotional response. If performers can alter their perspectives about an event's meaning, they can change their emotional response (Orlick, 2000). By having control of one's emotions, and seeing the performance in a positive light, performers can live closer to their performance potential.

In addition to assisting individuals in reaching new performance heights, perspective has the potential to benefit performers by reducing anxiety and burnout levels, by helping performers see that their overall meaning as individuals is not at stake, and by increasing the amount of joy experienced through their performance and in their lives.

The best way to prevent harmful anxiety is to control the way one views one's self and his or her world. Performers set themselves up for needless anxiety when they approach a performance as if the event is the most important event in the world (Orlick,

2000). If an individual fails to perceive the event as stressful, no stress results. One person may find something stressful, while another person is unaffected (Anshel, et al., 2001; Bond, 1993). If a performer can view a situation as non-threatening by placing the performance in the context of their entire life, anxiety will decrease. With respect to how perspective helps alleviate burnout, Raedeke (1997) states that performers experiencing burnout devalue the performance and detach from what is important within the performance – they stop caring about the sport and their involvement. Similarly, Smith (1986) explains that burnout performers begin to question “the value and significance of their efforts” (p. 42). By continuing to have perspective when approaching a performance, an individual is continually attaching much (but not too much) meaning and value to the performance. They know why the performance is important to them and they continue to participate fuelled by this motivation. If others involved in the experience can help performers reconnect with the value and significance that the performance once had for these performers, then more performers can take the first step to prevent or recover from burnout. It is important for performers to discover exactly what are these meanings and values that they attach to their performance.

Perspective also helps performers to realize that their own worth remains intact regardless of performance outcomes, that they are not completely useless if things do not go as planned (Orlick, 2000). The extent to which a person brings a sense of perspective to a performance is highly individual. Smith (1986) explains that people create a psychological reality to which they respond. A person’s belief system determines the meanings attached to the consequences of a particular response. Therefore, simultaneously, one person could equate self-worth with success while another could separate their self-worth from the performance (Smith, 1986). Having perspective when entering a performance frees athletes to perform without threat of losing part of

themselves to the performance and from feeling inadequate in the eyes of themselves and others.

Perhaps most important, perspective brings joy to all areas of one's life. When anxiety is reduced and one's meaning is not at stake, individuals are free to enjoy the performance experience. The focus is not solely on winning or appearing competent to others, but on all that can be experienced through the performance, including establishing bonds with others, discovering and developing one's self, and finding joy in every moment. Enjoyment, in turn, spreads through all parts of one's life when the performance is not the sole goal. Perspective enables performers to "stay meaningfully engaged with one's sport, the important people in one's life, and one's self as a whole" (Brown et al., 2001, p. 6).

The idea of having balance – the same basic phenomenon as perspective (Brown, et al., 2001) – also has clear benefits. Being balanced is an important stress management strategy, stress resulting when one or more areas of life are out of balance (Bond, 1993). In addition, being balanced helps to reenergize the body and refresh the mind. The time spent outside the performance domain helps an individual to "mellow out and unwind, to become more gentle, relaxed and playful," (Orlick, 1998, p. xii) and the joy experienced here helps him or her to enter the performance setting "well rested, well nourished spiritually and emotionally, and well prepared physically and mentally" (p. xii).

Performance outcomes are also influenced by the ability to carry a balanced approach. Orlick (1998) states that without balance, performers put their performance in jeopardy because they neglect "simple needs" both at home and during breaks at the performance site. Athletes feel that they have better performance results when they have a sense of balance in their lives (Amirault & Orlick, 1999). Having balance, therefore,

not only allows individuals to have many fulfilling experiences in different parts of their lives, but helps to improve their performance.

Balance, similar to the idea of perspective, is also related to maintaining an individual's overall self-worth. Using the analogy of a chair, a sturdy chair has more than one leg. For a balanced individual, being a performer is one leg but they also have other legs to stand on - being a student, leader, volunteer, sibling, son, daughter, or friend. If the individual has a less than optimal performance and experiences the feeling of having one leg kicked from underneath her, she still remains a relatively stable and full functioning individual. Regardless of performance outcomes, her self-worth remains intact.

Despite the clear benefits of carrying perspective into a performance, the demands and pressures of elite sport can cause lives to be unbalanced or out of perspective. However, there are athletes who overcome these challenges and continue to “conduct themselves with humility and grace, and perform admirably both in and out of their sport arenas” (Brown, et al., 2001, p. 5). Therefore, there is evidence that individuals can be top performers in their field without focusing solely on performance outcomes; they focus on the process involved in performing. They are able to find value in their sporting experience but they can also find value and meaning in other parts of their lives. They can place their performances within the context of their entire lives, and having a sense of perspective enables them to excel in their pursuits and simultaneously enjoy the process.

Not all elite athletes, however, are able to view their sporting experience with a sense of perspective. Athletes do sometimes confuse their individual performance with their human worth and much anxiety can develop by carrying this narrow perspective (Orlick, 2000). Some athletes have difficulty retiring from high level sport. They feel that they have little else to hold on to or look forward to than their sporting experience.

When Werthner and Orlick (1986) explored the retirement experiences of elite Canadian athletes, they found that many athletes had faced some difficulty in making the transition out of their performance domain and felt some fear for the future due to feeling unsure of themselves. When an individual's life revolves so much around the performance, with much satisfaction experienced, leaving the performance setting can be a "monumental and sometimes painstaking task" (Parham, 1993, 417). Instead of keeping in mind where the performance fits into their lives, the performance had become their life. Having a sense of perspective could help ease the transition from their performance domain to the pursuit of other valuable challenges in life. Having perspective could help individuals to realize that they are giving up only *part* of themselves, and most of what they are or can be still remains.

What about adolescent participants' perspectives and how they view their performances? In comparison to those individuals who are late in their performance careers, adolescent performers are just beginning their development. One advantage that adult performers have in their approach to their performance is that they already have many experiences to draw upon, experiences both in and out of their performance domain. Due to these experiences, adult performers may have a better conception of where their performance fits into the spectrum of their entire lives. In other words, they are able to see that their performance is not the only element making up their life experiences. They still value high achievement and they attach much meaning and value to the experience, but they do not feel defined by their performance. They can place their performances in perspective.

Adolescent performers, however, are still in the development process. Due to their limited life experience and development, some adolescent performers may become engulfed in their performance experience, at the expense of other development areas.

They are so focused on their performance that they lose sight of where the performance fits into their entire lives. The performance becomes their life. Adolescents are in a unique life development stage. They are in the transition to being adults, battling with such development tasks as accepting one's own physical appearance, slowly detaching from parental home while simultaneously forming a group of friends, preparing for a career, and developing a positive self-concept (Brettschneider, 1999). If the performance becomes their sole focus, these other areas of development may suffer. It appears that perspective could benefit of adolescents both inside and outside of their performance.

Having perspective can help adolescents see their performance in a positive light. Brettscheider (1999) explains that the perceived pressure adolescent performers feel is not simply a sum of performance demands but also "the result of subjective assessment and evaluation" (p. 124). If adolescent performers can control how they perceive the event, stress can be reduced, they can view the performance as less threatening, and they can ultimately experience more satisfaction through the performance. However, before adolescent performers and support groups – coaches, teammates, family, friends, sport psychologists – can work together to interpret an event in a positive manner, and ultimately help build enjoyable and more successful performance experiences, we must first discover how the performance is currently being appraised. In other words, what meaning and value do adolescent performers attach to their performance? By investigating the perspectives of young individuals who excel in and out of their performance domain and who clearly carry perspective, we can begin to understand the elements of perspective.

Originally, the current research was to center solely around the sporting domain. However, all adolescent performers can benefit from having a positive perspective in any area of interest, not just sport. Therefore, it was deemed important to widen the focus

area and also look at what perspective developing musicians bring to their performance and to their lives. By investigating the perspectives of both athletes and musicians a more holistic approach to the meaning and value attached to performance can be obtained. Although there are some differences in performance demands, both athletes and performing artists share commonalities. Both groups of performers, in contrast to other fields of work, are involved in a field where “the person is the instrument of the performer’s profession” (Hays, 2002, p. 299) and have similar demands relating to competing, achieving, performing in front of an audience, practicing, managing injury, and retiring (Hays, 2002). Athletes, musicians, and actors all attach meaning to the key components of their lives and have similar struggles in the battle to maintain perspective in the performance and in their lives.

The current research hopes to shed some light on the perspective elements of a unique group of adolescent performers. These individuals were identified both as top young performers and as people who have it all together. Once we know what are the elements of perspective, directions for further research include finding ways to help other adolescent performers to develop perspective and find joy in their pursuits.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

In any performance domain, individuals are constantly striving to reach their performance potential. Although hours of practice are necessary to achieve one's potential, the perspective that the individual carries also plays an essential role (Orlick, 2000). Before reviewing and analyzing previous literature involving the perspectives of performers, it is important to first illustrate how the concept of perspective has been defined. Once it is clear what perspective means, the next step was to briefly reiterate why it is important for performers to carry a sense of perspective. Assisting individuals in living and performing through helping them keep things in perspective is not possible unless we first know what elements compose the perspectives of performers. From previous literature it is clear that adult performers use a sense of perspective to help them cope and thrive in the performance environment. Although previous literature hints at what perspective elements adolescent performers may carry, the topic has not been explicitly addressed. The adolescents involved in this study were identified as students who excel in their performance domain (sport or music) and also seem to have it all together. The current research aims to explore what are the elements of perspective that these adolescent performers carry into their performance.

Perspective Defined

Perspective has been previously defined as having many elements in one's life, assigning meaning and value to each element, and continuing to focus not just on one but all of these elements (Brown et al., 2001). Having an awareness of how different parts of the self are interrelated, as well as an awareness of one's self in relation to others are also elements of perspective. Finally, perspective involves being fully absorbed in a

performance and still being aware of the most important things in one's life (Brown et al., 2001).

The Importance of Perspective

Having perspective as an approach to the performance experience clearly has many benefits. A sense of perspective helps reduce both anxiety and burnout in a variety of performance situations (Anshel, et al., 2001; Bond, 1993; Orlick, 2000). If an individual approaches the performance as something that is important but not completely life-threatening, then anxiety and burnout will be greatly alleviated. Perspective also helps protect the performer's self-worth (Orlick, 2000). Performers who carry perspective with them realize that their value as an individual is not dependent on the outcome of their performance. A less than optimal performance does not mean they are worthless. The joy associated with performance experiences and life experiences is greatly increased when people carry perspective (Orlick, 2000). Increased joy results when performers manage their anxiety and see their performance as just part of their lives. By engaging in other interests besides the performance, not only are the body and mind reenergized for upcoming performances (Orlick, 2000), but individuals have more opportunity to find joy in all parts of their lives. The final benefit to having a sense of perspective is that it can help free you to reach new levels of performance (Amirault & Orlick, 1999). Orlick (2000) states that perspective helps performers to live closer to their potential.

Perspective and Adult Performers

While some researchers hint at the elements of perspective that encompass an adult performer's approach to a performance, Brown et al. (2001) were the first researchers to explore the concept of perspective directly with elite performers. Brown et al. (2001) used a grounded theory approach to develop a model of the process of

perspective. The researchers interviewed eleven elite athletes who were described by professionals in the sport psychology field as having it all together. Elite athletes were defined as having competed at an amateur national or international level or at the professional or semi-professional level. The first interview was non-directive in order to prevent directing the athletes towards the researchers' assumptions about the nature of perspective. Questions were then developed to expand upon the emerging categories as well as to test the trustworthiness of the model against participant perceptions. The researchers were successful in letting the participants construct the model of perspective, not imposing a model on the participants, and checking to see if the developing model matched with the participants' perceptions.

Three primary categories emerged under Brown et al.'s (2001) study on perspective: defining the self, living authentically, and experiencing fully. "Defining the self" involved having a healthy, enduring, and complex self. The participants in the study defined themselves as having enduring attributes that remained in tact regardless of where they were or what they were doing. They also viewed themselves as multi-faceted, which helped to provide balance in response to success and failure. In other words, if they were not successful in one domain, they could accept the setback because the performance was just one of the many elements of their lives.

The second element in Brown et al.'s (2001) model of perspective was "living authentically." Living authentically involved staying true to yourself and others by having intimacy, emotional expression, humility, and support and sharing. There was a priority among the participants to have "the freedom to be themselves" (Brown et al., 2001, p. 14). Intimacy involved having close relationships where personal defenses can be dropped, resulting in an increased level of comfort, safety, and genuineness. Participants saw emotional expression not as a sign of weakness, but a healthy practice

that enhances the experience. Having a sense of humility enabled the participants to view success as an enjoyable experience rather than an opportunity for entitlement and special treatment. Humility also helped the participants to view failure not as a compromise of personal value, but rather as a disappointing experience in which they could still draw valuable lessons. Finally, under the concept of living authentically, the participants attributed a great deal of success, fulfillment, and perspective to the presence of supportive relationships.

"Experiencing fully" was the third element of perspective (Brown, et al., 2001). Experiencing fully involved taking in the full sporting experience, and simultaneously being free from a preoccupation with outcomes and their implications. There were four elements of experiencing fully: experiencing self through sport, connecting with others, immersing in the moment, and finding meaning and purpose in sport. The participants experienced themselves through sport, rather than being defined by the sport. They saw sport as a "vehicle for self-expression" (Brown et al., 2001, p. 25). The participants connected with others, forming extremely valuable relationships with teammates. Participants were immersed in the moment, describing a state of living and performing that fully engages them. Being focused on the moment helped the participants to avoid being consumed by the pressures of performance, the focus helping them to become free to relax and perform. Finally, the participants were able to find meaning and purpose in virtually everything that happened to them. They were constantly drawing out lessons, continuing to grow as people, and believing that there was some purpose attached to each challenge they faced.

Brown et al. (2001) illustrated that maintaining a positive sense of perspective helped certain adult athletes cope with the stress of their sporting careers. It also indicates that elite athletes can excel in their performance field and still maintain a

healthy view of self, stay true to their selves and others, and find meaning and fulfillment in the sport experience. The research provides a thick description of what elements of perspective elite adult athletes bring to their performance.

Prior to Brown et al. (2001), other researchers indicate that adult performers carry a sense of perspective which helps them to excel in the performance environment. Members of the 1988 United States Olympic Wrestling Team carried a sense of perspective into competition, helping them compete at a high level (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993). The team used a variety of coping strategies to deal with stress. One of those strategies, labelled "thought control strategies," was the most often reported coping strategy. Under the "thought control" dimension, "perspective taking" was the second most frequently referred to higher order theme, with 35 % of the wrestlers taking perspective to cope with stress.

Perspective taking, as defined by Gould et al. (1993), involved "attempts at rational thinking to place the event within a subjectively reasonable mental framework in which the wrestler felt comfortable or in control" (p. 88). Although there are differences in the wording of Brown et al.'s (2001) and Gould et al.'s (1993) definitions of perspective, the essence of each definition is much the same. The idea of using rational thinking to place an event within a reasonable mental framework links to Brown et al.'s (2001) idea that perspective involves keeping the most valuable aspects of one's life at the forefront. Both definitions involve placing a performance within the context of a performer's entire life, helping the athlete to effectively cope with the demands of the performance. Similarly, Gould et al. (1993) discuss perspective as feeling comfortable or in control, paralleling the idea of perspective as being able to stay meaningfully engaged with one's sport without focusing on outcomes and their implications (Brown et al., 2001). Although Brown et al.'s (2001) definition of perspective was more detailed than

Gould et al.'s (1993) definition, both definitions have similar components, and both studies illustrate that adult performers carry a sense of perspective to help them excel in a performance. Gould et al. (1993) provides further evidence that elite athletes use perspective as a coping strategy. However, further research could attempt to outline common *themes* within the process of placing events within a "subjectively reasonable mental framework" (Gould et al., 1993, p.88). In other words, are there common ways that performers put their performance in perspective?

Talbot-Honeck and Orlick (1998) and Poczwardowski and Conroy (2002) extend the understanding of performance perspectives by exploring perspectives of classical musicians and performing artists, respectively. Talbot-Honeck and Orlick (1998) investigated the mental skills of top classical musicians. Orlick's (1992) model of excellence was used as a framework for studying and presenting these mental skills. Common positive perspectives that these musicians exhibited included viewing performing as an on going developmental experience with goals of continued growth, keeping the "big picture" by focusing on long term goals and recognizing the danger of concentrating too much on minor details, thinking positively about setbacks and seeing them as learning opportunities, and feeling in control of one's life by accepting things that could not be changed. Talbot-Honeck and Orlick's (1998) study helps to begin the process of conceptualizing what elements make up performer perspectives.

Poczwardowski and Conroy (2002) investigated the performance perspectives of both athletes and performing artists. They qualitatively compared coping responses to both success and failure with 16 athletes and performing artists. One of the categories of coping was appraisal-focused coping, a coping strategy referring to appraising or reappraising stressful situations using such techniques as logical analysis and situation-reframing (Cox & Ferguson, 1991). Within the appraisal-focused coping was a strategy

labelled “Keeping Things in Perspective.” All 16 participants attempted to cope with failure, negative emotions, criticism, and even success, by keeping things in perspective. Three-quarters of the participants gained perspective by accepting that no one is successful every time they perform, by having realistic expectations, and viewing their performance from a distance. In addition, viewing one’s self as both a performer and a person was an effective coping strategy in taking perspective.

Clearly, both elite athletes and musicians use perspective and balance as coping responses and ultimately perform at a higher level because they are able to cope through perspective-taking. Poczwardowski and Conroy’s (2002) article sheds light on possible elements of perspective, including the ideas of having balance between being a performer and a person (Orlick, 2000; Amirault & Orlick, 1999), realizing success is a goal but is not attained every performance, and viewing the performance from a broader perspective to alleviate stress stemming from a narrow focus.

Werthner’s (2002) investigation of the nature of effective concentration before and during a high performance event offers further description of what perspective performers bring to competition. The participants in the study were either medallists at the World Championships or Olympic Games, or held a world record in their event. Five out of eight athletes discussed the perspective they have on their careers. Several approached the competition with a sense of balance, stating that the performance is important but not the only thing, and that it was helpful to have other interests besides sports. One athlete conveys their sense of perspective:

I think I have put speed skating in a good perspective. I really care.

I think about it and work hard, but I don’t look for happiness just in speed skating. Winning the world team championship was beyond my

expectations, and for the moment it's great and I'm proud of it. But after that life goes on. (Werthner, 2002, p. 24)

From Werthner's (2002) findings, elements of perspective include a deep care for the performance but, coinciding with this care, an ability to place the performance in the context of their entire lives. Further in-depth interviews with other high-performing athletes would help to clarify and expand these perspective elements.

Related to perspective is the term *balance* (Amirault & Orlick, 1999; Fageus, 1999; Orlick, 1998). Orlick (1998) defined balance as "finding, beauty, passion and meaning in the different loves of your life, and living those loves – everyday. Balance is respecting your needs for achievement and relaxation, work and play, giving and receiving, intimacy and personal space" (p.xiii). Balance also involves not relying too much on one aspect of one's life and the need to have many areas of one's life in order (Amirault & Orlick, 1999). Orlick's (1998) and Amirault and Orlick's (1999) definition of balance does indeed match nicely with Brown et al.'s (2001) description of perspective as having many elements in one's life, assigning meaning to each element, and continuing to focus on and respect not just one but all of these elements.

Amirault and Orlick (1999) investigated athletes's perceptions of balance in their lives by conducting in depth semi-structured interviews with 10 elite athletes, 5 currently competing and 5 retired. Athletes identified six prerequisites for attaining balance, including making a conscious decision to have balance, having strong self-discipline, enjoying what they were doing, having a supportive network, having leisure time, and being in the moment. Half of the athletes defined balance primarily as having a vision or goal and striving towards it. The other half defined balance as respecting different parts of their lives and felt that they had better results when they respected their need for

balance. The definitions of balance, as well as the prerequisites to balance, offer insight into other possible elements of perspective, including pursuing interests inside and out of the performance domain, finding joy in all their pursuits, having a deep sense of care for the performance and seeing the importance of including others in the performance experience.

Perspective and Adolescent Performers

Despite the evidence of exceptional adult performers' use of perspective to help them compete at a high level, there is minimal research on what perspective adolescents' bring to their performance and to their lives. Because the idea of perspective focuses on the meaning and value attached to the experience, as well as on how performers view their performance experience and their lives, we cannot assume that the elements of perspective outlined in adult performance literature coincide with the elements of adolescent performers. Adolescents may attach different meaning and value to their performance experiences. Just as one's view of the world changes as one develops, one's view on their performance experience may change and take on new meaning.

Adolescents are in a different stage of life development than adults and are working to form a concept of themselves (Brettscheider, 1999) and the world around them. How they perceive their world and, more specifically, how they perceive their performance domain may differ from adults whose perspectives on performing have been influenced by more experience.

One focus in the adolescent performance literature has been on possible narrow perspectives that adolescents bring to their performances, a narrow perspective being a view of the performance which causes performers to neglect other valued parts of their lives and leaves little acceptance for less than optimal performance. Two such narrow perspectives are perfectionism and athletic identity predominance (or

unidimensionalism). The two perspectives will be discussed in detail, describing both the benefits and risks of such perspectives. Following this exploration, studies on adolescent sources of stress and burnout reveal further elements of adolescent performers' perspectives. It is important to note that researchers investigating these perspectives have not used the term *perspective* in their studies. Due to the lack of research investigating adolescent perspectives, a search of adolescent performance literature involved looking for studies that addressed the meaning or value attached to the performance or studies that hint at how adolescent performers perceive their performance experience.

Perfectionism.

The first perspective that adolescents bring to their performance is the idea of perfectionism. Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr (1996) found that perfectionism plays an important role in predicting burnout in competitive junior tennis players. Perfectionism is defined as a tendency to set excessively high standards, engage in overly critical self-evaluations, and base one's self-esteem on achieving performance goals (Frost & Henderson, 1991; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). The investigators used the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) to measure the level of perfectionism. The MPS was shown to have good internal consistency and convergent validity. The results indicate that, in comparison to non-burnouts, the burnout players were higher on perceived parental criticism and expectations and experienced greater concern over mistakes. It appears that carrying the perfectionist perspective into a performance may be influenced by the adolescent performers' parents, forcing the individual to strive for perfection. In addition, the perfectionist perspective causes young performers to view mistakes as a cause for great concern, rather than seeing mistakes as a learning opportunity or chance to improve.

Hall, Kerr, and Matthews (1998) also illustrate the perfectionism perspective in a group of 119 high school runners. Specifically, Hall et al. (1998) show that overall perfectionism was a consistent, significant predictor of cognitive anxiety. Further analysis showed that concern about making mistakes was a key contributor to cognitive anxiety. Both the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 were shown to be valid and reliable. Clearly, the perfectionism perspective can have negative effects on sport participation, leading to increased levels of anxiety (Hall et al., 1998), burnout, or even causing individuals to cease participation (Gould, et al., 1996a).

The perfectionism perspective is also present in actors/musicians, these performers expecting “flawless technique” (Hays, 2002, p. 300). Opinions from judges and critiques from instructors centre on perfection, rather than on aesthetics (Hays, 2002). As a result, both developing and experienced performers cannot help but develop a perfectionist perspective in their own view of performing. Satisfaction with a performance, if the criteria for satisfaction is based on perfection, may be a rare experience. There are favourable and not so favourable results associated with the perfectionism perspective. On the one hand, carrying a perspective of wanting to be perfect promotes intense commitment and a constant striving for excellence. On the other hand, the perfectionist perspective leaves performers open to disappointment and stress stemming from any mistakes, losses, or other obstacles – “if one’s focus is too narrow, too intense, or too prolonged at too early an age, the likelihood of burnout increases dramatically” (Fiegley, 1984, p. 112). In addition to increasing the likelihood of burnout (Fiegley, 1984; Gould et al., 1996a; Hall et al., 1998), perfectionism has a tendency to cause stress and depression because the performer is seldom pleased by improvements and achievements (Anshel, et al., 2001). The key to combating the

unfavourable outcomes of the perfectionist perspective is not to get these performers to limit their strong commitment, but to bring balance and perspective into their lives (Shank, 1983).

The concept of perfectionism in adolescent performers links to the concept of perspective. Perspective centers around the different values and meanings individuals attach to their performances (Brown et al., 2001). What the studies on adolescent perfectionism illustrate is that many young performers put much value on trying to be perfect in their performances, a vision that is not only unrealistic but nearly impossible. As a result, they experience great concern over making mistakes. If there is constant concern over making mistakes, an individual may have a hard time staying meaningfully engaged in one's performance. Having the perspective that one has to be perfect every time may inhibit the individual from enjoying the experience, the individual focusing solely on the outcome of the performance rather than the total experience. Despite the evidence from the perfectionism studies that adolescents place great meaning and value on their performances, it is unclear what other possible elements of perspective make up adolescents' view of the performance.

One-dimensional identity formation.

In addition to taking a perfectionist perspective into their performance, adolescent performers may also become so absorbed in their performance experience that they begin to live unbalanced lives, form their identity solely around that of being a performer, and conceptualize a one-dimensional view of themselves. In other words, they are performers, not people who also perform. Within the performance environment, the demands placed on developing performers lead them to view their performance and their lives from a narrow perspective. Hughes and Coakley (1991) discuss dangers of over-conforming to the sport ethic, the sport ethic referring to what performers use as criteria

to decide who is a real athlete. The first criteria involves making sacrifices for The Game. Athletes must commit to the performance by putting The Game above all their other interests. Though commitment is essential to performance excellence (Orlick, 2000), the idea of putting the performance above all other interests, including the need for physical rest and mental rejuvenation away from sport, could threaten not only an individual's performance but an individual's well being. Hughes and Coakley (1991) paint a picture of expectations placed on athletes, a picture that indicates that the sport culture promotes a unidimensional identity formation and lack of perspective:

Throughout their lives, athletes have heard again and again of the need to be dedicated, to set goals, to persevere until goals are achieved, to define adversity as a challenge, and to be willing to make sacrifices and subjugate other experiences generally associated with 'growing up' all for the sake of their quest to become all they can be in sport. (p. 308)

Conditioning of athletes in the manner described by Hughes and Coakley (1991) may cause these performers to sacrifice their development in all other areas of life, ultimately jeopardizing their enjoyment of pursuits and ability to reach their potential inside and out of their performance domain.

Previous research indicates that the ability to maintain balance for developing performers can be a daunting task with unpleasant consequences. Student-athletes face many challenges including balancing academia with their performance, being isolated from many social activities, managing success or failure, maintaining exceptional health in order to avoid injury, and continuing to find satisfaction after their sporting careers cease (Parham, 1993). Even the most determined student-athletes have difficulty

maintaining balance. Time constraints placed on individuals by the performance can limit performers' abilities to give energy to academics and to nurture friendships, student-athletes reporting feelings of estrangement in relation to social activities (Parham, 1993). Those athletes, however, who sought balance and found enjoyment in their performance pursuits "without allowing them to dominate all or most of their existence," (Parham, 1993, 421) responded to everyday distress more effectively.

Those who have balance reap the benefits but it appears that far too many developing performers (as illustrated from research on athletic identity and unidimensionalism) are leading imbalanced lives, threatening their own self-worth. Individuals with a strong athletic identity understand and organize their world based on how events influence their athletic functioning (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). P. Adler and P.A. Adler (1987) studied role conflict in a Division I men's college basketball program, more specifically investigating the conflict between the performers roles as students and as athletes. Balancing both roles proved extremely difficult for these performers and eventually, the athletic role became the predominate identity.

Seeing one's world solely through an "athletic lens" indicates the relative importance some performers attach to their experience; continually basing one's actions and decisions on how they will affect one's athletic functioning helps strengthen commitment to performance objectives. Having a strong athletic identity can positively affect athletic performance, including increased commitment (Danish, 1983; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), but the potential risks for individuals who identify strongly with their athletic role include a threat to one's well-being. Attaching too much importance to the event has consequences. Brewer et al. (1993) state that showing incompetence in an area of high perceived importance can ultimately threaten one's self-worth because "[w]hen the athlete lacks other sources of self-worth and self-identification, it is hypothesized that

there is an increased risk for emotional disturbance” (Brewer et al., 1993). Pearson and Petitpas (1990) illustrate that the emotional disturbance resulting from a strong athletic identity is in relation to not being selected for a team, and coping with injury and retirement. When faced with such obstacles, if a performer could approach the performance as just one element of themselves and be able to place the performance in the context of their entire lives, the level of emotional disturbance would greatly decrease.

Other performance literature reveals further risks of athlete identity and unidimensionalism, illustrating that performers can be prone to carrying a narrow perspective into their performances. A performer whose identity is linked so intimately to performance success, becomes ultimately controlled by the demands of the sport and is prompted to participate in self-destructive behaviors (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Continually seeking to demonstrate worthiness to others and continuing to sacrifice and jeopardize outside interests (their relationships with family, work responsibilities, and physical health) contribute to a narrow identity formation in adolescent and adult performers (Ewald & Jiobu, 1985; Hughes & Coakley, 1991).

The risks of athletic identity appear particularly dangerous for student-athletes. Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) examined the self-identity/career maturity relationship among 124 intercollegiate student-athletes in a NCAA Division I school. They found that identifying strongly with the athletic role and failing to develop other roles were associated with delayed career development. Clearly, the negative affect of an exclusive athletic identity may go beyond acute emotional disturbance to having lasting effects on individuals, namely, inhibiting former student-athletes from pursuing career goals in the future. Some athletes may hesitate to begin planning for other possible careers because such an act would illustrate that they are not fully committed to their

performance objectives and that they may doubt their ability to play professionally (Murphy, et al., 1996). The inability to balance one's performance with other life pursuits limits the future life opportunities these developing performers have. Once the performance is gone, they leave themselves with few opportunities.

Members of the performing arts community are also susceptible to formation of a one-dimensional identity. Hays (2002) discusses identity foreclosure as a grave risk for developing performers in the performing arts. The idea of identity foreclosure, linked intimately to athletic identity formation, involves committing to one role while ceasing to investigate other roles (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Hays (2002) states that the hours of hardwork, discipline, and focus on a "single-minded goal" required by developing musicians can have great risks, including identity foreclosure. The performance can become such a key part of their lives that it takes on more and more meaning and, if setbacks occur, the performer could start to question their abilities, confidence, and own self-worth.

Research on unidimensionalism, a term synonymous with athletic identity formation, provides further evidence of the narrow perspective that some adolescents carry into their performances and into their lives. Unidimensional identities among sport participants are identities where participants define themselves solely as athletes (Coakley, 1992; Raedeke, 1997). Coakley (1992), in his conceptualization of burnout as a social problem, explains that the social organization of sport may constrain identity development during adolescence and prevent young athletes from having meaningful control over their lives.

Coakley (1992) interviewed 15 people (age 15-19) identified as burnout cases. The structure of the conversations were informal, the conversations varying from person to person depending upon the participants' experiences and what the investigator learned

from each conversation. Coakley (1992) concluded that one reason why participants left competitive sport was because life experiences were constricted due to intense participation. The inability to pursue non-sport roles, identities, and activities caused their identity to be foreclosed, ultimately resulting in the development of a unidimensional self-concept. The unidimensional identity “constrains sport participants into the role of an athlete because their senses of self are based exclusively on being athletes” (Raedeke, 1997, p. 400). With such a narrow conception of self, obstacles – including making mistakes, losing, and injury – can not only negatively affect an individual’s view of herself as a performer but as a human being.

Coakley’s (1992) study shows the possibility that adolescent performers may lack a broad approach or perspective. Other life experiences are neglected and a narrow perspective may develop, due to the continual pattern of the performance as the sole emphasis in the adolescent’s life. Having a sense of perspective involves respecting all aspects of one’s life (Brown, et al., 2001). However, Coakley’s (1992) study illustrates that adolescent athletes may not be respecting all of these aspects. They begin to develop a unidimensional view of themselves, causing them to eventually leave competitive sport. Coakley’s (1992) study hints at the fact that adolescent performers do attach a tremendous amount of meaning and value to their performance, focusing a majority of their time and energy towards performing. However, just because they focus much time on the performance does not explain what importance these adolescents attach to their performance or how the performance fits into the rest of their lives. Coakley (1992) recognizes the importance of asking adolescent performers questions about why they participate in sport and how sport is tied to the rest of their lives - getting adolescents to assess their sport participation may help to prevent negative consequences such as burnout. Before performers can be assisted in getting the most out of their performance

experience, we should first gain insight into what perspective - what meaning and value - adolescents attach to their performance in the context of their lives.

Stress and burnout.

Investigation into the adolescent stress and burnout literature provides insight into other possible elements comprising adolescent's perspectives. Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza's (1991) in-depth study of sources of stress in former elite figure skaters gives further illustration that adolescent perspectives can be detrimental to themselves and to their performance. Participants had worries about competition, including not wanting to let others down if they performed poorly and worrying about what others think and say. If they experienced competitive failure, some felt that all the work and effort was not worth it and they had displeasure with themselves. Scanlan et al.'s (1991) study gives further indications of the meanings and values adolescents attach to their performances. There were worries about competition indicating that the performances had important meaning to the adolescents, although it is unclear exactly what meaning the adolescents attached to the performance. Worries about letting others down or about what others would think and say indicates that the adolescents in the study see the performance as ultimately meaning an opportunity to prove themselves to others. Results also indicate that some adolescents value winning over all else and, when unsuccessful, they saw the experience as a waste of time with little reward. Scanlan et al.'s (1991) study indicates that some of the former elite figure skaters felt that they missed social opportunities/maturational experiences due to the time commitment, some of the participants even feeling that they were losing their sense of self-worth/identity, a finding that closely relates to Coakley's (1992) idea of sport as constraining identity development.

Studies on adolescent burnout also contribute to determining what elements comprise the perspective adolescents bring to their performance domain, specifically about how adolescents can stay meaningfully engaged in their performance. Gould, Tuffey, Udry, and Loehr (1996) investigated burnout in 10 junior tennis players, assessing their reasons for burning out, as well as identifying mental and physical characteristics of burnout. Of particular interest, these burned out tennis players were asked to give advice to other competitive tennis players to follow in order to avoid burnout. Three suggestions were tied closely to bringing a sense of perspective to sport: 1) you should not concentrate all your effort on tennis 2) learn to have a balance in your life 3) remember why you are playing - for fun (Gould, et al., 1996b). The advice of not concentrating one's effort solely on the performance and learning to have balance, link to the idea of perspective, specifically to the concept of respecting all aspects one's life and keeping the most valuable aspects of one's life at the forefront (Brown et al., 2001). Having valuable and meaningful experiences where having fun is of central importance seems also to be a key element of carrying a sense of perspective. However, these are just elements of perspective that burnout players *suggest* to other competitive players - it is unclear what perspective adolescents *actually* bring to their performance and to their lives.

The literature on adult performers indicates that these performers carry many unique elements in their perspectives, elements that ultimately help them to perform in and out of their performance domain. An investigation of literature in adolescent performance literature offers some insight into the elements of perspective that they bring to their performance and to their lives. Although ideas of perfectionism, one-dimensionalism identity formation, a sole emphasis on winning, learning to have balance, and participating for fun are all *possible* elements of perspective that adolescents bring to

their performance and to their lives, there is currently no research specifically addressing the idea of adolescents' perspective. Further exploration into the lives of adolescents who seem to cope and thrive both in and out of their performance domain will help further explore adolescent perspectives. The adolescents in this study were identified as top performers who also seemed to have it all together. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to determine what are the elements that characterize the perspectives these particular adolescents bring to their performance.

CHAPTER III

Method

Qualitative Method

The main focus of the study was to determine what elements encompass the performance perspective of these adolescents. A qualitative method was chosen to help clarify the elements of the adolescents' perspectives because qualitative interviewing helps to hear the meanings, interpretations, and understandings of the participants' world (Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S., 1995). The researcher aimed not to generalize results to all adolescent performers, but to provide a thick description of the participants' perspective elements. The qualitative method was essential in the description process. The researcher obtained a thick description of perspective and its elements through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, Brown's et al.'s (2001) definition of perspective guided the conceptual framework of the research.

Participants

The population for the study was students attending a private school in central Canada. There were 7 athletes (4 female, 3 male) and 3 musicians (1 female, 2 male) for a total of 10 student-performers. There were 4 participants 17 years of age, 5 participants 18 years of age, and 1 participant 19 years of age. The athletes represented the sports of golf, football, rugby, basketball, and soccer. The musicians represented the performance areas of vocals, cello, alto sax, and chamber choir.

The school setting.

A performer's perspective is greatly influenced by his or her environment and his or her experience in this environment. Due to the uniqueness of this private school, it is important to describe the school in some detail. The majority of students come from

upper-middle class families, with tuition fees exceeding \$10,000 per year. There are over 70 full-time and part-time teachers overseeing 645 students, making for small class sizes. The staff challenges each of the students to attain high standards inside and outside the classroom, with the goal of preparing students to succeed at university and in life. Indeed, a high percentage of students go on to study at university. The school exposes students to a range of learning experiences through culture, athletics, social development, and community service. Due to the high demands and challenges to perform inside and out of the classroom, the researcher felt that the setting would be an ideal place to view the concept of perspective.

Selecting participants.

The researcher asked the athletic director and music director to identify students who excel in a performance domain (sport or music) and also seem to have it all together. After the students had been identified, a discussion with the athletic director revealed what performance criteria and academic criteria the participants met. The performers were among the top athletes and musicians in the school and among the top performers in the province. All participants aspired to perform at the next level, wanting to continue their performance careers after graduation from the private school. Nine out of ten participants had an academic average of 85% or above, with ten out of ten having an average of 75% or above. Each participant will receive acceptance from all of their top 5 choices of universities. The acceptance rating is phenomenal considering that the applications are during a double-cohort year in which both grade 12 and grade 13 students, province wide, will be graduating from the secondary level. The double cohort makes acceptance to a university that much more challenging and being able to choose from one's first five choices speaks to the abilities of these individuals. All ten

participants were recognized as leaders within their performance environment and also within the school environment.

In brief, having it all together entailed excelling in at least two performance areas – academics and athletics or music – and respecting other aspects of their life, including their need for family, friends, and leisure time. A further indication of how the participants “have it all together” was revealed in how they viewed their performance domain in the context of their lives. These views or perspective elements are discussed in the results section.

A look at some of these participants’ individual accomplishments indicates the uniqueness of the group. One participant had competed in and won two American Junior Golf Association events, events comprised of the best young golfers in the United States and Canada. She was the only student at the private school on full scholarship and had accepted a full athletic scholarship to a prestigious Division I university in the United States for the upcoming year. Another participant had been selected as a member of the National Junior Women’s Rugby Team. Three of the female participants were members of provincial championship teams, with one of these three being a member of two provincial championship teams. The athletic director stated that, with only 165 girls in the school, to have two championship teams indicates the strength of the athletic abilities at the school. Two of the male participants led their team to a provincial championship final. One of the male participants played for the National Youth Orchestra, while another received a scholarship to one of the top post-secondary schools for music in Canada.

The sampling was purposeful because the participants were selected based on their performance experiences, academic standing, and the fact that they had it all together. Purposeful sampling is a research strategy in which specific people are chosen

in order to access information that could not be obtained by other sampling techniques (Maxwell, 1996).

Once the directors identified the participants, the athletic director approached the students and asked them if they would be interested in participating in two interviews regarding their performance experiences. The researcher then approached those who were willing to participate to set up interview times that were convenient to the participants. The researcher conducted interviews at the school in the morning (prior to the beginning of class) or during a period in which the participant had no class scheduled.

Data Collection

The interview guide (See Appendix A) was developed based on input from four student-performers in a pilot study and the thesis supervisor who has experience interviewing hundreds of elite performers. The researcher collected data via semi-structured interviews. The interviews were semi-structured because they contained elements of both structured and unstructured interviews. The questions were formulated ahead of time, one feature of a structured interview (Cote, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). However, with the exception of the first question (which was always the initial question in the first interview), questions were not necessarily asked in the same order, and the interviews were concerned with unique and individual viewpoints, two features of an unstructured interview (Cote et al., 1995). The semi-structured interview gave the researcher an opportunity to ask participants to clarify or expand upon their answers, as well as a chance to ask additional questions based on the interviewees' responses.

The researcher was the sole interviewer, for each of the two, one-on-one Interviews, both of which were tape recorded for further analysis. For the sake of convenience to the participants as well as to ensure a comfortable atmosphere, interviews

took place in an unoccupied classroom or a study room in the school library. The first interview lasted from 45 minutes to 75 minutes. Prior to the start of the first interview, the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the research, stating that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained at all times, and each participant had the right to opt out of the interview process at any time (See Appendix B for Information Sheet/Consent Form). The researcher addressed any participant comments or questions.

To allow time for transcription and initial analysis, the second interview took place at least 2 weeks after the initial interview. In the second interview, lasting from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, the researcher and the participant reviewed the transcript from the first interview, with the researcher asking questions to clarify excerpts where the researcher felt the meaning was in doubt. The researcher then asked participants whether or not they agreed with possible perspective elements that emerged from analysis of the first interview. The researcher provided examples to the participant of excerpts coded under a particular element of perspective. Each participant, in response to the researcher's probe questions, then provided either clarification or further detail on these elements. The second interview also gave the researcher the opportunity to ask any questions from the interview guide that were not addressed in the first interview. The structure of the second interview, therefore, helped provide clarification and further detail on the elements of these adolescent perspectives.

Data Analysis

All interviews – 20 in total - were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were then analyzed inductively. In the analysis, the researcher classified units of information based on categories that emerged from the interviews themselves. The researcher organized the units of information using QSR Nudist Vivo, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program. In Nudist Vivo language, the

units are “nodes.” As interviews continued to be conducted and analyzed, the researcher created some new nodes or grouped others, depending on evolving interpretations.

Trustworthiness

The sampling was based on the selection of both the athletic director and music director at the private school. Both individuals were knowledgeable of the student/performers and therefore were left to recommend the participants they felt would be suitable for such a study.

A pilot study – involving 4 participants who the athletic director identified as top performers who had it all together - was conducted in order to ensure that the interview guide would help effectively capture the perspective elements of the participants. Each of the four participants took part in a 60 minute interview. First, the pilot study helped determine whether the participants understood the questions and enabled the researcher to determine the most effective way to ask particular questions. Second, the pilot study helped to ensure that all relevant questions were addressed in the actual data collection process. The pilot study gave the researcher the opportunity to add any relevant questions that were previously left out.

In the collection and analysis of the data, to establish credibility, the researcher used member checking to ensure that there was a correspondence between the participants' viewpoint and how the researcher talked about their viewpoint. The researcher reviewed the transcription of the first interview with the participant, to clarify any places where participant meaning was in question. The clarification helped prevent any misunderstandings of the transcription by the researcher. Also, the researcher, after analyzing the first interview, presented coded nodes to each participant to ensure that the node fit as an element of his or her perspective. The check helped the researcher to validate elements, as well as to gather more detail regarding the various elements.

When conducting qualitative interviews, the researcher is the primary research tool. Illustrating the trustworthiness of the data collector, therefore, is of utmost importance. First, the researcher has been trained in qualitative research through graduate course work. Through the course work, the researcher conducted a series of interviews as part of group projects, improving his ability to make the participant feel comfortable, to listen carefully, and to ask appropriate probe questions.

The researcher also recognizes the importance of establishing a good relationship with each participant, in order to conduct meaningful interviews. H.J. Rubin and I.S. Rubin (1995) outline several steps that the researcher followed in order to help facilitate a good relationship. The researcher created a familiar and relaxed environment by first telling each interviewee that there are no right answers, that he was simply interested in their experience in their performance domain. The researcher began each interview by giving participants bottled water to show appreciation for their time and effort and to help them feel more comfortable. Each interview began by asking participants to discuss their previous performance involvement, a question felt to be a non-threatening and deemed a pleasurable way to begin. The researcher showed understanding by paraphrasing their responses and asking clarifying questions in order to confirm that he understood their feelings. Both factual and emotional understanding help ensure a meaningful interview process (Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S., 1995). Next, asking probe questions based on the participants' initial responses helped encourage the participants to provide a detailed account of their experiences. Finally, the researcher thanked each participant for taking time to share their experiences.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The elements of perspective for these adolescent performers are presented in such a way to fully capture their own words, thoughts, and feelings on performing. There were six main elements that characterized the adolescents' perspective. The six elements are balanced approach perspective, people perspective, learning and improving perspective, positive perspective, passion perspective, and complete focus perspective. Four of the six elements have sub-elements. The elements and their sub elements can be seen in Figure 1. A description of the six elements and their sub-elements, with supporting quotes, follows below.

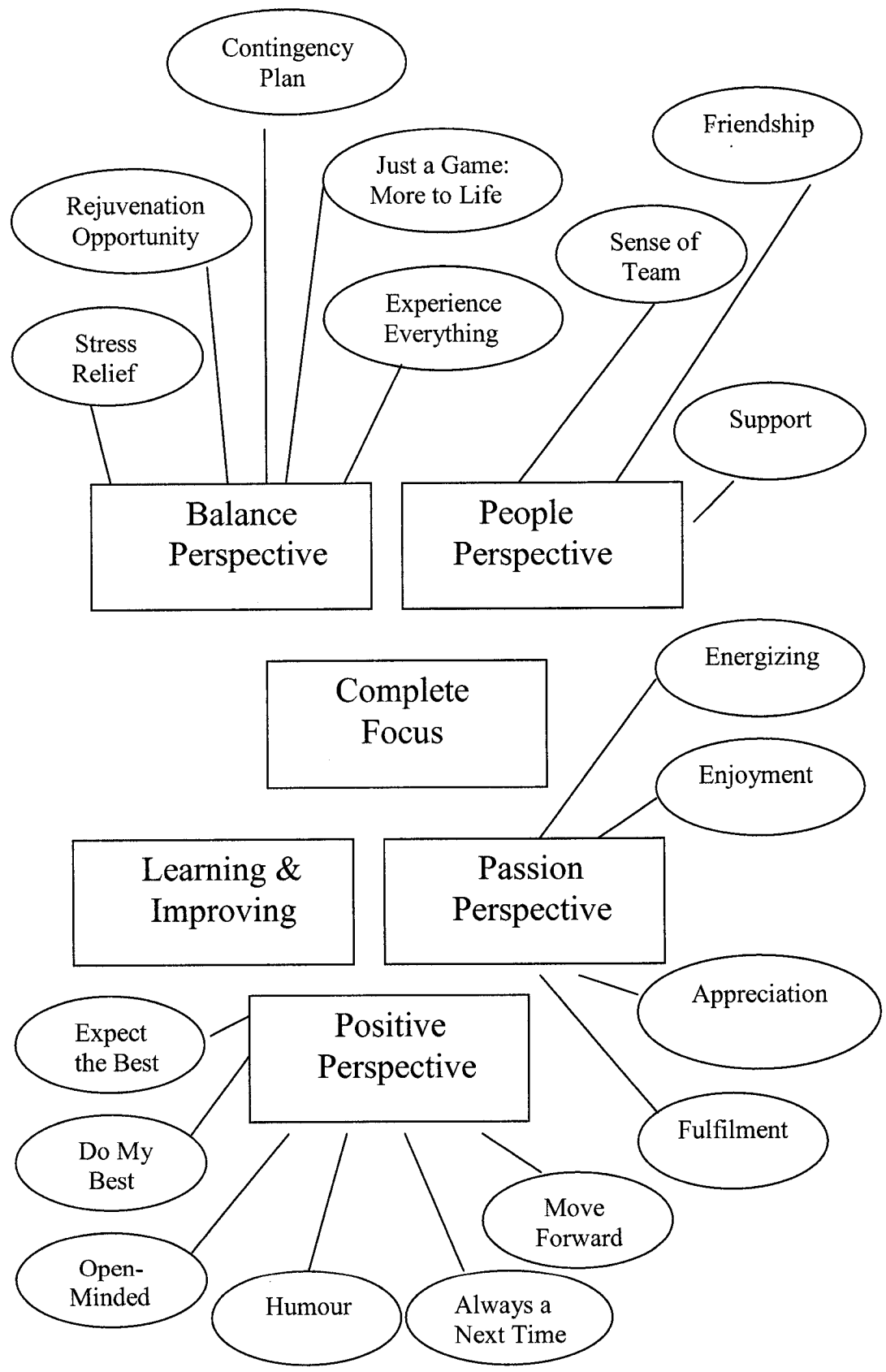


Figure 1. The elements of adolescent perspective.

Balanced Approach

The first element of perspective involves having a balanced approach to performing. All ten participants spoke of having many things in their lives that are important to them, including the performance itself. They discussed the strong value they placed on family and friends. Education was of utmost important to these individuals and choosing a strong academically centered university for future study was their focus. Participants were involved in a number of other activities including other sporting activities and community involvement. The performers spoke about the importance of balance and setting priorities. One participant explains:

I think balance is important....Like balancing your school and your social life and your family and your sports....Then you go home [after practice] and you have two or three hours of homework. So you have to just balance it out. And put your priorities first, whether it's sports or school or your family. (#2)

The participants describe themselves not just as performers but individuals with many facets to their lives. When asked if being a performer was their sole identity, one participant states, "No. Of course not. But I do think it's become part of who I am. I think it's just too important to me not to become part of who I am. And I don't mind that at all" (#8). These performers clearly pursue other interests than the performance itself, but the performance is extremely important to them. One participant places a value on performing in relation to his other life priorities: "I'd say it holds equal ground with them [the other priorities], which is pretty big" (#6). There is a struggle at times to maintain a balanced approach, as one participant reveals when he discusses the value he places on different parts of his life:

Well, obviously in the forefront is family and friendships and so forth. But I find myself realizing that I've had to make a lot of sacrifices in the friend area, in most relationships, because of the music. So there's been some sacrifices for the music. And I don't regret that....You have to be selfish in many ways to succeed in music. For awhile you've really got to be, not selfish in a bad way, but you just have to be really into what you want to do because you get that drive and you need to be pretty focused. (#9)

Not only did all ten participants carry a sense of balance into their lives and into their performance, they seemed to benefit from the balance in one or more ways. The benefits of balance are outlined below.

Stress relief.

Seven of ten performers discussed their performance experience as a way to relieve stress. They discuss their performance as a release or escape from their regular lives. Because of the performance, they are able to take their mind off everyday worries and pressures. One participant explains how the performance domain frees her mind from other thoughts:

Well, if I'm stressed out in school...you get into the gym. And as I said before, you don't think about those other things that are going on. And you can just get out and play. And even if I'm stressed, like even outside of basketball time, like school's hectic or whatever, I could just go to the gym by myself and just play around. And it just sort of takes your mind off whatever else you're thinking of.
(#5)

For another, the performance is an escape from life stress, but remarks that the escape is only temporary:

It's kind of an escape. But, there's been times where playing football, I'll get this escape. I'll get the release. And then at the end of the game, when it's all over, it's like the real world comes back and you can feel the stress return. It's just like oh shit, I've got to do this for tomorrow. (#4)

Besides providing an escape from life, the performance actually helps them in dealing with everyday frustrations. They explain that frustrations in their life can build up, frustrations surrounding school, friends, and family. The performance gives them a forum to let out their energies. They leave the performance with a feeling of calmness and now feel more ready to face the everyday. For some sport performers, the physical contact involved allows them to release any aggressiveness they are feeling, a performer remarking that, "I guess you relieve some of that stress when you hit somebody. [Laughs]. It helps, yeah" (#1). Another performer explains that the performance can bring happiness when life is frustrating and this happiness carries over from the performance into his life:

When you're feeling down or anything like that, you go to the soccer field. You have a good game. Everything sort of disappears again and you're happy again. It's just sort of, if you're angry or anything and you just go out there and take your frustrations out. (#6)

One musician explains that the stress relief provided by the performance is therapeutic in nature, stating that,

A lot of people play music to de-stress, or if they're upset, they go to a piano and sit down and play. And I think music is very therapeutic in that way. And it's important to have something like that. (#8)

The performance brings balance to these individuals' lives. Without the balance between the performance and the events of everyday, they would have difficulty relieving stress. The performance acts as a stress relief by helping them release from the everyday and by lessening frustrations in their day to day lives.

Opportunity to rejuvenate.

Five out of ten participants explain that leading a balanced life gives them a chance to rejuvenate and return fresh to the performance. Just as performing offers a relief from the everyday, the everyday events can also offer a release from the performance: "Just like soccer is a release from regular life, I think you need a release from soccer too. You can't work hard all the time. You've got to go out with your friends and got to have some fun" (#6). The performers explain that if all they do is practice and perform, they start to lose the fun in performing and it becomes too much like a job. Without balance, they start to lose their passion for performing. One participant explains how the fun diminishes without balance: "So I think you need balance. If you don't have a balance...there's so many people that do that. They go to the course. They don't have fun at the course" (#10).

Having a balance between the performance and outside priorities helps because these outside interests take their mind off the performance. Having the outside interests prevents the individuals from being over-consumed with the performance and ultimately prevents feelings of burnout. One participant explains:

I think you'd get sick of it [the performance] if that was the only thing you were ever doing or ever thinking about. Like I don't even really think about it during the days and stuff when I'm at school or when I'm sitting at home watching a movie or anything. That's my other time....It [the balance] keeps yourself refreshed...if you're only focusing on just one thing and you don't have balance then you'll just burnout. (#5)

Another participant states that being involved in school helps prevent placing too much emphasis on performing:

Sometimes school even helps to kind of balance. To put things in reality. If you have other work you're doing besides music, it kind of takes away from your focus on that...And other performances go smoother, go better because I have school work there to kind of take away my emphasis away. (#7)

Contingency plan.

Having balance, for four out the ten participants, represented focusing on getting a sound education, in case their performance pursuits did not work out as planned. Education enabled them to have a contingency or back-up plan in case of a career ending injury or lack of success at higher performance levels. The participants recognized the danger of getting caught up in one aspect of their lives and the importance of balance in keeping many career opportunities available. One participant emphasizes how education helps to keep her options open:

I kind of have ideas of what I want to do. But I mean it's [the performance] one part of my life I guess. It's just one little thing. There's so many things I can do. And if this one thing that I've decided to do doesn't work out, there's so many

other things I can do. There's endless opportunity....But I think I realize that I'm really fortunate to live in North America and be going to a school where I can get such a good education. (#10)

Another performer explains that education is important because there is life after the performance is over: "If I had the opportunity to drop school altogether, I probably wouldn't take it just because I know that I would be kicking myself in the ass as for when my football is over because you can't play football for ever" (#4). Finally, one performer emphasizes how education gives him essential grounding for life and for the performance:

I've often said, talking to the family, why haven't we gone off and try and do this professionally? And it all comes back to get the grounding. Because that is the most important thing you can do, far beyond the music. Because it [the performance] can be very powerful in that sense and you can get lost in it...I mean, many people have done it and many people have been successful so I can't comment on their experience. I only know from my own experience now that, well, I can see that having not had this grounding, I wouldn't be where I am today....Music is such an expression thing. And I've grown intellectually I think through education and my ability now to express to what I'm feeling. (#9)

Without a sense of balance, without emphasizing other areas of their lives besides the performance, these performers felt they would limit their future opportunities and ultimately deter their ability to develop.

Just a game – more to life.

All ten participants point out that ultimately they see their performance as just a game and that there is more to life than the performance itself. They value the performance but state that others involved may place too much value on performing. As a result of their balanced approach, the participants see the performance as part of their lives as a whole and they are able to place the performance within the context of their entire lives, as one participant explains: “I enjoy it [the performance] and it’s a big part of my life but it’s not the only part. And it’s just a game in reality” (#6). Furthermore, though they would be disappointed, the performers believed that it would not be the end of the world if their performance pursuits did not work out because, as one participant notes, “On the big scheme of things, golfing isn’t life.” One musician talks about taking a step back from the performance and realizing his position in the world:

It might help me if I was less serious in the performance and kind of took a step back and put his whole performance in perspective, in terms of what it’s going to mean. That’s what my teacher keeps telling me, ‘Just put this in perspective. It’s not that big of a deal. You’re just playing in front of a few people here. And it’s not going to make or break your music career.’ So you’re kind of contextualizing the performance in your life. I mean it’s just one performance. It’s not that big of a deal. You’re kind of looking at the other people around. You kind of look at the world around you and realize that you’re not the most unprivileged kid. You don’t have the most stressful position in the world right now. You’ve got to kind of get back to reality. Even if you mess up, so what? There’s people that are starving. I mean, it’s not the end of the world basically. (#7)

All the participants not only carried the view that the performance is just a game and there is more to life, they found the view was advantageous for two main reasons. First, the view helped them to experience less stress in the performance. Second, the view helped them to overcome performance obstacles.

Realizing that it that is just a game prevents these adolescents from getting too caught up in the performance and placing excessive pressure on themselves. The view helps them to decrease their worry and increase their ability to relax, freeing them to enjoy the performance. One participant explains how she maintained calm in an important tournament:

I went to Florida this December and I played with a bunch of girls and I was having a ball of a time because I'm not in the snow or anything – I'm down south. All these girls put so much pressure on themselves. And, obviously, I had pressure on myself because I had to go down there. And then there is a lot of added pressure but, I mean, I kind of put that into perspective. I remember saying to them, I'm like, 'Heck. There is so many feet of snow where I come from and it's hot out right now. I'm wearing shorts. Like, C'mon.' I'm just having a ball of a time. I remember I hit one kind of to the left and I'm like, 'No big deal.' And the girls are like, 'I can't believe you just said that,' because it was a really tight competition. I was just whatever. (#10)

The participant ended up winning the tournament in Florida, saying that she finds she plays better when she is having a good time.

Taking the approach that there is more to life than the performance also helps participants in over-coming obstacles, such as a poor performance or suffering a defeat. The participants realize that it's just a game and that they are going to get another chance

to make good on previous outcomes. They are able to deal with the pressures of overcoming obstacles because they see the big picture. One participant explains how she perceives the performance situation:

You'll see people [players] who are high maintenance and are like, 'Oh my god Coach! What am I going to do?' I hate that because it's just a game in the end. No matter what you say. Like it's not going to matter twenty years from now. It's just a game. So I think it's just really important to...you can't let little things bother you in life, especially in sports. Because if you do, it's not going to help you to perform to your best level possible. (#2)

Another participant stresses the importance of not taking losing to heart:

It's a game. You've got to realize that. [Laughs]. I mean, if you lose, it feels bad but it's not the end of the world. Nothing's going to happen. You'll see a lot of people who take it too harshly. To be a good player, I guess you sort of have to care but be able to walk away from it. (#6)

In order to place the performance in the context of one's entire life, there must be other facets to one's life. Clearly, if these participants did not have a balanced approach to performing, they would have difficulty seeing that the performance is just a game and there is more to life for them.

It is important to note that participants who do view their performance as just a game also admit that, at the same time, the performance is a little more than just a game. As one participant states, "I wouldn't say that it's only a game but it's not life either" (#4). One participant explains that "there is a whole range of very emotional ties to the sport" (#3). As will be evident later on in the results section, each participant is

extremely passionate about their performance. On the other side of the spectrum is the view that the performance is just a game. In brief, having the view that the performance is just a game is just part of their view on the performance, not their sole view. The participants state that having the sole view that the performance is just a game and there is more to life would not be an optimal performance perspective because a certain level of seriousness is necessary to train and perform optimally.

Experience Everything.

A final advantage that participants mentioned in regards to taking a balanced approach to the performance is the benefit of leaving themselves open to a vast array of experiences outside of their performance domain. Seven out of ten participants explain that it is important for them to develop other areas of themselves and have life experiences independent of their experiences as performers. Life experiences mentioned by performers included those experiences in school, with friends, with family, with work, and with other activities outside of the performance domain. They believe that these experiences are important because they are part of fully living, and they would not want to take these experiences away. They see great experiences and great opportunities in each area of their lives. One participant explains that the different activities in her life help to keep life interesting:

I need to have different activities in my life to keep me stimulated. Because I think otherwise, I get into the fear of stagnation and just remaining in one place. Moving forward is really important and I always want to be moving forward throughout my life. So having the balance of different activities will keep me diverse and more open-minded I think and with the ability to move forward.

Because you can always pick up a new activity or drop one or things kind of just

come to an end. So you have to be willing to just incorporate lots of different experiences into your life so as to be able to move forward and be able, for me, to be fulfilled. (#8)

Still others discuss having a “total package” of experiences, both in and out of the performance domain. Two participants explain that it is important to be balanced because, within each facet of their lives, there is opportunity:

I think it's [balance] is important for me because you get a lot of chances in each aspect of life. Like with your friends, you have all the good memories and the fun times. And with sports you get the experiences and the successes. And with school, you get experience and success. I've had so many opportunities at this school. Going away on trips and vacations and experiencing things. It's the same thing with sports. You get to travel and experience new cultures and new people. (#2)

A musician shares similar sentiments, illustrating that with a wide range of opportunities and experiences comes a better ability to cope, regardless of the profession:

The more opportunities you are exposed to, the more worldly you can be and the better you can cope, not only in the music standpoint but I think in lifestyle. Especially now, being that careers are that much shorter and simple. So by having that wide range of experience, you can bring that into whatever craft you choose. And again, not being so focused on one thing. And focus is important when you're going to record an album or perform. But not be so focused that you disregard other elements. And you lose track of the rest of the world and the rest of what's important. (#9)

Clearly, these participants want a full spectrum of life experience and seek out opportunities for themselves.

Furthermore, the participants felt that their experience outside of the performance helped actually helped them in the performance itself. One participant explains how focusing on family, as well as on his performance, ultimately helped his performance:

You've got to have those other things there to help you play well. Like seeing my dad on the sidelines, telling me do this instead of that or shake it off. That's all important. And having my family come out and even watch the game means a lot to me and that. They like watching me play. I guess if I didn't spend as much time with my family, they wouldn't care as much to come out to my games or support me. (#1)

Another participant explains that time with friends indirectly helps the performance:

You know, having friends, going out, doing dumb things. They [the experiences with friends] might not be the smartest things to help you play golf but probably, in the long run, they are because you've experienced that. So, it's kind of helped your golfing. It may not seem like it, but I think it probably does....I guess you're just more open-minded. (#10)

Three participants discuss how they apply their learning in school to their performance domain. One participant explains that the communication skills and determination necessary to be successful in school could be taken and applied to her performance. Another participant states that the questioning nature of academia can be related to her performance:

It [school] makes you kind of question everything and I think that has helped me a lot in golfing. Like the things you learn in school, you can relate it back to your entire life and life consisting of sports, consisting of golf. You can kind of relate it all back. (#10)

Viewing school as another arena in which to practice performing proved beneficial to one participant:

So you're always having to do stressful tests or stressful presentations....You're always being tested and you're always put in that performance situation at this school. So your practice with that situation certainly helps me when I'm performing and helps my preparation for the performance. (#7)

However, the same participant also explains that experience outside of the performance experience helps the performance only if it does not interfere with practice time. In other words, feeding other areas of development is important in helping the performance but, for optimal performance, one must also spend time physically training for the performance as well.

By carrying a sense of balance, these performers did not limit themselves to just their performance experiences but opened themselves to a vast array of life experiences. Clearly, with these participants, all their interests are linked together through balance. One participant explains:

I'd guess you'd say it's sort of like a cycle. Soccer's tied to school. School's tied to soccer. Soccer is like a relief from friendships and then you need your friendships to help with soccer again. And friends are really from school now.

It's sort of all tied together. So it's a nice balance. If one thing's out of place, it just throws everything out of cycle. (#6)

Each focus area of their lives is inseparable because of the balanced approach, with each area helping to enhance the other areas.

People Perspective

All ten participants discuss having an experience in their performance domain that is linked to so many other people. They view their performance domain not only as a venue for personal accomplishment and development, but as an experience in which each participant focuses on “We” rather than “I.” They view their performance domain as a venue to accomplish great things as a *group* of individuals. When the participants search for meaning in their performance pursuits, they all mention building bonds with others and belonging to something bigger than themselves. One participant explains: “It’s a great sport. It means a lot to me just being out there and being part of something. That you can make something big happen out of this” (#1).

They also view that they are not alone on their journey to performance excellence, that others are there to assist them in many unique ways. In other words, the sense of team goes beyond the members of the actual performance team to reach into the “support team” of coaches, teachers, parents, and friends. Participants also see their performance domain as an opportunity to develop long-lasting friendships. Friends are there to help them enjoy the performance journey. In essence, the people perspective enables the performers to free themselves to perform for the benefit of the entire group, be lifted by others to new performance heights, while simultaneously leaving the mark of friendship along the way.

Sense of Team.

Nine of the ten participants discuss that they have a deep sense of being part of a whole performance unit. Even when asked specific questions about their individual performances within the performance context, these performers would often relate back to the importance of team. They believe that they are one part of a total unit. “Well, when you play for a team, it’s never about yourself” (#2), one participant explains. She goes on to say that, “I know people often say, ‘Play for yourself,’ but not for others. But I think it’s important to play for others as well because they’re there...just because it’s a team really” (#2). The participants talk not only about personal performance development but also team development. One performer describes how all parts of the team come together to create something wonderful:

And it’s just so impressive the way it’s built together to be this one entire work where there are so many different elements - like melody, and harmony and rhythm and tone. And it’s just almost like a building. And it’s incredible the way people can put that together. (#8)

These performers are able to excel in their performance domain but do not lose sight of the fact that they are part of a larger performance unit.

Furthermore, the participants explain that in order to meet team goals, it is important to work together and get along with teammates, as one participant states:

Yeah, we get along because we have one thing in common we’re out there playing football together. So that helps out a lot...Like there’s not one person out there that hates someone else. We just all get along because it’s something we want to do and work together. (#1)

Two participants, when trying to decide which university to attend after graduation, visited the universities and asked the coaches how the members of the team got along together. In other words, having a cohesive team that wanted to work together was a huge factor in deciding which environment they wanted to perform.

Within the view that their performance experience is part of team experience, the participants see the team experience as an opportunity for both themselves and their teammates to push one another to perform well in practices and performances. The participants want to do their part and contribute to the team and encourage other teammates to continue their contribution. The push between team members helps to maintain player motivation, as one participant notes:

Because in an individual sport I can get discouraged and decide to quit or whatever. I may give up on that challenge if it's just for myself. But when it's a team thing, I can stay motivated because other people are involved. (#3)

These participants also acknowledge the contribution of others on the team. They congratulate their teammates good performances and for their teammates' assistance in helping them, in turn, to have good performances. They also show appreciation by making sure smaller efforts of teammates do not go unnoticed:

And they [the less developed players] expect so much of themselves when really they don't realize how much time we [the more developed players] have all put into it to be where we are. We basically told them, 'By coming to practice, just pushing us in practice, you guys are going to get so much better and you're making us better as it's going. (#5)

These performers say that acknowledging others contributions also helps them to prevent becoming too egotistical or feeling superior to anyone on the team. One musician explains the internal struggle he had as the leading role in a production:

It's nice [to have the leading role]. But in the same sense, my concern was I didn't want people to see me as someone who is so self-absorbed that I'm better than everybody else. They're all there to help me. They're all there to help the main player on the team. So you just have to be real conscious of it. And after awhile, it just became natural. I mean, you do your job, they do their job, and treat everyone equally. (#9)

In summary, the participants place their performance in the context of the team performance, seeing their participation as a contribution to the whole. They see the performance environment as an opportunity to push themselves and others to their potential. Finally, they appreciate the efforts of other team members.

Friendship.

Another element of the people perspective is the idea of making friendships within the performance area. Nine of ten participants talk about their performance experience as an opportunity to make friendships. The experience for these participants is not simply just about performing, as one participant explains:

Sports have always been a huge part of my life. Because, it's not just the sport itself but I mean the people you meet, the conversations you have, just the friendships you build with teammates....It comes way beyond the scope of the sport I think. (#10).

Some of the friendships turn into long-lasting relations, even after they stop performing together. They explain that you experience so much with people inside the performance that one cannot help but feel a close connection or bond with others. One participant points out that the trust established between teammates can transfer to a friendship off the field:

If you trust them on the field to do what they have to do, then it helps you off the field. Like off the field, you'll trust them to do the same thing....And then, as far as friends go, it will bring you closer together. (#4)

Having friends within the performance helps them to enjoy the process of performing. One participant explains that having close friends on the team not only increases enjoyment, but even helps him to bring more intensity to performing:

You want to go out there and not just have it so it will be work. You want to have fun. And you know that if you're working with somebody....if it's your friend, obviously you're going to care more or try harder. And during practices and games, you're going to work hard. You've got to have someone there to help you along. If you don't care about the guy, if you don't like the guy at all, you're not going to have the same enthusiasm for practice. (#6)

One participant, although he enjoys the friendships made within the performance, explains the difficulty of maintaining the relationship:

But with music, I always found for me, focusing on the show for three months, it will be intense. It will be like a family. And after that, you break off and it's as if that's one poster on the wall type thing. Move on to the next thing without

looking back. And so I always found it difficult to stay in touch with people and there's very few people I found from the performances that I've stayed in long term contact with. (#9)

In contrast, one athlete illustrates the advantage of performing with the same friends over a number of years:

You just sort of build those friendships that...people that you never would have met otherwise. But playing on the same team for so long, we just...we have so much in common and we have so much fun whenever we're together. So I think that's the biggest thing it [the performance] has done for me. (#5)

In brief, the performance experience is an opportunity for these performers not only to achieve their individual potential but to develop lasting friendships that increase their joy in their performance and in their life in general.

Support.

All ten participants view their performance not from an isolated perspective, but from a perspective that they are not alone in their performance pursuits. Family, friends, teammates, coaches and teachers are the main supporters. Each participant felt that they have always had and will continue to have somebody beside them in their performance pursuit. One participant illustrates that her parents support her regardless of performance outcomes:

So I'll go out and have a really horrible game but they'll still be happy because they'll still come to my game....No matter whether you play shitty or really, really good, they're still going to be there no matter what. So it's nice to know

that they'll always be there for you. They'll come to all your games and just be supportive. (#2)

The participants indicate that the support is of the utmost importance to them. One participant credits her support as key to reaching her current performance level: "And even to this day, I've had so much parental support along the way that they've really got me to where I am. You need the people behind you" (#5). Still another participant claims that she would have dropped out of performing if it was not for the support:

I think that if I hadn't had it [support] all throughout my career as a musician, I probably wouldn't be preparing and I wouldn't still be in music today. Because I'm the kind of person where music wasn't always something that came very easily to me. And it wasn't really something I saw myself involved in throughout my life, at a very young age. So I think if I hadn't had the support and the encouragement of people around you to continue with it, I don't think I'd still be performing. (#8)

Support is also important to participants because the support serves as a source of motivation to continue and strive for new performance heights. They would not have put as much into the performance if the support was not present. One participant explains what it would be like without that support: "I guess I really wouldn't be playing for something. Your parents come to the game. You play for them to watch you. I mean, if you didn't have everything there, then why would you be playing?" (#1). Another participant explains that her coaches' support motivates her: "I think you should play for

them [the coaches] sometimes just because they are the ones that got you this far in a way, just with their knowledge and support” (#2).

The participants believe that the support they receive helps them to recover from mistakes made during performing. The support network continues to give words of encouragement, telling participants to shake off their mistakes. One participant states that support helps ease frustrating feelings:

And I can just get frustrated and lose sight of...like lose perspective of what the problem is and the fact that I can fix it. So when there are other people there to say, ‘Well, don’t worry about it,’ then it can be easier. (#3)

Another participant points out that friends help her reconnect with her motivation to perform:

You can find yourself getting too involved in it [the performance]. You can catch yourself when you’re making these mistakes. And I think sometimes friends can really kind of take you back and say, ‘This is why you like the game.’ (#10)

Verbal feedback from coaches and teammates also gives support to these performers. One athlete explains that feedback from teammates is effective because teammates understand exactly what is going on in the performance environment and can relate better than other support groups. The performers appreciate when instruction from coaches is positive but they also have a tendency to view all coaching feedback in a positive light, as evidenced by the following:

You know, someone’s always on your case about this and that, helping you. I mean they will get on your case about things. They’re just trying to make you

better and you have to understand that. It's nothing personal from the coach and that. So you can't let that get down on you. (#1)

One musician shares similar sentiments:

Basically, I've counted a lot on the support of my music teachers. I've found that all the teachers that I've had in the music area have been extremely supportive, both in music and in dealing with school and life and all that....I really developed close personal relationships with teachers. And that has really helped me in learning and growing as a performer. Because I've found that they're very knowledgeable and they're always very open and positive in their comments. Even in constructive criticism, there's always the positive aspect. (#8)

The participants see the support they receive as helping to foster a belief in themselves. One player comments: "If your coaches aren't there and your teammates aren't there for you, thinking that you can do it, then how are you supposed to be able to believe in yourself that you can?" (#5). The participants, however, also believe that the support ultimately has to come from within:

I think it [support] has to come from within a little bit also. I think support from friends and stuff and from people believing in you can really help and reassure you that you can do it and everything. But you have to believe in yourself. Because anyone can tell you, 'I believe in you,' and you don't, then you're not going anywhere. So it's self-supporting. (#10)

In conclusion, the people perspective involves viewing one's performance not from a "me and me alone" perspective. The participants see the performance as an opportunity

to combine their talents with others, for the purpose of creating something bigger than themselves. Along the performance path, there is a wonderful opportunity to build friendships. They acknowledge the benefit of having people behind them in their pursuits, the support network increasing the joy and motivation in their pursuits.

Learning and Improving

All ten participants discuss their performance experience as one in which they focus their attention on constantly drawing lessons and seeking improvement in their performance. The focus on improvement is evident from one performer's comments: "I can never settle with where I am. In sport, I always want to be that next step higher." (#5). The same performer says she loves to practice because that is where she improves the most. A goal of another performer is to get better every time she steps on the field, to get her skills to a higher level.

The participants spend time reflecting on their performance, learning from each performance and finding areas for improvement. Most of the performers feel badly after a poor performance but then begin to analyze the situation. One participant explains:

After a loss, well, usually the first few hours or so is just regrets. The things I should have done that I didn't do for the team....I put a lot of blame on myself most of the time and thinking about the little things that I should have done, that I didn't do. After a couple of hours, I start to calm down....And I sort of think about what I did do wrong and what I did differently in that game that I had done in previous games that I'd played well or had won. I think about it a lot. I break down in my head just about everything that went on through the whole game, whether I was on the court or not. It makes me realize that when I go into the next game after that or the next practice, I'll work twice as hard trying to think

about all the things that I did do wrong that I want to improve on. And then I'll just concentrate on small areas for starters and then I'll try to expand on them too.

(#5)

One performer explains that the reflection is instinctual: "You can't help but try and figure it out, like understanding why you played bad" (#6). Still others take time during the performance to reflect on their performance thus far and make any immediate changes if necessary:

It's usually between quarters and half-time that these opportunities to sit back and kind of look at it [the performance] come around. If I'm not playing well on the field, I'll sit back and visualize what I have to do better. I guess visualization is pretty key. When you're playing football, you have to know exactly what you're going to do before you do it. And not let anyone stop you from what you're going to do. So to turn my game around, I'll sit back and look at what I have to do and look at who I have to do it against. Like size up my man against me. See what he's doing. Look at what he's doing to make me look stupid. Or find what he's doing against me to beat me at it. And then see where I can beat him. (#4)

One participant explains that reflection is key to successful team performance:

If we didn't win, of course we can learn from it but we should have learned during it. Whatever that team that we lost to had to offer, then we should have recognized it earlier. Because that's what a good team would do. (#3)

Reflection not only occurs after less than optimal performances, as one participant illustrates: "If I have a good performance, I try to capture the mindset that I had before

that performance each time I do it” (#7). Constant reflection enables these performers to learn valuable performance lessons, implement change, and, in turn, enhance performance, as one participant notes: “The ability to make a mistake, correct it, and move on is definitely important in terms of progression and moving forward and kind of keeping your interests and your abilities growing” (#8).

Viewing the performance as an opportunity to learn and improve helps to motivate these athletes. Working hard towards improvement pushes these athletes. One athlete explains why she performs:

I think I’m trying to play for improving my game on a certain day to a better score. Not just playing just for the sake of playing. I think a score is kind of to monitor your progress. And I’m not just going to play to try to get a scholarship or win some money. I’m going to play for myself. (#10)

Seeing improvement drives another performer: “From where I was in the past, I’ve improved so much that I want to just keep it going” (#5). The joy resulting from improvement is so immense that it becomes their main focus. One musician clarifies:

I like the satisfaction of the sound that I make. Like one of my strong points is my sound and I find it very satisfying to get through a piece and work through it. Day after day, it can only improve. And I like the satisfaction of hearing my improvements....You always have the goal to get better. And therefore you base your work ethic around your idea, your goal of improvement. (#7)

Although the performers strive to win and get great joy out of winning, they are not over-consumed by the notion of winning. They believe that there is more to the performance than winning, four participants stating that improvement was more

important to them than winning. They see the performance as more of a competition against themselves:

I mean, you want to win for yourself, beat yourself kind of thing....To get to the next level, I think it has to be more self-winning....Measuring yourself against other people, I don't think that's good. I think you have to measure against yourself and work for yourself towards your goal. (#10)

Participants see success as a product of individual improvements, that improvements during practice carry over into performances. One participant explains that, "If you just keep improving, then you're just going to keep passing everybody else" (#5). In summary, all ten performers continually learn from each performance and steadily improve as a result of taking time to reflect on both good and poor performances. Small improvements motivate them and become their main focus. Winning is a joyful experience that results from a view that improvement is of the utmost importance.

Positive Perspective

All ten participants place their performance experience in a positive light. After less than optimal performances, they are able to see "the good" in the performance. No matter what the situation, they do not see only negatives:

I wasn't overly impressed with that [the performance] but I was glad that I was able to pull that off....I try to find the good things in everything...the good elements of it....And often a performance that may not be most optimal, maybe what you think is the worst, it's not so bad. (#9)

These participants expect the best when entering a performance. They approach the performance from the philosophy that they can only try to do their best and see what

happens. The performers keep an open-mind to the challenges they face. They maintain a sense of humour throughout the process. After making a mistake or after a poor performance, there is always a “next time” for these performers. Finally, they do not dwell on previous mistakes. By approaching the performance from a positive perspective, these performers are able to increase the joy in their pursuits and ultimately perform at a higher level.

Expect the best.

Looking at each indication of a positive perspective in a little more detail, first, the performers expect the best when they enter the performance arena. Six of ten participants responded under this sub-theme. One participant explains:

I’m not the type of person to let things worry me. And I don’t run around with ‘what if’s’ in my head....I just think that everything just happens and whether you’re going to go into this game or not, you have to go in and expect the best.

You have to play your best and what happens is what happens kind of thing. (#2)

Another participant states that he is strongly optimistic before a competition:

I’d say I guess I’m optimistic. I always think I’m going to have a good game.

I’m going to be able to outplay my player. Yeah, definitely before the game. I’ll go into a game thinking I can beat the player and I’ll be better. So, yes, I guess going into the game, I’m optimistic. (#6)

For the participants, expecting the best is intimately tied to self-confidence. One participant clarifies that to perform well, you need confidence, as well as positive thoughts:

If you're not confident you can do something, you're not going to do it. I mean I'm positive, but I think I'm confident as well that I can do the shot. Because if you go over a shot and you're like, 'I'm just going to hope for the best,' the best isn't going to come. [Laughs]. It's going to be bad. (#1)

However, one participant says that he does not like to be too positive or too confident:

I don't think you can get too optimistic. And I don't think you can take it to getting cocky. Like, 'Oh, we're going to beat these guys. We're going to smoke them so hard....We don't even have to play our best.' Like you can never get it to that point. You've got to always say, 'We will beat this team because we will play our best and they can't match us if we do everything perfectly.' (#4)

One participant takes a slightly different view on being optimistic. She explains that physically taking the steps to reaching a goal is more important than being optimistic:

Optimists are the ones that are never pleasantly surprised. I see it in sports as playing the odds maybe and I'm cynical about it. Like sure you can be optimistic and that's fine. But if you've trained hard and prepared well then you don't need to be....I think it's not a question of optimism and pessimism. It's just like doing what you can do to achieve your goal. (#3)

Do my best.

The second indication that the performers take a positive perspective into performing is that they focus on doing their best and that's all they can ask for in a performance. Five of the ten participants describe taking this perspective. When

participants worry about the performance, the view of doing one's best helps the performers, as one individual points out:

When I start to get all worked up with all these [worrying] thoughts I just realize that I can't do anything more than my best. So once I've done my best, I don't have to worry after that because that was the best I could have done. (#3)

Another participant says that she used to focus on beating others but now, if she did the best she could, then that's okay. She has the view that if she tries her best everything else will take care of itself:

Just try your best really. Whatever happens, happens. Just let things fall into place. If they don't fall into place, they don't fall into place. But, they'll fall into place somehow. What you want may not fall into place the way you want them to but you need to just keep working at it and you'll probably end up somewhere. I don't know where, but you'll end up somewhere. (#10)

After a loss, the view of doing one's best helped to put the loss in perspective. One participant explains:

And I think if everyone's trying their best and like working as hard as they can, even if you don't win...when we play against a really good team and we lose, but we work as hard as we possibly can, it's still...I'm not as affected by that because I've known that we've done our best. And that's really all that I can ask for from everybody and myself. (#5)

One participant was not always happy with doing his best:

If I play my best but still get beaten, I'm not going to be happy with that. I'm not going to be happy if I get outplayed by another person...It's not just that I want to beat the person I'm playing against. I need to have a good game. But I'm not going to be happy if I play my best and still get outplayed. (#6)

Having the perspective that all you can do is your best helps these performers to see their performance in a positive light. When they are unsuccessful in performances, they are unhappy with the outcome, but by reasoning with themselves that they did their best, the positive view helps them to strive for better performances.

Open-minded.

Seven of the ten participants discuss bringing an open-mind to their performance experience, meaning that they were receptive to new ideas and opportunities within their performance. The participants illustrate their willingness to try new skills that they may not necessarily be comfortable performing. One participant emphasizes the importance of being open-minded when you first start in a performance domain:

Well, for any sport, you just go into it having an open-mind. Just willing to be able to learn the new skills and drills, etc., and everything that you learn when you first get into a sport. And it's hard work and it's hard to understand but no one's perfect at anything they first try to do. Most people aren't. You have to just give everything a chance. And you can't give up on it the second you make a mistake or you're embarrassed in front of the rest of the team. You have to just keep trying. You won't get anywhere unless you do. (#2)

Another participant had similar thoughts: "When you're just starting out, it's not...you're not going to be the best. And you have to realize that it takes a lot of work

to be the best” (#5). Even when they struggled, they kept an open-mind. One participant describes the importance of being open to learning new skills and making mistakes:

If you're not open and you don't realize everything that could go wrong or the not-great part of the game, then you're not going to be able to reach your potential. You're going to get stuck down lower. But if you keep your mind open and you learn from the mistakes of the past, then you will learn from it and get better. (#6)

After gaining experience and becoming established in their performance environment, the performers continue to be open to challenging themselves with new skills. One participant explains how her willingness to challenge her creativity helps her to evolve as a performer:

I think music is something that seems that it's always possible to move forward...there aren't any huge obstacles standing in the way necessarily. I find music is just something that seems to stretch on forever. It's something that provides you with kind of an infinite ability to grow. And you can go down so many different paths in your creativity that you're always going to be better than what you were before. (#8)

In the end, because of the ability to carry an open-mind, the performers became better, as one participant notes: “I think pushing your boundaries really helps to make yourself a better performer” (#8).

Humour.

Five of the ten performers use a sense of humour in order to maintain a positive outlook on their performance. The performers use humour as a way to approach mistakes

in a positive manner. One performer explains that humour helps maintain enjoyment: “It’s about enjoying it [the performance] and my personal way of enjoying it is by seeing humour in mistakes” (#8). Another performer describes a method she uses to see the humour in a situation, regardless of mistakes made:

And I remember I went to this camp, this elite training program, and they were saying how that every single swing you have, say something funny to yourself. You know, I found that was actually kind of amusing....I did it. I think it really helps you. I mean, you can do it in anything, you can like do it in any other sport you know. If something didn’t go your way but whatever. You still say, ‘I’m number one!’ [Laughs]....I know it’s totally unrealistic but it kind of helps. I know it’s a bit optimistic but it keeps it fun. (#10)

After initial disappointment with a performance, one participant is able to take a step and uses humour to put the performance in perspective:

You kind of laugh at it [the situation] afterwards. In retrospect, I was certainly disappointed over one performance that I did. And now I’m kind of laughing at it. I mean it was the stupidest thing and you think it’s just such a big deal at that moment. And you think, ‘Wow, that’s it for the music.’ But now you’re kind of laughing at it. (#7)

Still another participant uses humour as a stress relief and to show her human side to the audience:

I think the lack of stress or release of stress that humour provides in a performance shows your humanity to the audience. If you make a mistake and

you're kind of like, 'Oh!' If it's funny and you laugh at it then I think they kind of see that it's okay to make mistakes because you don't get all up tight and don't close up because of it. And it keeps the openness and kind of keeps the connection with the audience going. Because they see that you're really enjoying the performance and it's okay to make a mistake because you're here to enjoy yourself and so are they. So I think humour is important in maintaining your openness and the optimism of the performance. If you find humour in it, you're more able to bring something positive out of the experience. (#8)

Clearly, the ability to see humour in a situation helps these participants to see the performance through optimistic eyes.

Always a next time.

Five of the ten performers have responses under this sub-theme. The performers take the positive view that there is always a next time, another chance to redeem themselves. After initial disappointment, one performer explains how she regroups:

If I do go out and I do have a bad game or anything, I'll usually spend awhile being mad. But then once I realize, take a deep breath, there's still tomorrow. Tomorrow's game where I can sort of turn it around. And it was just one game that I didn't play well and I can change something the next time. (#6)

Another performer sees that poor play early in the performance does not mean poor play will follow. She also has a view that the poor play is not a cause for over-reacting:

So you just need to say, 'Well, you know what? Those were probably some of my bad shots. I still have good shots to come.' Just try and help yourself through it and just say, 'I just had two bad shots really. It wasn't the biggest deal in the

world. There are so many other things going on.’ And put it into perspective and say, ‘It’s not the biggest deal in the world....A lot of things could happen so you never know.’ (#10)

A less than optimal performance does not deter these performers from persisting through disappointment. One participant states the point nicely: “When you get down, get back up” (#6).

Move forward.

The performers, also, do not dwell on their mistakes. Four of ten participants had responses under this sub-theme. They are able to move forward to the next performance challenge in a positive manner. They are able to shake off poor performances or not let negative thought stick in their minds: “I can’t keep thinking negative thoughts about that game. You’ve got to move on and think positive” (#1). Participants explain that past mistakes are irreversible and what happens next is most important: “Just shake it off. There’s nothing you can do about it. Just go out hard and try it the next time” (#1).

Another participant shares similar sentiments:

The thing about football is that you can’t let what’s happened before determine how you’re going to feel for the next half. Like if I have trouble in the first half, yeah there’s going to be those feelings of like, “Ah, shit. This was real bad.” I’ll feel bad about myself but then I’ll try to check myself before I fall into a hole that I can’t get myself out of before I get so depressed about how bad I’ve been playing. You’ve got to stop. You’ve got to look at how you’ve played and say, “Okay, the past is the past. I’ve just got to forget about what happened. (#4)

How one participant views her mistakes helps her to move forward: “I don’t think something was a mistake unless you do it twice....It’s like sort of second chance in a way but it’s also looking into the future which is better than just dwelling in the past” (#3). By not dwelling on their mistakes, the participants are able to limit their frustration and enter the next situation with a clear mind.

In summary, the participants all have a positive perspective towards their performances. They expect good things to come from performing, are happy to simply do their best, keep an open-minded and sense of humour, are able to recover from mistakes and look towards the future. The participants reach new performance heights because they carry positive perspectives.

Passion Perspective

All ten participants discuss a deep passion they have for the performance. Having passion involves having strong love for the performance, high enthusiasm, and a deep desire to perform (adapted from Random House Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 1999). As one participant comments, “After playing for so long, it’s my love” (#5). Another participant explains what passion means for her: “For me, passion is just playing my heart out every time I get on the field”(#2). The participants explain that it is the passion that motivates them, pushes them to work hard, and helps them rise to performance challenges. One participant explains: “I think that it’s the passion that inspires me to perform. I don’t think I would perform if I didn’t have that passion. Because I think if it wasn’t there, I’d just drop the instrument” (#7). Another participant sees the passion as coming from the feeling one gets from the performance. When asked for more detail, the participants explain that passion consists of many different feelings. The most common feelings of all participants are discussed below.

Energizing.

The first element of the passion perspective is an energizing feeling that the participants get from performing. Five out of ten participants express that there is an energy or vibe that feels great to them. One participant talks about the feeling prior to a game:

It's just like a want. You want to get out there and you want to play the game but you can't wait for kick off. And just little traditions you'll have with each team that you play on. Like before the game, certain cheers you do or certain little sayings you have before kick off. Or inside jokes you have with friends on the team. It just gets you all pumped up and just the rush of adrenalin through you.

(#2)

Another participant explains that the adrenalin builds up because he likes the game so much, the feeling being his main motivation:

I guess it's just a feeling of intensity almost. I don't know, it's like an adrenalin rush almost when you're out there. Just like a rush. Like an energy buzz kind of thing. And I mean, I think pretty much the main reason that I play football is like that adrenalin rush kind of...just the feeling that I get. I like going out there and playing football. I like the feeling of the game. (#4)

One musician talks about the similarities and differences in the energy associated with athletic and musical performance:

People always ask me why do you do these shows for free because it's only now that I'm starting to use these as employment, to do gigs and stuff. But when I was

younger, it was all pretty well volunteer. And I said, 'Well, why are you on the football team? Why do you go to practice every week?' I mean it's because you enjoy doing it and you enjoy the rush you get when you're out on the field, just like being out on the stage. And, so, it's really the ability to pull off the audience....I love the ability to get on stage and really have the audience in the palm of your hand and really take them where you want to take them musically or artistically you know. (#9)

The participants also see the energizing feeling as helping them to perform well. One athlete states that the energizing feeling fuels her performance and if she is not energized, she plays poorly. One musician tries to find the energy or excitement as a way to prepare for the performance:

And what I do before a good performance is...you look over your piece and you look over what you want to do and how the piece can excite you throughout the way or how you can show your emotion through it. (#7)

He explains that, for him, the passion is the excitement he feels:

It [the passion] is the excitement and the feeling I have for the music. Throughout music, they have little nuances, like forte's in pianos, and the way you kind of shape a phrase or something. And if you have that passion, you're able to shape phrases differently or have unique interpretations of the music....You have to have a passion for the music, in order to make it sound interesting. (#7)

The energizing feeling, therefore, both motivates the performers and raises their level of performance.

Enjoyment

For all ten participants, the performance domain brings them a sense of joy and they have fun performing. Although the training and the performance itself are a lot of hard work, each participant explains that they can work hard towards their goals but still have fun. One participant notes:

There are days when you're like, 'I don't want to go....I don't want to go and listen to coach drill' [Laughs]. It's just hot some days and pissing rain on other days and you just want to go home and go to bed. But it's so worth it. It's so worth the fun and the work and the tears and the sweat and everything. It's just fun in the end. (#2)

The performers also explain that if someone is not enjoying the experience and not having fun, they should not be participating. They see it as a waste of time if there is no enjoyment. If there is no fun involved, they would cease participation: "I've had a lot of experiences where it's not fun anymore and my skills will then dissipate and I'll just end up leaving the sport. I know from experience that fun has to be a part of it" (#3). One participant explains that the philosophy is true in and out of her performance domain: "To have fun at least is the main thing because, I guess, what's the point of life if you're not having fun. If I don't like playing sport, there's no point in really doing it" (#10).

To the participants, there are many things that are enjoyable about the performance experience. They do not rely on one or two things for sources of fun or enjoyment, but on a number things: "I know it's my one passion but there's a few things that make it all add up to be a fun game" (#1). They all discuss, in great detail, the things they enjoy about performing. One participant has several performance joys:

I think there's just so many things about it [the performance]. It's really hard to point to one particular thing....I like going out and just like walking by myself on the golf course. Just enjoying the atmosphere, and just sort of everything around me and just kind of appreciating it for what it is. I mean, sometimes, I enjoy putting with a crowd just watching, clapping. You know, sometimes you enjoy that. Or sometimes, you might enjoy just going out with a group of people and just having a good laugh. Sometimes, I might enjoy competing in your sport for another day and like seeing yourself improve. I seen that in myself. I went back to a course I used to play on four year ago....And I just felt, "Wow, I've really improved.' And kind of seeing yourself progress is rewarding in itself. (#10)

The participants also find it fun to have performance success, as one participant points out: "Being successful is so much fun and it just makes you want to get out there and do more for the game and do more for yourself" (#2). Another participant explains that success is fun but not essential to having fun:

I think it's the fact that we are a winning team that makes it fun but it can be fun with out, just through all the comradery and all that's involved in team sports. And it's also fun because our coaches are young and interesting people and they make it fun with all their competitiveness and everything. (#3)

Not only do all ten participants have fun and enjoyment as part of their performance view, the fun and enjoyment help with performance success. One participant explains that fun needs to come before success: "You can't be successful if you're not going to have fun at the game" (#2). Another participant feels that having fun fuels his focus and commitment: "If you don't have fun, you're not going to be able to

want to play or have that focus or give up as much of your time” (#6). The enjoyment also serves as motivation to one participant: “It [performing] is something that I really enjoy doing and I think that definitely helps in encouraging me to do well at it” (#7).

For one musician, having enjoyment and expressing this joy helps performers to connect to their audience:

And really you can tell when a performer loves what they’re doing because it just comes through the audience. No matter how ignorant you are about the form of the piece or if you don’t know anything about music, you can still tell when somebody loves what they’re doing. And I think that’s almost infectious. People go from seeing a performance where you know the musician is just obviously in love with what they’re doing, you’re inspired, no matter who you are. So I think that that’s really important that people continue to do that for other people. (#8)

To truly experience joy and have fun through the performance experience, participants stress the importance of being involved “for yourself” and not be pushed into the performance by others. One participant, when discussing the importance of playing for oneself, describes an unfortunate incident:

[If you’re not having fun] you shouldn’t be playing really. I mean you always hear these girls or guys who make a career out of practicing day and night and getting pushed all the time. They really don’t like it. I met this guy and his parents went to his tryout day and I guess this kid missed this putt and then the father just goes up and goes beserk on him. He grabs the putter and just starts swing[ing] away at the green, and makes this huge gouge out of the green. (#10)

When asked what advice he would give to a younger sibling who just started performing, one participant responds:

I'd tell him only to play it if he wants to play it. Like don't play the game for anyone but yourself. I think that's probably the most important thing. Because when you play the game because you want to play the game, you're going to play better [than] if you're playing it because someone else wants you to play. (#4)

In summary, the performance brings many sources of enjoyment and fun to the participants' lives. They believe performers should not be participating if the joy is not present. Moreover, joy helps to elevate their performance. In the end, these participants perform because they want to, not to please others.

Appreciation.

Six out of ten participants illustrate that they have a deep appreciation for their performance. However, what these participants appreciate about the performance experience differs significantly. One participant appreciates the opportunities that the performance has given her including the chance to develop unique physical skills, to travel, and to represent her school and country. She states that she must enjoy the performance experience while she can because she realizes that she cannot perform at a high level forever.

Another participant, when he is struggling in his performance takes time to rekindle his appreciation for the performance:

Sometimes when I'm playing bad, I'll watch soccer on t.v. And I don't know why but you sit and watch them play, you get an idea of what they're doing. And

you start thinking about what you did wrong. You watch soccer and realize how nice of a game it is and why you like it again. (#6)

Revisiting this appreciation helps him to simplify things and return to performing well.

One musician explains her appreciation for the different aspects of the music and how the appreciation grew with time:

I definitely have a better appreciation for it now. That's something that grows from the beginning, so you can't really know that from the beginning. But certainly now when I hear classical music or hear any kind of music, I definitely have a better appreciation for the sounds and techniques used....And appreciating it for all it's aspects and not just for the way it sounds. Appreciating the way it's built, the way it's transcribed into a performance. (#6)

She also adds that, to be a top performer that is technically sound, one needs to develop an appreciation for the music.

Finally, another musician conveys how he appreciates his talent and the ability to reach out to others with music:

It [music] is a full, enriching experience on a level far beyond. I mean you could take it on a spiritual level for those who are into religious music. You can take it on an emotional level. And you talk about all these elements and the ability to touch people. You know, singing at funerals is so...it's moving. And you're glad that you're gift is able to bring peace to someone else. And not a lot of things can do that I think and can touch someone in that intense way. And so there's an incredible responsibility that comes with that. Because you have this voice and

this god-given talent. You better use it to try and better your life and better other people's lives. (#9)

Although each participant shows a slightly different form of appreciation for the performance, each form speaks to the deep passion that the participants hold. They love to perform and recognize the importance of the performance to themselves and others.

Fulfilment.

Six of ten participants speak about the performance as a fulfilling experience for them, something that offers them a great feeling of completion in their lives. One participant states that there's nothing else she would rather spend her time doing than performing. They explain that performing is something that feels right to them and brings them comfort. One participant describes the feeling he gets from performing:

I don't know if it can be described. Just think of something that seems more natural than what you're doing right now. To you, it fulfils something that you need to do and then doing it. So it's kind of like a feeling of fulfilment. You love doing this. And it's something that just feels good doing it. (#4)

Another participant explains the meaning the performance has for him: "The meaning would come from the emotional intensity you get from performing - the feeling I get of completion, I guess personal completion" (#9). One musician explains her performance feelings: "Just learning and growing as a performer, like I find that performing is something that always has had kind of an enthralling affect upon me. I get up on stage and I just love it" (#8).

The sense of fulfilment that these adolescent participants attain from performing is also evident from their description of times when they were not performing. When she is in the off-season, one participant says that there is something missing in her life:

It [performing] is a test of my will every time I go on the field. So if I don't get a chance to do that or prove myself in that way, I feel like something's missing. Other sports sort of fill that hole when rugby isn't in season. But nothing beats rugby. (#3)

Another participant also feels there is something missing when he isn't performing:

Like right now, there's just sort of...it's kind of bland and plain. You go to school. You go home. Whatever. Do my homework. Go back to school. Before, I'd have soccer. I'd get pushed harder. I'd have to run the whole game. You win. I don't know. There's different emotions. You lose, you're sad....I just found my life a bit less exciting. (#6)

Still another performer felt down when he had to take time off:

Actually, just this March I had to take a two week break. And it was...it was just kind of...it didn't feel right. I mean, something was really missing. And it was kind of a semi-depression....I couldn't feed off the audience because I wasn't performing. (#9)

For these participants, there is intense feeling attached to the performance. They really miss the experience when they are away from the performance environment. The fact that the performance is truly a fulfilling experience for the participants gives a strong indication of the passion they have for performing.

Passion, in summary, describes the deep attachment participants have to performing. They are energized by performing. The experience is also fun and joyful. They feel fulfilled when performing and they appreciate their abilities to perform and the beauty of their performance domain. The strong passion of the participants illustrates that performing is a central part of their lives. However, as one participant points out, the performance for them is a passion, but having a passion does not mean that the performance is the be all, end all:

You have a passion for it...but not like a complete obsession over your entire life. You shouldn't go too deep into it because you're just kicking a soccer ball around. [Laughs]. You're not doing anything that intense....You've got to realize that it's just a game. Like you still have to love the game. If you have an obsession, and you lose a game or do something bad, it throws you out of focus. Because all you can think about is that mistake, or that bad game, or that loss. And so it eats away at you I guess.

The participants are able to build a strong passion for performing without losing focus or neglecting other key parts of their lives.

Complete Focus

All ten participants discuss their ability to focus completely during both practices and performances. The complete focus allows these performers to *live* the perspective elements outlined above. In other words, the focus enables them to live with balance, to benefit from support and friendships, to continue to strive for improvement, to view things positively, and to fill their lives and their performances with passion.

The participants live balanced lives, where they have an intense commitment towards the performance, but they do not neglect other life priorities. However, in order

to have enriching experiences, they need to be completely absorbed in what they are doing, whether they are involved in the performance or with other facets of their lives.

One participant reveals her ability to focus on and off the court:

I think you'd get sick of it [the performance] if that was the only thing you were doing or ever thinking about. Like I don't even really think about it during the days and stuff when I'm at school or when I'm sitting at home watching a movie or anything. That's my other time. So when I step into the gym, it's just one focus. I just couldn't imagine having just that one focus all the time. (#5)

The participants talk about the performance as a stress relief from their everyday life. The focus allows the performers to lose themselves in the performance and block out everyday concerns. One participant describes how the focus helps him to escape everyday life:

When I'm on the field, I sort of go into a zone you know. And I just focus on what I have to do. And everything else is lost. Everything in life that's going on is gone out of my head....Because if you're having a problem with friends, girlfriend whatever, everything's gone. It's not in the back of your head when you're playing. The only thing is your focus, getting on the field, whatever you have to do....I'm just thinking, 'Just go and play.' (#6)

Another participant explains that she will make more mistakes if she is thinking about other things in her life while performing:

Well, you just don't want to have other things on your mind when you play. They'll inhibit your performance I think. Like you can't think about school, or

your boyfriend, or the fight you're having with your parents or anything like that. I think you just have to be focused on what you have to do and how you're going to do it. And if you don't have a focus, you may make many more mistakes than you normally would. (#2)

With a complete focus, the performers free themselves to fully absorb themselves in all their life pursuits.

When the participants discuss their focus, they mention the help of others in enabling them to refocus and have strong performances. One participant explains her unique relationship with a coach and how he helps her:

He [the coach] is the most positive person which is really nice to have in a coach rather than, you know, pushing or something. He's really positive and just, you know, instead of saying, 'Well, that's really crappy,' he'll be like, 'This is more ideal,' you know. So, it's more positive reinforcement rather than the negative stuff that you get a lot from people – 'Why are you slicing?' or something like that. Rather than, 'Oh, it's just a little something at the end' or 'It's your timing' or it's a little more of a positive spin on things which really is encouraging I guess. It helps you refocus on what you want to do. I think that's a key word. It helps me focus. (#10)

In brief, if the participants did not focus on developing a strong sense of team, as well as on developing friends and support networks, they would not have others to be by their side in performance pursuits.

The participants are constantly learning from their experience and taking steps to improving their performance. However, in order to be able to draw lessons and improve, the performers have to be focused. One participant explains:

I think the focus is essential for the improvement. I think if I'm not focused, I'm not going to get the improvement. And my frustration will kind of erupt due to my lack of focus. So I think those two are very tied together. (#7)

One musician tries to improve by focusing on avoiding previous mistakes: "I focus on the mistakes I know I've made and remembering not to make them again" (#8). An athlete also explains that he recovers from mistakes by focusing on improving:

That's something that I do. Like I'll take mistakes made in the last game and use it to get me on the field and focus on things I can do better. And then I try to do better. Try to run harder, move faster, hit harder. (#4)

In order to learn and improve, the participants also emphasize the importance of focusing on themselves and what they want to accomplish, rather than on what other competitors are doing. One participant discusses the importance: "Golf is more you against yourself. Whereas if you focus in on other people and what they're shooting, you're going to be so...you're done. Yeah, you have to focus on yourself, for sure" (#10). As another participant says, "Just focus on yourself and you'll be fine" (#6). By focusing on one's performance and not on another's, the performers are now free to focus on their own goals. One participant explains how she focuses on improvement by setting goals:

I kind of clear my head and just think of what I have to do when I go out. And at the beginning of our game, like while we're doing stretches, we just say, 'In this

game I want to...' You give yourself a goal and you give yourself a team goal. I know I try to make them pretty accurate because there is always something you can work on. So I just go in there thinking about what it is I have to do. (#2)

In brief, the focus allows them to improve by focusing on themselves and by setting goals.

The participants are able to view their performance from a positive perspective because they are able to focus on the positives in each situation. One participant explains the difference between her focus and the focus of other competitors:

This year it was really tough for a lot of girls because they're focusing in on the coaches watching them. 'Oh, I did the wrong thing. I should have drank more water. I don't think I was hydrated enough.' They think of so many things. Whereas, you really have to think that you're not in a competition and it's just you. And who cares if you got a [score of] 10 on one hole because every shot counts. And you really can't do anything about what you did before. (#10)

In simple terms, the ability to focus on the positives keeps their perspectives positive.

The participants attach a great deal of passion to the performance. The focus allows them to feel and experience the passion. Part of the passion stemmed from an excitement or energy attached to the performance. In order to feel this energy and excitement, the performers need to be focused. One participant describes his pre-game focus, the focus helping him to get excited:

My heart beats fast. I kind of have steady breathing. It would probably be kind of like a horse, a horse in the gates before a race type thing. Like you're kind of

breathing heavy and your heart's thumping but I'm not shaking and I'm not screaming or anything. It's all just kind of focus. (#4)

One musician describes his focus and how part of it involves concentrating on the music's emotion: "You're always thinking of breathing, your always thinking of these things, but you tend to try and take the emotion of the piece and let that carry you. And everything else just falls in place" (#9).

Another part of passion has its roots in finding joy and fun in the performance. The participants' focus enables them to decrease any stress associated with performing and ultimately increase their joy and satisfaction. One participant explains how she focuses on what she enjoys about the performance, rather than focusing on worrying thoughts: "You are sharing it [the performance] with them [the audience] but still concentrating on what you value about the music. And let that come through rather than worrying about how you'll sound to the other people" (#8). Another musician discusses how he needs to focus in order to have fun with the performance:

To have fun, as you're asking, I guess you have to take it one show at a time, and getting inside the piece I guess, and let that keep you away from those other distractions that are now there. (#9)

In brief, the participants fuel their passion for performing by focusing on the excitement and joy of performing.

In conclusion, having the ability to completely focus helps these performers to live the different elements of perspective. The focus helps them benefit from experiences inside and out of the performance domain, to involve others in the experience, to

constantly improve, to stay positive in the process, and to maintain their passion for the performance.

The Private School

The participants' environment helps to shape and refine their perspective on their performance and their lives. The private school offers an environment in which the participants could pursue many academic and performance opportunities. Both the teachers and coaches help to foster individual growth along the way.

The participants discuss the opportunities available at the school, opportunities that assist the performers in experiencing so much. One participant explains: "And with school, you get experiences and successes. I've had so many opportunities at this school – going away on trips and vacations and experiencing things" (#2). Another participant describes how his time at the private school has contributed to his experience and helps him to do things he wants to do:

Well, the school environment here is definitely a community, a small, close knit community....So that connection with people is pretty close here. Just a lot of opportunities. It really has been a positive influence in being able to start up clubs, being able to be involved in some of the sports teams, as well as having a very solid and very good education, academic record. And again, being able to talk to your teachers in closer detail, with smaller class sizes which allows for more individual attention in that sense, which is always positive from an educational standpoint....I think anyone can find opportunities out there but to recognize them and have the willingness to grab onto them, I think they encourage that here too. (#9)

The private school constantly challenges the participants to get involved and perform any task at a high level. One participant explains how the challenge ultimately helps his performance:

[The private school] kind of stimulates you to take on a million things. You know, you're doing academics. You want to keep up a high level there. And you're doing soccer and then they want you to do all the music stuff. So you're able to balance certain things. And always having to do stressful tests or stressful presentations that you have to do....You're always being tested and you're always put in that performance situation at this school. So you're practice with that situation certainly helps me when I'm performing and helps my preparation for performance. (#7)

Clearly, the nature of the school helps participants better themselves inside and outside the classroom.

Coaches and teachers show great concern for the students. One participant notes: "Well, being at [the private school], it's a great school. Teachers care a lot about what you do" (#1). Teachers are willing to give the performers extra help if needed, so they can continue to perform and keep their grades at a high level. Coaches, who are usually also teachers, are knowledgeable in the performance domain and genuinely love coaching. The staff gets involved anyway they can, as one participant explains: "I like it that some of the teachers get involved in the choir and we have three teachers, including our headmaster, in the choir. I think it really shows that they believe music is important as well" (#8). One participant describes how she looks up to the staff at the private school:

I think sometimes you can learn through them [the teachers], just from their experiences, the way they carry themselves, just as like role models....They have really good balance in their lives. It's just so transparent, you can just totally see that. I mean some people you can really see that. Like, wow, I really look up to this person. This person's really accomplished a lot. They're generally good people. You can really just see that and feed off it....You just kind of look at them and say, 'Wow! They really have good perspective on things.' They are really focused on what they do and really do it well. (#10)

In brief, the participants appreciate the support and opportunities given to them. They respect the teachers, the coaches, and the institution itself. They have an intense pride for their school. One participant summed it up nicely, when asked what it meant for her to perform on behalf of her school:

It just means so much to me to represent something you're proud of like your school. It's a real honour to represent [the school]. No matter where we are, at provincials or city finals or just at an exhibition game against some random school, it's just fun to be able wear the jersey and have pride. (#2)

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The elements that characterize the perspectives of the adolescent participants reveal not only how the participants view the performance itself, but how they view the performance in the context of their entire lives. The perspective elements may be best understood by conceptualizing the participants' views both *within* and *surrounding* the performance. Within the performance, the participants view the performance with a great deal of passion. The performance sparks something inside of them, bringing a sense of joy and completion in their lives. The love and desire drives them to continue to participate and strive for higher levels of performance. The passion is the element that lies at the root of their perspective, a root from which others elements grow.

In addition to the passion, two other perspective elements guide the performers through efforts in practice, in actual performances, and in reflections on their experience. First, they aim to learn everyday from the experience and improve; the participants see the experience as a chance to evolve into something better. Striving for self-improvement guides their objectives in practices and performances. Second, they are able to carry a positive approach to any situation, enabling them to be receptive to whatever comes their way. The performers inevitably face obstacles within their performance experience. However, a positive perspective places them in a frame of mind that frees them from doubt and hesitation and from placing their own self-worth on performance outcomes. Instead, they embrace the obstacles and mistakes and move forward through them.

The learning/improving perspective and the positive perspective influence one another. If the participants are able to keep an open-mind to trying new skills and

attempting new feats, they are more likely to improve. If they are able to see humour in their mistakes and believe that there is always a next time, persisting through setbacks will be manageable. If they expect to do well and are happy to simply do their best, eventually they will surpass their previous best. Once they realize this improvement, it will feed back into their positive perspective. Since they know that they can progress, they are able to not dwell on subsequent mistakes and they can move forward with a positive perspective. In turn, the passion for the performance grows. The performers become energized by the improvements and are able to experience more joy and fun because of their positive perspective. The energy and joy experienced helps to reaffirm the participants' feelings of appreciation for the experience and fulfilment through the experience.

Now, *surrounding* the performance, the participants seek balance in their lives and see that they are not alone in their performance pursuits - other people are present to support them and be a part of the experience. By having perspective elements that include a sense of balance and inclusion of others in the experience, the performers are able to place the performance in the context of their entire lives. The balance perspective enables the participants to view the performance as just that, a performance. They want to experience all there is to experience in life. Despite the important value and meaning attached, performing is just one of the countless experiences awaiting them. The balance perspective allows the participants to not become too absorbed in any one activity that they start neglecting other priorities in life. Pursuits do not become stale because time is spent away from any one pursuit. The balance serves to ultimately keep a performer's passion in check, so that the passion does not consume the performer. Having balance as one of the elements of perspective gives the adolescents the opportunity to develop many

areas of themselves, while being able to stay meaningfully engaged in their performance pursuits.

The performers also view that they are not alone in their pursuits. Surrounding their performance pursuits is a network of people that are an integral part of their experience. They express that without the perspective that others are part of their experience, the performance would be less joyful, less successful, and lack purpose. They view themselves as part of a larger unit or team and place their needs below the needs of their team. They see the performance experience as a great opportunity to develop relationships with others. They meet people and develop friendships that they value as a key part of the experience. The support that they receive from coaches, parents, and friends helps them to persist with performance endeavours and draw energy not from the power of one, but the power of many.

The ability to focus on the perspective elements within and surrounding the performance helps the adolescent performers to *live* all the perspectives, without neglecting one. Only by focusing on taking a positive, passionate, self-improving perspective can the performers be positive, passionate, and self-improving. Only by focusing on taking a perspective where balance and people are important, can the performers live balanced lives in which many others are closely involved. The most important role focus serves is giving the performers the ability to switch back and forth between a focus on the perspective elements within the performance and the perspective elements surrounding the performance. The ability to switch focus allows the performers to absorb themselves fully in the performance while still being aware of their surroundings, their priorities, and the key people in their lives. In this way, both the needs of the performer and the person are fulfilled.

Previous literature touches on each perspective element that was revealed. It is important to keep in mind that the adolescents in this research were identified as top performers who also had their lives together. Adolescent performers from previous studies were not selected based on this criteria and are distinctly different. Although a direct comparison cannot be made, placing the results in the context of previous studies with adolescents will further our understanding of the perspective of a wide range of adolescents.

Addressing the perspective of passion, the most prevalent term discussed in previous literature was the idea of enjoyment. The performers found many sources of enjoyment, matching a previous finding that elite adolescent performers had multifaceted sources of enjoyment (Scanlan, Stein & Ravizza, 1989). They could find joy in performing even when some sources of enjoyment were lacking. However, enjoyment – that is, feelings of pleasure, liking, and fun (Scanlan, Simons, Carpenter, Schmidt, & Keeler, 1993) - was only part of the participants' description of how they felt about the performance. The participants explain that they had a deep desire to perform, more of a passion than a simple enjoyment. Previous literature in both athletics and the performing arts discusses the presence and necessity of a passion for performing. For one group of elite performers, performing was a complete passion yielding much satisfaction (Amirault & Orlick, 1999). Moreover, Fageus (1999), in his description of the process of artistic development for musicians, explains that love for what the performer is doing frees him or her to do great things: "Where love abounds, there is no fear" (Fageus, 1999, p. 10). The findings of this research reaffirm that passion is a key element of how both adolescent and adult performers together view a performance.

The findings also offer a further description of this passion. In addition to enjoyment as part of the passion, the passion involves an energizing or exciting feeling, a

deep appreciation for the performance, and a feeling of fulfilment through performing. Adolescent performers experience exhilaration from simply being involved in a game and also from the movement and sensations associated with performing (Scanlan et al., 1989; Wankel and Kreisel, 1985). The results of the research on perspective add to these findings by illustrating that the energy and excitement are feelings that stay with performers long after the actual performance is over. In turn, the excitement helps to build a performer's passion for the next performance and push them through long practice hours. Having a deep appreciation for the performance has been evidenced in the performing arts literature (Talbot-Honeck & Orlick, 1998) but the current findings illustrate that both athletes and musicians build an appreciation for the performance. The appreciation increases their desire to perform. Finally, the findings indicate that the performance is something that fulfills these adolescents. It gives them a feeling of completion. The idea of fulfillment is not discussed extensively in the high performance literature and investigation into this phenomenon could further our understanding of how the performance fulfils the lives of both younger and more experienced performers.

The perspective of learning and improving is seen throughout the performance literature but the research with these adolescent performers offers some new insights. Previous literature reveals that some performers seek self-growth or personal excellence goals and carry the perspective of enjoying learning and looking for opportunities to grow in the performance (Talbot-Honeck & Orlick, 1998; Scanlan, et al., 1989; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). The adolescents of this study also seek self-growth and attempt to learn and improve. The results give a further explanation of this process. The quest for improvement actually motivates them to persist in their pursuits. However, they also couple this desire for improvement with a desire to be their best. They see a focus on improvement as important because through the improvement, they believe that they will

ultimately have performance success. Furthermore, these adolescent performers go through a conscious process of analysis after a poor performance and decide what lessons to take from the performance and how they can improve. This reflection process is independent from the facilitation of coaches or other supporters. In other words, they take it upon themselves to draw out lessons and to take steps to improve. The self-analysis is seen in top adult performers (Poczwadowski & Conroy, 2002) and is now evident as well in younger performers.

The idea of taking a positive perspective into the performance has been seen in various shapes and forms in the literature. Positive thinking has been used as a coping strategy in the Olympic Games (Gould et al., 1993). As well, top musicians see setbacks and mistakes in a positive light (Talbot-Honeck & Orlick, 1998). The results of this study help to give concrete ways in which adolescent athletes and musicians view their performance positively. More specifically, the performers expect the best when entering a performance, they aim to do their best and believe that everything else will fall in place, they view that there will always be a next time to perform and make good on past mistakes, and they refuse to dwell on past mistakes and are able to move forward.

There are two other ways that these performers view the performance from a positive perspective. These two views are relatively new to the performance literature. First, the participants view their performance experience with an open-mind, in that they are receptive to new ideas and opportunities. They do not close themselves off in a stubborn manner from new ways of doing things within the performance. Talbot-Honeck and Orlick (1998) discuss a similar term – flexibility – found among classical musicians. They describe flexibility as being open to the dynamics of the performance situation. The classical musicians found that since they were not set in their way of how things should be done, the flexibility freed them to grow and continuously learn. The open-

mindedness of the young athletes and musicians in this study also helped them to adapt and improve in performing. The ability to keep an open-mind appears to not only help performers to view situations positively but ultimately leads to more developed, successful performers.

The second way of viewing the performance in a positive light is the idea of seeing humour in mistakes. Although humour has been used as a coping strategy for decathletes (Dale, 2000), having humour as part of one's performance perspective has not been readily seen in the literature. Half of the participants in the study mention their use of humour in viewing mistakes. The humour helps them to not take themselves too seriously and enables them to take a step back from the performance.

The perspective of perfectionism, a view that often takes away from a positive perspective on performance, is not a predominant view among these adolescent participants. Previous literature indicates young performers do view that they must be perfect in the performance, a view that may lead to stress and burnout (Anshel, et al., 2001; Gould, et al., 1996a, 1996b; Hall, et al., 1998). The adolescent performers in this study, however, place high demands on themselves without demanding perfection from themselves when entering the performance environment. They accept that they will make mistakes and because of this acceptance, they move forward in their performance pursuits.

Next, the participants had balance as another perspective element. They value the performance deeply but also place priority on other facets of their lives. The adolescents want to experience many things in their lives and develop many parts of themselves. The adolescent performers discuss many benefits of living a perspective of balance. These findings help balance a vast amount of literature that illustrates that performers can live one-dimensional or unbalanced lives (Adler, P., & Adler, P.A., 1987; Brewer et al., 1993;

Coakley, 1992; Hays, 2002; Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Murphy, et al., 1996; Parham, 1993; Raedeke, 1997; Scanlan, et al., 1991). Whereas previous literature in adolescent performance has focused on the negative consequences associated with living imbalanced lives, the results of the current work focus on the positive consequences associated with living balanced lives.

First, the fact that the adolescents see the performance as just a game and that there is more to life, is of benefit to the participants because they do not place their self-worth on the outcome of the performance. In contrast, previous research shows that unidimensionalism and athletic identity can potentially threaten self-worth (Brewer, et al., 1993; Hughes and Coakley, 1991; Pearson & Pettipas, 1990). Second, having balance gives the performers an opportunity to physically and mentally rejuvenate from performing while past research shows that imbalance can lead to burnout (Gould, et al., 1996a, 1996b). Next, balance enables the adolescents to view their performance predominantly as a stress relief from other parts of their lives; other research indicates that adolescents have many sources of stress related to performing, including worrying about what others think of them and not wanting to let others down (Scanlan et al., 1991). Also, having balance enables participants to have a contingency plan in case their goals for high performance are not achieved; imbalance causes some student-athletes to hesitate in their planning for other possible careers (Murphy, et al., 1996). Finally, the participants are able to live fully in many facets of their lives, while others jeopardize their relationships with family, friends, employers, and ultimately with themselves, by neglecting their own health (Ewald & Jiobu, 1985; Hughes & Coakley, 1991).

The findings also show that these adolescent performers view their participation as intimately linked to many other people – an element called people perspective. They view their own performance success as a contribution to something larger than

themselves; they want to perform well not solely for themselves, but for the good of the whole team. They acknowledge the accomplishments of teammates. The participants talk in detail about their teammates and how vital these teammates are to their own individual performances. The fact that participants guide the conversation towards discussion of their team, even when asked questions specifically about their individual performance, speaks to the humility of these performers. They credit others, as well as themselves, for individual success. The results show that not only adult performers show humility (Brown et al., 2001) but that adolescent performers can also be humble in success.

The participants also view the support of people not as an optional part of their experience but as an integral one. The most prevalent form of support given to these adolescents is words of encouragement following performance mistakes, the words helping them to re-enter the performance with a positive perspective. Previous research indicates that support networks are used as a coping strategy to manage sport stress (Anshel, et al., 2001; Brettschneider, 1999; Dale, 2000; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Poczwardowski & Conroy, 2002). The results of this study indicate that encouraging words help these performers to cope best with the stress. In addition to serving as a way to cope with stress, the support networks help the participants to foster a belief in themselves and, at times, serve as the motivation to perform, supporting previous findings that social support enhances perceived competence and intrinsic motivation (Lazarus, 1990; Scanlan, et al., 1989). Although some adolescent performers feel pressure from support networks to continue participating and competing at a high level (Raedeke, 1997; Scanlan, et al., 1991), these participants actually want to work hard and perform well, out of appreciation for the support of others. Fageus (1999) explains that

bad relationships will “incapacitate the development of your full potential” (p. 6).

However, these participants view the support as helping them to reach their potential.

Also under the findings of the people perspective, these adolescents view building friendships as a central part of performing. They believe that the experience is not just about the performance itself but about meeting others and making friends. The fact that 9 out of 10 participants saw the opportunity for friendship through performing offers further strength to Scanlan et al.’s (1989) findings that 65% of their sample of adolescent performers saw building friendships as a source of enjoyment. However, for the athletes and musicians of this study, having friends through the performance went beyond simply a source of enjoyment. Having friends involved in the performance experience helped to motivate these participants in performances and the bond formed through performing carried into lasting friendships away from the field.

Looking at the findings as a whole, this study offers much to our picture of what perspective adolescent performers can bring to their performance and to their lives. Previously, Brown et al. (2001) have been the only researchers to look specifically at the concept of perspective in the performance literature. They outlined the different elements of perspective for 11 elite athletes. This research does much to reaffirm and compliment Brown et al.’s (2001) results. In both studies, the participants describe themselves as multi-faceted and complex individuals who have balance in their lives. Both groups set priorities and live these priorities everyday of their lives. Both the adolescent and elite adult performers also spoke about having a support group that made them feel that they were not alone in their performance pursuits. The groups connected with others along the way, building lasting friendships. Last, both groups draw lessons out of each experience and aim to improve and grow through performing.

The study with adolescent performers also expanded upon Brown et al.'s (2001) findings. Brown et al.'s (2001) participants found meaning and purpose in virtually everything they did and everything that happened to them. They discuss the importance of having a passion for competing and about making the transition out of sport when this passion starts to diminish. The responses of the adolescent performers also indicate that they have a passion for performing. The results of the current research give more detail on exactly what form the passion takes. The adolescents' passion involves having an energizing feeling towards the performance, having enjoyment and fun throughout, having a deep appreciation for the performance, and a sense of fulfillment when performing. For the adolescent performers the everyday meaning for them meant an opportunity to learn and improve through the performance. Furthermore, this study expands upon the idea of performers being complex individuals with many interests, outlining the specific benefits of living a life of balance.

The findings with these adolescent performers offer a slight twist to Brown et al.'s (2001) presentation of perspective. Brown et al. (2001) describe the elite performers' needs to fully experience everything within their performance domain. An immersion in the moment enables them to be completely focused on their performance. The adolescents, on the other hand, use a complete focus as means to balance their needs for development inside and outside of the performance domain. Within the performance, the adolescents are extremely passionate about performing and they use a positive perspective to stay meaningfully engaged in the performance. The positive perspective helps them to overcome obstacles and frees them to perform without worry of mistakes. Outside the performance, they see the pursuit as just a game and there is more to life than simply performing. They want to experience everything in life and see a wide range of

experiences as key to their full development. The ability to narrow and broaden their focus enables them to perform at a high level, while still benefiting from a life of balance.

Another slight twist to Brown et al.'s (2001) presentation centers around the perception of the term balance. Brown et al. (2001) state that balance is the same basic phenomenon as perspective. Balance and perspective do have many similarities in that they both involve having many elements in one's life, assigning meaning to each element, continuing to focus on and respect not just one but all of these elements. However, after investigating both phenomena through interviews with these adolescent performers, the researcher feels that balance and perspective are not interchangeable terms but that balance is one perspective element. In other words, balance is just one way in which these adolescents view their performance, just as another element would be that they view their performance as a chance to learn and improve. They carry the view that the performance is just one part of their lives and this view is just one of the perspective elements of the adolescents. Perspective involves the meaning and value an individual attaches to a performance, or how one views the performance; one view that these adolescents have is that they approach the performance with a sense of balance. Their perspective on balance is that they think it is important.

A strength of this study lies in the fact that the perspective of adolescent performers was addressed as the sole focus for the first time in the performance literature. The study also includes the views of both adolescent athletes from a variety of sports, as well as musicians, which makes it more applicable beyond one particular performance domain. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted in such a way that the researcher's conceptions about perspective elements were minimized by allowing the adolescent performers to take control of the conversation and lead it to the elements that they felt were most important to them. More than one participant mentioned how the

interview process helped them to conceptualize their view of their performance and to realize just what the performance meant to them. As the research continued through the various stages, it was evident that the elements of perspective went beyond simply outlining their philosophy on performance. The elements really spoke to the heart of their philosophy on life. Their view on life is full of optimism and passion. They seek balance and continued growth and absorb themselves in their everyday pursuits.

There are, however, limitations to this study. The present study looked at adolescent participants who were identified as top performers in a particular domain (sport or music) and who also seemed to have it all together. These adolescents were found within a specific setting – a private school in central Canada. The results therefore may have limited generalizability to other adolescents in other schools and in other locations. Though the sample was not representative of all adolescent performers, the researcher feels that the issues that the participants raised, including the essentialness of a wide range of experiences for both their development as performers and as people, would resonate with the majority of adolescent performers.

Further research in the area of perspective and adolescent performance could center on early adolescent performers, at an age when the performers first start to consider being involved in serious competition. Such research would clarify how these early adolescent performers view their performance in the context of their lives, given their relatively small experience with performing and with life. Another area of interest would be to track young performers through a 4 or 5 year longitudinal study, to reveal any changes in perspective and possibly shed light on what led to these changes. Given the benefits of carrying a healthy perspective, the research would be a significant contribution to increasing the success and enjoyment of a performer's experience.

The participants in this study are exemplars, able to excel in their performance domain and still manage to fulfil their other needs and priorities as developing individuals. Their perspective on performing and on living helps them to respect all areas of their life, to continue to learn and grow as individuals, to develop meaningful relationships, and to live their passions every day of their lives. The challenge facing those who are involved as coaches, parents, teammates, friends, officials, higher administrators, and sport psychologists is to help other developing performers to approach their pursuits with the same healthy perspectives.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. a) Describe briefly your background in your performance domain.
b) How have you managed to cope and thrive while you have been involved in performing? Please feel free to discuss anything that you view as relevant to you and your experiences as a performer and student (adopted from Brown et al. (2001)).
2. What are the things you really enjoy doing in your life? What are your main interests? Do you enjoy being involved in sport/music? What is it that you really love or enjoy about it?
3. What are the greatest stresses you face in your performance domain?
4. You know yourself better than anybody. If you had to describe yourself, what are the pieces or parts that make you what you are?
5. a) Could you rate or discuss the value of different key components of your life? How important is each element?

b) What meaning do you attribute to your performance? How important is it to you?
6. a) Describe what is a “big performance” or describe one of your most “stressful” performances.

b) How do you think and feel going into a big competition/performance? Ideally, how would you like to be thinking/feeling going this event?
7. I want you to think back to your worst performance. Describe what happened and how you reacted? Were you upset? How did your body react? What were you thinking? How long did these feelings last? How did you recover after this poor performance?
8. What advice would you give to a younger brother or sister who is just starting to be involved in sport/music? What advice would you give to help them to get the most out of the experience?
9. With respect to things we have discussed, how has your experience at the private school contributed to your experience in sport or music? Has it helped you to do the things you wanted to do?
10. With respect to things we have discussed, have you drawn out any lessons for how you want to live your life?

APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM / INFORMATION SHEET**

Dear student,

My name is Matthew MacDonald. I am currently taking my Masters in Sport Psychology at the University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Dr. Terry Orlick. The topic of interest I have chosen for my thesis is to investigate what meaning adolescents give to their performance and what importance adolescents give to their performance in the context of their life in general. I am currently seeking participants to take part in the project.

Although I foresee the interview process as being a pleasant experience for both the participating students and myself, I would like you to be aware of the potential harms of the research project. The participants may become tired during the interviews but, as I will outline below, the interviews become progressively shorter in length as the project unfolds.

Within the interview, there may be some questions that could cause the participants some psychological discomfort. However, participants will be free to abstain from answering any question without prejudice. Furthermore, through my Master's course work, which covers mental training consulting, I have been trained in dealing with performers facing worries. The participants will be thoroughly informed of their power to control their participation in each interview, as well as their freedom to withdraw from it at any time.

I would also like you to be aware of the potential benefits of the research project. The research will give insight into what meanings and values adolescents attach to their performances. The small inconveniences that might be caused by the research are justified by the fact that the participants will be contributing to the advancement of knowledge on adolescents' participation in various performance domains. The research will shed some light on how adolescents can continue to have positive experiences, and minimize negative experiences, in their chosen performance domain. The participants could also benefit from the project. The interview process could provide the students with an enhanced awareness of themselves, helping them to continue to perform at a high level and find meaning and joy in their experience.

I will be using a semi-structured interview guide to help understand the students' experiences as top performers. There will be two interviews in total, the first interview lasting approximately 45-75 minutes and the second lasting approximately 30-60 minutes.

Each individual will be given a pseudonym, in order to protect anonymity. Minor context details (e.g. player position for student/athletes, musical instrument for student/musicians) will be altered to ensure confidentiality.