

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**The Process of Perspective:
A Grounded Theory Inquiry into the
Art of Living Well in the World of Elite Sport**

by

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ABSTRACT

To date, research suggests that the demands and pressures of elite sport can result in a variety of psychological difficulties. We are bombarded by the media with stories of athletes that further validate this pattern. However, there are examples of athletes who seem to transcend these challenges and maintain positive relationships with their families, friends, and community. They conduct themselves with humility and grace, and perform admirably both in and out of their sport arenas. This study is an investigation into the lives of some of these exemplars. Through a series of interviews, I attempted to shed some light on the process through which these athletes live and perform.

Using a grounded theory approach, a model of *perspective* was developed. The insights of eleven elite athletes fit into three main categories: defining the self, living authentically, and experiencing fully. Interview quotations lend powerful testimony to the notion that an elite athlete can excel in the sport environment while maintaining a healthy view of self, staying true to self and key others, and finding meaning and fulfillment in the journey. These findings reinforce other ideas in psychology and sport psychology while providing a holistic model of healthy living to the elite performer.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Kim.

Your love helps me to see myself
for all that I am and all that I can be.

Your unwavering support and encouragement give me
the freedom to 'be me' ... with all my little imperfections.

Your passion for life inspires me to find the magic in every day,
and the meaning in every experience.

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Thank you, Kathy and Cal, for all of your guidance, support, and friendship.
Thanks Kathy, for your patience and your gentle but firm commitment to excellence.
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Thanks Mom and Dad, for the foundation of love and genuineness that gave me the courage and conviction to seek purpose and fulfillment in my own life.

A special thanks to the athletes that took part in my study. Your willingness to share your lives, the good and the bad, shed light on a process of profound importance. Your insights carry tremendous wisdom, and I will make it my mission to pass it on to all those who will listen.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introducing Perspective

Through an ongoing dialogue with sport psychology professionals and elite athletes, I became sensitized to the importance of a concept that has been termed *perspective*. Many of the issues faced by our sport psychology team related not to specific performance challenges, but rather to difficulties of a more basic nature. In counselling athletes, much effort was focused on helping individuals relate better to coaches and teammates as people, not just as athletes. Others were helped to stay connected and intimate with significant others, friends, and family who were not immersed in the same performance environment. Many teams and individual athletes were engaged in a dialogue about the personal meanings that they draw from their experiences in sport, helping them to stay motivated, deal with fears, and process the powerful emotions associated with success and failure. Still others were asked to place sport within the broader context of their whole lives, in an effort to avoid reliance upon their identities as athletes. It is through attention to this basic human foundation (that we've termed *perspective*) that athletes seemed best able to survive and thrive in the demanding and often brutal environment of elite sport. It is these consulting experiences that fostered my curiosity about the nature of this foundation.

However, to date, *perspective* in this sense has not been clearly defined. This study was designed to paint a clearer picture of *perspective*, its components, and its implications. I also hoped to document the conditions which 'make or break' *perspective*, as well as the strategies and philosophies that allow athletes to develop.

regain, and enhance it. Therefore, I was not seeking to describe perspective as a construct, but rather as a process of considerable complexity.

One definition worthy of attention here relates to the selection of the *word* perspective. *Webster's Dictionary* defines perspective (partly) as "the relation of aspects of a subject to each other and to the whole" and "subjective evaluation of relative significance". This definition sheds some light on the rationale for choosing the word. Arguably, perspective suggests some awareness of the self in relation to others as well as certain aspects of the self in relation to other parts and the whole person. The use of the term implies a respect for all aspects of life, without focusing solely on one. The subjective component of the definition indicates relevance of personal values, and the meaning attached to different aspects of one's life. It was thought that perspective might be a process of keeping the most basic and valuable aspects of one's life front and center, placing other pieces in a secondary position. It seemed to be a process of managing one's world in order to stay meaningfully engaged with one's sport, the important people in one's life, and one's self as a whole.

A related concept is 'balance' as examined by Amirault and Orlick (1998). Athletes either defined balance as having a vision or goal and striving towards it or as respecting different parts of their lives. The study identified some conditions necessary for achieving balance, including making a conscious decision to have balance, having strong self-discipline, enjoying what you are doing, having a support network, having leisure time, and being in the moment. While the focus of the study was on fitting one's sport and other aspects into one's life, there were data that hinted at a more primary process of finding meaning in one's sport, identity, and relationships, and assigning value

to these different aspects. The current study explored the process of this meaning-making.

My own experiences in sport reinforce the importance of this topic. In my second year as a university football player, I suffered a broken neck, effectively ending my football career. My world was turned upside-down. I struggled for years to redefine myself as a person, even though all I had lost was my sport. I experienced first hand the extent to which an individual's identity could be wrapped up in a single dimension. This single event may be most responsible for my fascination with the psychological world of the athlete.

My interest grew as I went on to compete at the national level in the decathlon. During my years of training, I encountered and/or observed many instances where the world of the athlete collided with the other aspects of life. Examples include relationship conflict and transience, stunted career development, depression and anxiety associated with failure and injury, and existential anxiety at various times when sport failed to provide sufficient satisfaction and meaning in life while alternatives seemed limited. While I trained and competed, I completed a psychology degree and increasingly held the conviction that athletes could benefit from psychology professionals familiar with the life challenges of the athlete's world.

Amidst the examples of life difficulties, I was also aware of certain individuals who were able to cope effectively with these same challenges. Furthermore, I and many with whom I trained coped differently at different times. In retrospect, I had ample opportunities to explore the process of perspective as an athlete but lacked the presence of mind to do so in a systematic and purposeful manner.

Were my experiences and observations typical? The next chapter provides some evidence from the literature supporting the challenges that the elite sport environment presents to those within it.

The Good News

However, despite literature that may paint an unflattering picture of the sport world, one should be reminded that these challenges affect different athletes in different ways and in varying degrees. There are numerous examples of individuals who excel in sport and still maintain positive relationships with family, significant others, and the community (such as Wayne Gretzky or Catriona Lemay-Doan). Some individuals are well rounded athletically, intellectually, professionally, and personally. Many are able to maintain healthy conceptions of self, independent of success or failure in sport.

Using the term perspective was intended to provide a positive focus, directing the investigation towards enriching, purposeful, meaningful living by the individual. I contended that athletes could have a basic foundation that bolsters their coping ability and allows them to embrace their experiences as athletes fully, while concomitantly enjoying other aspects of their lives. Investigation to date points primarily at what can go wrong. This focus allowed exploration of how things can go right.

CHAPTER TWO

An Abbreviated Review of Relevant Literature

In contrast to the traditional empirical approach, the proponents of grounded theory advocate a delay of the literature review until after the data collection and analysis are complete. The researcher then weaves the literature into the findings in order to draw connections and to couch the findings within an existing body of research (Charmaz, 1995). Literature can also be used to illustrate the findings further. This is a necessary step in a grounded theory study, since it serves to reduce the likelihood that the data will be manipulated to support existing theory and findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The intent is to generate theory inductively directly from the data, not from a priori assumptions. As such, the theory is then 'grounded' in the phenomenon it is intended to reflect.

You will notice that, in the literature reviewed in this chapter, the notion of perspective, what it is, and what contributes to it is not addressed. The review will simply paint the context in which elite athletes are required to function and provide some evidence of the challenges and difficulties that many athletes face. A more extensive review of literature, focused on the process of perspective followed the data collection and analysis, and is found in the discussion.

The Challenge of the Elite Athlete

Stress & Burnout

The presence of significant levels of stress and anxiety in elite sport is well-documented (Lopiano & Zotos, 1992). Both external pressures to perform (e.g., coaches, owners, sponsors, peers, fans, family) and internal pressures (e.g., personal standards and

expectations) can become overwhelming for athletes. Concomitantly, physical stress of high volume, high intensity training and competitions over an extended period of time contribute to a stress load that may exceed the physical, mental, and emotional resources of the athlete. Response to this overload can, at times, be problematic and warrant clinical intervention (Heyman, 1986).

Impending threats to one's status are also a reality for the athlete. The possibility of injury is always present, as is the knowledge that a dip in performance could cost a starting role, roster spot, or qualification for an important competition (Heyman, 1986). A look at the reality of competitive sport reveals that these athletes cannot afford the luxury of an 'off day'.

Further complicating this stress can be the perceived lack of control over one's fate because of the ultimate authority of coaches or even the dependence on a spouse/partner or parents for support (in the case of many amateur athletes). This lack of autonomy can contribute to feelings of helplessness and a pronounced stress reaction (Heyman, 1986; Parham, 1993). While some athletes are able to manage this stress, others may experience overload in the form of burnout.

Burnout is defined as a condition produced by working too hard for too long in a high-pressure situation, and is accompanied by a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose. The individual displays a pattern of physical and emotional exhaustion involving the development of negative self-concepts and negative values towards work, life and other people (Feigley, 1984). This condition may be accompanied by feelings of emptiness and isolation, since much of his/her life has revolved around sport. Behavioural manifestations may include reduced athletic accomplishment, and

sometimes withdrawal. Key factors in resolving burnout are thought to include attention to the significance of the activity in the athlete's life as well as the make-up of the support system (how much is tied to sport) (Heyman, 1986; Raedeke, 1997).

Identity Issues

Due to the demands of high level sports, the activities of athletes are dominated by sport related behaviours. Research indicates that more time spent engaged with such behaviours is associated with stronger identification with the athletic role (Curry & Weaner, 1987). In late adolescence, individuals are faced with the task of shaping their identity. This task coincides with a period in which most athletes are maximally engaged in their sports (one exception being gymnastics, when competition may coincide with an even earlier phase of identity construction). One study demonstrated the significant relationship between identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). It was shown that individuals identifying more closely with the athletic role did so at the expense of behaviours exploring other options and were found to have spent less time considering career possibilities at the conclusion of their athletic careers.

Athletic ability is reinforced from a very young age. In cases where individuals receive positive reinforcement in sport that exceeds all other forms of encouragement, athletic ability may come to be the only attribute that they value in themselves (Heyman, 1986). In a society that values sport performance on multiple levels (i.e./ parents, peers, media, economic rewards), it is not difficult to see how such rewards could outweigh others. When a single role becomes dominant, individuals are likely to detach

themselves from other role options and their associated developmental tasks (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995).

This lopsided identity can compound pressure to perform. Athletes are aware that failure to maintain a high level of performance will lead to self-doubt, self-criticism, and withdrawal of acceptance by the people that hold them in highest esteem (Parham, 1993). As a result, one's perceived value as a person may be at stake every time he/she competes, leading to high levels of fear and anxiety. With a strong and exclusive athletic identity, athletes may have as much difficulty maintaining their self-esteem in the face of failure as they do maintaining humility in the face of success. Furthermore, Deci (1980) demonstrated that rewards contingent upon athletic performance do not foster enduring feelings of self-worth. Instead, an external orientation may be developed, including such patterns as poor coping skills, indecisiveness, susceptibility to control by others, attribution of outcomes to chance rather than personal initiative, and reliance on external reinforcement to feel competent.

Relationship Issues

The stubborn, obsessive mindset required to excel in sport can represent an obstacle to healthy intimate relationships (Heyman, 1986). Arguably, most elite athletes likely have people in their lives whose esteem for them is unconditional. However, the time commitment required to excel makes regular contact with those people difficult. Furthermore, athletes may feel that these people cannot possibly understand the pressure, pain, and focus that is their world, thus isolating them further (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). Relationships with family and significant others can be strained by virtue of the amount of time required for training and competition (Heyman, 1986). Athletes with

busy travel requirements experience further strain. Infidelity is also a common theme in counselling athletes and couples, in part due to the time strain, but also complicated by the presence of 'groupies' and subculture expectations associated with certain sport environments (Brustad & Ritter-Taylor, 1997).

Another challenge to couples may come in the form of lack of maturity and responsibility by the athlete in the relationship. Some athletes come to live in a 'play world' where other relationships and activities are secondary, and an aimless day-to-day approach is acceptable. Although such adolescent views and behaviours may have been part of the original attraction for the partner, they may represent a significant hindrance to a mature adult relationship (Heyman, 1986).

Retirement

The athletic identity can also make transition out of elite sport difficult. Successful transition depends in large part on a sufficient support system. When one's whole support system contributed to the development of this narrow identity, the athlete may have tremendous difficulty moving forward (Heyman, 1986). Exit from sport may also require that the individual redefine him/herself with respect to personal competence, affiliation and friendship, physical self and experience, conception of fulfillment, and the passion or challenge that drives him/her (Brown, 1998). Survival of a sense of self and subsequent life satisfaction has been shown to suffer following unanticipated exit from elite sport (Sparkes, 1998; Kleiber et. al., 1987).

Grove, Lavalley, and Gordon (1997) conducted a study highlighting the role of athletic identity in transitions out of competitive sport. They found that those athletes with strong and exclusive identification with the athletic role tended to engage in less

post-athletic career exploration/planning and had more anxiety associated with this process than those athletes with a weaker athletic identity.

This body of literature identifies many of the psychological pitfalls that athletes may be prone to. The next chapter outlines a study designed to capture the process through which some athletes are able to transcend some of these difficulties. It was intended to shift the focus from 'what is wrong' to 'how things can go right'.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter will provide a rationale for the methodology chosen and an explanation of some important epistemological assumptions that were held going into the study, then a description of the study and the protocol it followed. The description of the procedure is organized into sections explaining the grounded theory method, for those unfamiliar with its conventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore elite athletes' experiences with respect to perspective. Those factors that contribute to or detract from a *state* of perspective were examined and a model of the *process* was developed. It is hoped that the insights from the current study will provide guidance for athletes, coaches, friends, family, and professionals working in this environment.

The Questions

What does the process of perspective look like? Does perspective have different forms and components? What contributes to it and takes away from it? How can it be developed, regained, and enhanced by athletes who are immersed in the multiple challenges of a time and energy intensive, highly competitive environment and lifestyle?

Considering the nature of the research questions, it was clear that qualitative methodology was well suited to this investigation. Specifically, the grounded theory approach was chosen. Let me first explain the suitability of qualitative methods generally.

Why Qualitative Methodology?

A qualitative approach was employed for the following reasons (Creswell, 1990):

1. Qualitative research is concerned with process. *Perspective* was not viewed as a static state, but rather as an ongoing process.
2. The study was exploratory. Little had been done in this area.
3. Qualitative research is concerned with meaning. I suspected that the challenge of *perspective* depends greatly on how one perceives oneself, others, and his/her environment.
4. Qualitative research is inductive. The goal of this study was to create a model that describes/explains *perspective*, not to test an existing theory.

Why Grounded Theory?

The preferability of grounded theory lay in its design for model construction. It is a stepwise method for organizing and synthesizing patterns and relationships within a set of experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While a phenomenological approach (Polkinghorne, 1989) would have painted a vivid picture of the athlete's *experience*, the purpose of this study was to commence a line of research that would extract a model from the experiences of athletes, not just describe them. *By assembling the concepts relevant to perspective into a model, athletes will eventually be able to draw insights for themselves, while coaches, support groups, and professionals will have a basis for designing educational programs, as well as remedial ones.* My intentions for these findings were applied and I chose my methodology accordingly.

A grounded theory approach seemed to offer certain other advantages in examining the process of *perspective*. First, considering the invariable breadth of

information that would come out of such a study, the grounded theory approach provided a systematic, organized framework for synthesizing information. Secondly, I contended that perspective is highly subjective and depends largely upon the perception of the individual. By constructing a theory that was carefully *grounded* in the experience of elite athletes, this process would be respecting the very nature of the process it sought to explain. Finally, I had to create, modify, and alter several different models before settling upon one that is most reflective of this process. The grounded theory approach lent itself to this intermediate development of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The Design

Before describing the steps taken to complete this study, it is important to outline the assumptions that were drawn upon in using a grounded theory approach.

Epistemological Assumptions

It should be stated in advance that the existential counselling approach has been a significant part of my professional development that I had hoped to tie into my dissertation. It is the counselling approach that I am most comfortable with, and I see certain principles as being intricately tied to the nature of the questions asked in this study. For instance, the notion that individuals actively construct meaning in their lives is a basic existential assumption (Norcross, 1987). This was of considerable importance when examining how athletes view their sports, themselves, their friends and family, and their lives as a whole. However, in order to conduct a grounded theory study properly, it was necessary for me to first be aware of my theoretical biases and then attempt to quiet them while conducting my analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

It is important to note that grounded theory can fall into one of two camps. The original conception by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is closer to the positivist research tradition (Annells, 1996), probably due to Glaser's Columbia University influence (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This classic version of the method is thought to *remove* bias through systematic steps and techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is suggested that, by following the prescribed techniques, the categories and patterned relationships would *emerge* from the data and represent a close representation of objective 'reality' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

By contrast, the newer conception of the approach, taken by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and others (Charmaz, 1995) accepts the subjective nature of social science research, maintaining that the researcher actively interacts with the data to produce the theory (Charmaz, 1995). The theory is said to be an interpretation of a reality that can never be 'objectively' known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is therefore essential that researcher biases be stated explicitly so that the reader has an appreciation of the 'glasses' through which the data has been interpreted (Ahern, 1999). This approach is less concerned with the 'truth' of the research product than with the pragmatic applicability of the results (Annells, 1996).

I feel it is important to state my belief in the latter, more phenomenological assumptions (not accidentally compatible with my existential bias). My awareness and active acknowledgement of my biases were therefore critical in communicating the process and findings of my research. I took steps to account for my beliefs and assumptions and how they influence my perceptions and to attempt to see around them. or *reflexively bracket* (Ahern, 1999). One of these steps was memo writing throughout

the research process (Charmaz, 1995). By recording one's thoughts and insights throughout the research process, one has a body of writing that can be examined for researcher biases. In addition, the process of articulating thoughts relevant to the study raises those thoughts to consciousness, forcing the researcher to clarify the logic directing them. Another was to periodically ask myself how my background may have been directing and shaping the manner in which I interpreted the data.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define theoretical sensitivity as the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and capability to separate out the pertinent information. This concept highlights the researcher's active role in the research process. Such sensitivity is said to balance professional and personal experience with the grounded theory research process itself (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A basic understanding of the people and the environment one wishes to study can provide efficiency in accessing the categories and relationships of pertinence to the participants. Adherence to the rigors of grounded theory method provides sufficient opportunities to view the data in different ways, thus allowing the researcher to make explicit the 'obvious' patterns and concepts that might not be addressed by someone who is immersed in that social context. I had to put a certain amount of faith in this research process, since the world of sport has long been a part of my personal and professional experience.

Simultaneous Data Collection and Analysis

Arguably the most defining characteristic of grounded theory method is the simultaneous data collection and analysis. In order to ground the emergent theory in the data, it is necessary to continually test hypotheses and emerging patterns against the

perceptions of the participants (Charmaz, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As the researcher in this study, I conducted initial interviews, transcribed and analyzed the interviews, then created a tentative model. After some refining of the model with guidance from my supervisors, I then went back to the participants with the results of the analysis in order to clarify and test the patterns that were generated.

As the second interviews were analyzed, they informed a new model (which was created about half way through the participants). This model was then taken to the rest of the participants for a third set of interviews. Following these interviews, the model was again refined with the guidance of my supervisors.

It was through this ongoing checking of the findings that the *trustworthiness* of the data was achieved. That is, rather than asking whether the findings represent an objective reality, I attempted to ensure that the model was reflective of the experiences of the participants as they perceived them (Guba, 1981). The agreement across all participants about the fit of the model led me to conclude that further interviews were not necessary.

The initial interview was as non-directive as possible in order to reduce the likelihood that I would direct the participants towards the assumptions that I have about the nature of perspective. Each participant was asked the following question: *“As a researcher in this area, I’m aware of the incredible demands and challenges that the elite athlete faces. I’d like you to tell me how you have managed to cope and thrive while you’ve been involved in high level sport. Please feel free to discuss anything that you view as relevant to you and your life as an athlete.”* All other questions asked in the first

interview were intended to clarify points being made or help participants to articulate them further. I relied on such counselling skills as probing, reflecting, and summarizing to ensure that I understood the points being made (Egan, 1990). Subsequent interviews were more directive as emergent categories and patterns were being tested.

The analysis itself followed the coding protocol as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Analysis consisted of three levels of coding. Open coding was used to identify key concepts, along with their properties and dimensions. This step briefly paraphrased main concepts, providing a slightly more manageable data set. Axial coding allowed for the identification of links and relationships between concepts. A coding paradigm placed ideas within four categories: context, conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences. Of primary importance here was identifying key factors or conditions associated with perspective and linking them with the varying consequences (as perceived by the athlete). For example, handling oneself humbly was associated with stronger connections to the people in one's environment. Finally, selective coding provided me with the freedom to piece together the relationships in a meaningful, coherent way.

Theoretical Sampling

Yet another defining feature of grounded theory is the use of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). No attempt is made to select a sample that is representative of a given population. Instead, participants are selected in order to check and define emerging conceptual categories (Charmaz, 1995). It is therefore inappropriate to define the characteristics of the whole sample prior to the study, as these will depend on the ongoing analysis. The one parameter that was used

pertained to how *elite athletes* were defined. All participants had to have competed at the amateur national or international level or in the professional or semi-professional ranks. Collectively having competed in multiple Olympic Games, World Championships, Pan-American Games, Junior World Championships, Francophone Games, and the National Hockey League procured the label of 'elite' for this group of athletes.

A first group of eleven athletes (six male, five female) was chosen by the researcher with the help of other professionals working in elite sport. These professionals were asked to identify athletes who were top performers and seemed to 'have it all together/have gotten it all together'. Seven of the participants had worked with sport psychology consultants before. I acknowledge the subjective nature of this criterion. However, I was willing to accept the 'gut impressions' of other sport psychology professionals as a valid *starting point* in this exploration. After all, these individuals were critically involved in the coining of the term perspective and genesis of this research question. The criterion was intentionally vague so as to minimize the influence of my own notion of how perspective functions.

According to Glaser & Strauss, (1967), as categories emerge, different grounds for comparison become apparent. These grounds direct the selection of further participants. Saturation of data surrounding the emergent model determines whether the sample is sufficient (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In other words, when no new categories or relationships are generated in the analysis, no more participants need to be recruited.

The group of participants in this study was not expanded for two reasons. First, the categories that emerged from the analysis were relevant to all of the participants.

There appeared to be a 'universality' to the categories with little splintering of categories from participant to participant. Secondly, the many small variations in subcategories would require dozens of additional participants to be recruited. Full elaboration of this process would require several years to complete in order to be thorough. In the spirit of grounded theory, I am willing to concede that my model is provisional.

Sequence of Methodology

The sample of eleven elite athletes was accessed through sport psychology professionals from the National Sport Centre – Calgary, using a letter of introduction (Appendix A) that was sent on email. Those athletes who wished to participate were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B). Initial interviews were then conducted with those participants *prior to* the first round of analysis. All interviews were taped on audio-cassette and transcribed. Analysis was *not* conducted between each of these initial interviews so that the experiences of one athlete would not influence the perceptions of the next. This pool of data provided a rich starting point for preliminary model construction. The entire pool was analyzed using the three levels of coding (open, axial, & selective).

Next, based on the first analysis, questions were designed to develop the emergent categories further, to test hypotheses about relationships between categories, and to test the trustworthiness of the initial model against the perceptions of the participants. Interviews became more directive after the first set in order to test the tentative findings generated through the analysis. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the same sequence of coding. As mentioned earlier, second and third rounds of interviews led to the eventual model described in the results.

Once the model was complete, the quotations that best illustrated the categories and subcategories were organized into their respective sections. A running narrative is used in the results to articulate the categories and to draw links between them. The next chapter provides a description of these findings, organized according to the model and its categories. Each participant was given a pseudonym for the purpose of confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Process of Perspective

The model of perspective has three primary categories: defining the self, living authentically, and experiencing fully (see Figure 1). Each of these categories is influenced by the other two, as is indicated by the two-way arrows. Each category has a set of subcategories that further elaborate on the main category. The subcategories are described in terms of their defining patterns. Each pattern is expressed in terms of two polarities: positive (+) and negative (-). The overriding category of perspective can be thought of as an overall tendency/movement towards the positive polarities of the subcategory patterns.

The dialogue identified a theoretical state of perspective with few drawbacks and considerable benefits. The participants felt better connected with themselves and the people closest to them. They felt more engaged in their activities, and felt that their lives were well aligned with their values and passions. They found meaning and purpose in their experiences, both good and bad.

Conversely, the loss of perspective is associated with high anxiety, isolation, and preoccupation with people and outcomes outside of the self. For this reason, it is intuitively difficult to see why anyone would move away from perspective. However, certain conditions, by virtue of their prevalence and emotional impact, can lure individuals away from perspective. These conditions include high performance incentives (personal, social, and material) as well as aversive treatment in response to poor performance. They are acknowledged wherever the negative polarities are described.

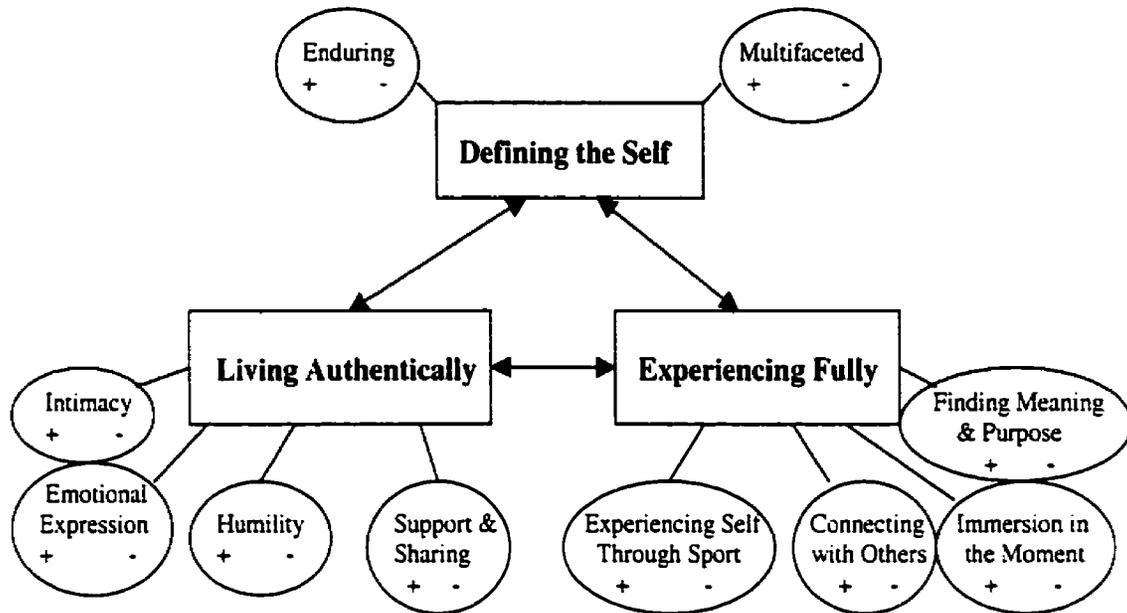
Perspective, as a category of its own, has a polarity or *valence*. The ongoing interplay of the positive and negative polarities within the subcategories shifts individuals back and forth along the continuum. The individuals in this study appeared to evolve towards more consistent living at the 'perspective' end of the continuum (versus 'perspective lost'). However, it is important to note that these participants were selected as 'exemplars', and it should not be assumed that all athletes will experience this shift towards perspective over the course of their careers. The process is represented in Figure 1. Elaboration of the subcategories (including the polarity of patterns within them) is illustrated in figures and explained at the beginning of each section.

Defining the Self

How one defines the self is of primary importance to the process. Individuals who are able to see themselves as having enduring attributes that cut across activities are able to find value in the self more consistently than those whose self-definitions hinge on sport involvement and outcomes. A sense of being multifaceted provides a buffer for setbacks in any given relationship or pursuit, in contrast to simplistic, unidimensional views of the self. These distinctions help to alleviate pressure and preserve a sense of self and personal value in the face of setbacks and transitions.

Participants viewed the self as distinct from any given activity in which they engaged. The subcategory used to describe this distinction is *the enduring self*.

Figure 1. The process of perspective.



The Enduring Self

It was important to the athletes to separate their value as a person from their results in the competitive arena (see Figure 2). Rather than being defined by their sports, individuals valued attributes in themselves that would endure independent of sport.

CASSIE: I think, in terms of my worth, I think I look at my attributes as a person. What I have. And I try to look at it, not necessarily based on successes, I mean, I think that's part of it, in terms of what I gained, but I think more so qualities are what determine my worth. And I think my qualities will compute to whether I get a job, or whether I can make the team, or whatever. And so that will reflect back on my qualities. But I think I try to maintain, in terms of where I am, the qualities that I have.

The self is seen as distinct from any given role that the individual takes on.

CASSIE: I have a number of roles, like the athlete, or the student, or the friend, or whatever, but I don't see myself as being defined by those things. I think I bring attributes to those things. So for example, in sport, when you're talking about expressing emotion, I don't think I have a problem with that one. I think that is the problem (laughs). But everything I do, I bring the energy and the raw 'let's go get it done' type of emotion. And sometimes it can be aggressive in some people's eyes. And so I think I bring different attributes to everything I do that are consistent. And so that's where my self comes out in everything I do. Versus it's me as the athlete. Like when I'm introduced, I don't really announce what I do. But I define myself more by my personality characteristics and the consistencies within.

I: So you wear a lot of different hats but always on the same head.

CASSIE: Yeah, exactly.

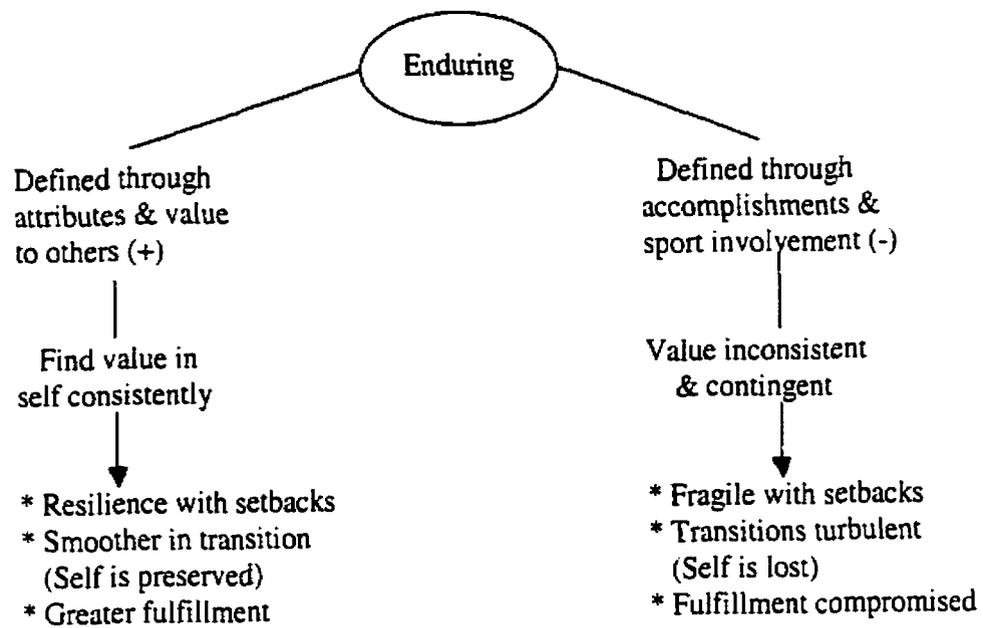
This view of the self brings with it an implied resilience.

MEAGHAN: I always think of it as, if all of a sudden, on the way home, I got hit by a car and my legs were broken, or something happened, my world doesn't fall apart. You know, maybe I think of things in a drastic way, but I could go on. I still have everything that makes me up.

Another athlete alludes to an intrinsic value that each of us has, simple by being human.

SCOTT: I've said this a few times; a person's identity isn't what they do, or where they live, or what their education level is, or whatever it may be. That's not you. I think people are much more valuable than what they accomplish. And people are intrinsically much more valuable than that. And I think you're created for much more than being a good athlete, or being a good student, or being the head

Figure 2. The enduring self.



of a major company, or whatever it is. You have much more value than that. It's not about things. It's about who you are inside.

The temptation in athletes to attach their value to their accomplishments is acknowledged but overcome.

SCOTT: I think there's a level of insecurity that's associated with athletes. They see who they are as what they do. You're only as good as your last game then. But if you see who you are as who you actually are, and that's reinforced by the people that you associate yourself with, the people that you're intimate with, the people that you're close with. Reinforced, but those relationships do not alone tell you, you know that internally, they just reinforce that, I think you have a much better balance. You're not worried about what other people think outside of that circle of influence.

Greater emphasis was also placed on the value that people add to the lives of those around them, rather than value by virtue of athletic achievement. Reference is made to some athletes that achieve as athletes, but not as people.

COURTNEY: And I don't care how talented you are physically, if you don't have the other parts, I don't want to be a part of it, and you'll never be great in my eyes. I'm very clear on that. Because for myself, I'm a gifted, talented athlete, but I'm not physically in the 90th percentile of elite players, but I think I have all the other parts pretty much in place, and that's why I've gone where I've gone. While I've played with people that have incredible physical talent but they go on to do nothing in their life, and if it is in the sporting world and they try to make it a career, it's very short-lived because they're awful to be around.

A tie is made between positive attributes and the value one adds to the lives of others.

RACHEL: I admire excellence in people, but I admire strength in character more. Like we talked about before, success or failure magnifies the person you are, and if you're not happy before some great achievement, you're not going to be happy afterwards. And to me it's far more important that I have strong morals, that I'm a good person, a kind person, encouraging towards others, than that I'm a great athlete, that I produce results. And that's more important to me than anything. And I think that is what my parents are most proud of too. That's what they've told me is that as I've gotten older, I've developed strong character, and I think that's who I am.

RILEY: I think what makes a great person is just someone who enjoys being alive, enjoys living everyday and takes advantage of the things around him, the people around him, and really cares for people in his community, and his friends. And

I've always been a person who depends a lot on friends and I've also tried to be a good friend.

This value distinction appears to be closely linked to a separation of one's identity from athletic results. In other words, the way individuals defined themselves far exceeded any event or accomplishment. In addition, events in the athletic realm do not dictate change in the essence of the individual.

MEAGHAN: You know, people said "oh, you must be going through a post-Olympic depression" but obviously some people go through that, but I think they only go through that if they have the perspective that the Olympics are everything in their life. Because if you put everything on it, and it's over, what else do you have? Where I don't look at the Olympics as that. Yeah, you know, people get to know your name, they get to know your face. Whether that means going into broadcasting, whether that means sponsors, those things, I mean golf tournaments, people you get to meet. There are things that you can do with an Olympic gold medal, but I think when you look at it, that doesn't change the person. It changes the opportunities, but it has to be something else that moulds your life.

Once the conditional value is let go, a celebration of the self can occur.

MIKAELA: Now I accept who I am, and kind of just revel in it. You know, I always thought that when I did something, or when I accomplished this or that, then I'd be this really incredible person. And now it's like "no, I'm already an incredible person, regardless of what I accomplish". You know, the way that I look at my life, the way that I treat other people, the way that I interact with people, and the way that I do the things that I like doing, and the love that I have for everything that I do, that's what makes me who I am.

Reference is made to the kind of panic response that can occur when athletes start to struggle in their sports.

SCOTT: I think that when people get caught up in seeing themselves only as what they've done, what they've accomplished, then when they start to have bad results I think it leads them to make nasty choices. I think that that's where there's a lot of danger in sport or in work or in anything else in life. If you see yourself as a lawyer, and that's what defines you, and you're nothing outside of being a lawyer, you get your self-worth from it, what happens if you're sued for something and it is actually your fault and you cost a corporation a huge amount of money and you get fired? Where does that put you? You know? Your world is destroyed. And

that's a pretty dangerous place to be, I think. I think, ultimately, everyone is unique and multifaceted.

This separation was viewed as critical to the full enjoyment of one's sport and life and the ability to cope with setbacks.

MIKAELA: When I first got started, even when I went to my first Olympics, everything was so serious, and you equate everything you do with how good of a person that you are. And after a while I just figured that's all bunk. I mean, you are who you are and nobody's perfect, and yet when you get into the public eye or you get around other individuals, they feel that you should be put up on this pedestal or that you should be more than who you are. And when I was that way, I found that I had this really negative drive, like everything had to be done and it was a must, and I drove myself and I worked hard, and you couldn't take a day off because if you did you'd fall behind and stuff. And then, when I didn't make 96, it was like "wait a minute, that's not the way I want to live my life". I don't want to end up in an early grave or end up really jaded too soon because I found that after 96 I lost the drive for sport. And so I found that I kind of had to change or learn a little bit more about me and separate me from the athlete. And once I did that, I started kind of just exploring and going through the things that made me me, like the things that I liked to do, the things that I liked to do outside of sport, my other interests and things.

Adversity can actually help individuals to revisit their holistic value, rather than breaking them down completely.

MIKAELA: I know after Sydney, after not qualifying, telling people, and having to walk through that whole interaction. And not just doing it once but having to do it maybe a hundred times. And the first time is hard, but then kind of looking at different people's reactions and how they respond to it. Some people go "oh, that's too bad" and some people go "well, we're really proud of you anyway". But again, it's about being able to separate yourself out from being just the athlete. So that when you're telling the story or when you're asking the questions, you can still be who you are. You can still hold your head high. And you can keep it in perspective; I still have all my arms and legs and everything like that, and I'm still here, and it doesn't mean that any part of me has been lost, or that it was all for naught or anything like that. Being able to answer those questions gives a huge sense of what you have outside of your athletic world. Being able to sit there and honestly evaluate and convey those thoughts to people is huge. And a lot of people don't do it. They just drop out of sight, or they never explain it or they never talk about it. It's more than they can deal with in the moment or even years later.

A peacefulness can develop in individuals who are accepting of the self.

RACHEL: Athletes that are very graceful in defeat and victory, in everyday training, in their lives, I think they're just happier people, happier with themselves, more at peace with everything that's going on around them, more at peace with where they're at in their relationships, in their sport. And I believe this for myself, you just really have to take a step outside of your little bubble and put everything into perspective. I say 'perspective' lots because our sport psychologist really engrained it in our brain (laughs). I don't know if everybody picked up on it but for me it's just so vitally important and I really feel that once you have that, it kind of makes everything not such a big deal, you know, and you can just kind of go with the flow. You know, if you're happy with yourself, I think that doing well is like a bonus in everything you do. And doing poorly is just another life lesson. And that's why I think people are a lot more graceful. They're just happier people. They're a lot more content with themselves and where they're at in life.

And this philosophy can feed one's passion for the sport, enjoying it in and of itself.

SCOTT: I think the athletes that need to be successful never find true enjoyment in sport. That's my personal opinion on that. I think that when you realize that what you do on the track or do on the field or whatever doesn't really determine who you are, or doesn't really affect who you are, and you're doing it because you enjoy it, you may be good at it, those are the reasons you're doing it. You're not doing it to get money or to get feedback or whatever else.

This philosophy allows the individual to face transition (or the idea thereof) with less apprehension, since the core self is not threatened.

COURTNEY: And I'm right there, actually. That's probably where I am, in transition right now. But I don't feel ... well, and I've had some of my good friends retire in past years, and they've had a really difficult time, and I've listened and I tried to learn from their experiences how I'm going to be. So this whole transition period is strange for me but I've always felt that I can take what I know and I've learned from my sport and that's made me who I am, and move on to something else. So I've always said that I'm not going to have difficulty. And I have a couple of friends that can't leave the sport. That's who they are. I don't believe that's who I am. But it's a big part of me.

The importance of accomplishment in the face of transition is conspicuously absent from this athletes reflection.

I: When you leave the sport, what do you want the people around you to remember about you?

SCOTT: Probably that "there's a guy who just did his best in everything. He just tried to do his best. Whether he was fixing the wrongs that he did, whatever he

could do to fix that, or as a competitor, or as a person.” Not that I was whatever champion or whatever else you accomplish. I think that’s nice but I don’t think that’s what it’s about. I think it’s ... “here’s a guy you could approach who was giving his best all the time”.

The transferability of core attributes is also recognized by this athlete.

RICHARD: I’m disciplined. I have a lot of desire. I’m hungry to achieve what I set my mind to. To me this is something that I feel in my heart, and so even with my own self-doubts I still persevere to achieve this, knowing that the rest of your life is always going to be there waiting for you. And so what if I don’t have a fulltime job by the time I’m 26? I’m doing something that 99% of the people in this world will never get the opportunity to do. And when I’m done, I’ll be ready to focus all of that desire, perseverance, and discipline to a career in marketing and management which is what I want to do, and I will have no regrets.

In summary, the self is seen as having value independent of athletic performance.

Individuals recognized personal attributes that they possess regardless of their

involvement in sport, as well as a quality of interaction with others that added to their

sense of value.

Multifaceted

Multifaceted is the second subcategory in defining the self (see Figure 3).

Individuals viewed themselves as having multiple dimensions. This broadened idea of

the self provides balance in response to success and failure in any given facet of one’s

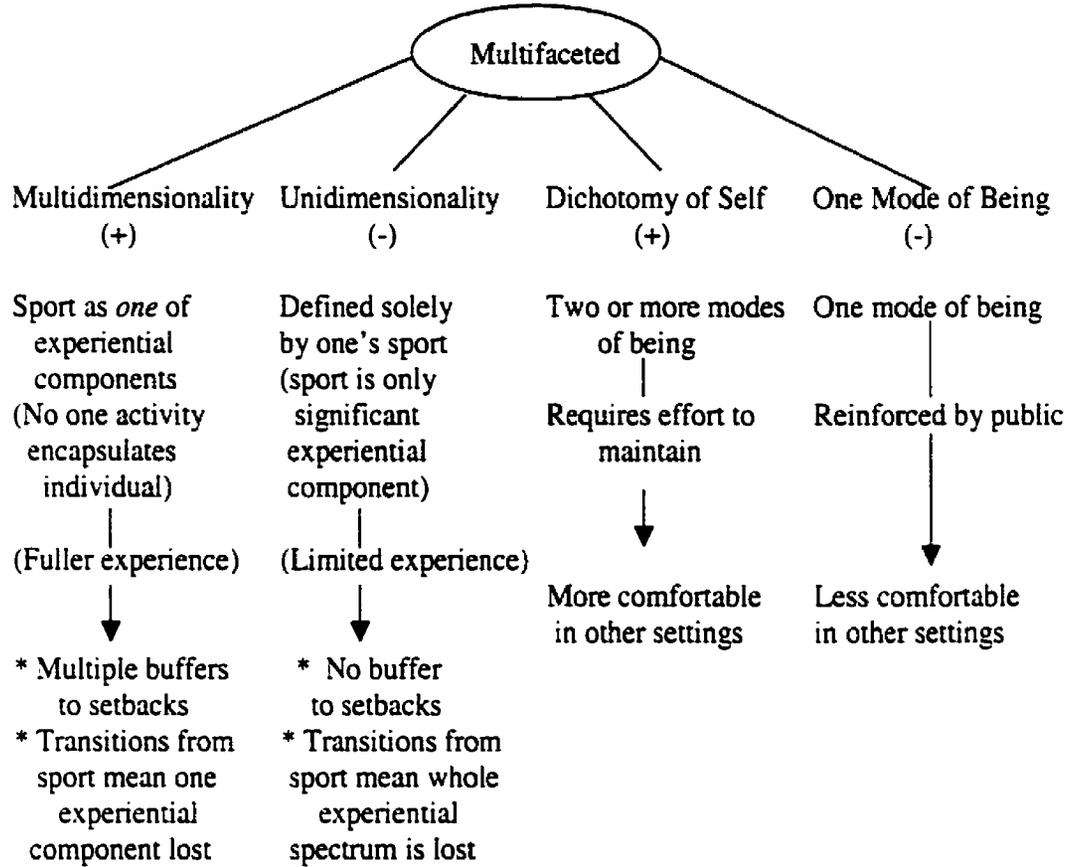
life.

Athletes could recall times when they defined themselves unidimensionally and

contrasted this with the stability of multiple dimensions.

CASSIE: We went to the (Olympic) qualifier and we were one team away from making it. I came home and that was probably the worst point in my life ever, because I put everything towards this goal. You know, make the Olympics, then I was just gonna train and then I’d decide what I wanted to do with my life. So I got back in November and was completely empty. So from November to ... it took a good three or four months, and even that was scrambling to try and find what it was that I could do to make me feel like a person, to feel like I’m worthy, or those kinds of things. So that took a while.

Figure 3. Multifaceted.



Evidence of a lifestyle change to counteract the distress of failure with 'all the eggs in one basket' is seen, supporting the notion that individuals navigate the perspective process with the help of experiential learning.

CASSIE: So 96, I saw that as "I'll go to school this year, but then the next quad", I thought, "can I go to school, get that down?", because I identified after the last one that I needed more balance in my life. And it's great to have this dream, and sometimes you do need to just focus on that, but I think you need to have a backup plan. That's kind of one of the things that I learned. Or another area where I had some passion, you know, I realized that this wasn't something that was going to last forever.

The common belief that success can only result from total immersion in one's sport was evident early in this athlete's career.

CASSIE: Everything about me was about going to the Olympics and about being involved in sport, and "no, I can't work because I've got to focus my attention on ...", you know, and I wasn't even ready to look outside that box. And I think, with that, that was awful in terms of my self because what I valued in myself was related to that. Whereas now, this next Olympics that we didn't qualify for (laughs), it was still hugely disappointing, but it was like when a door shuts, another one opens. I had set myself up because I never wanted to feel that way again. So I'd worked to maintain a balance, to make sure that "yeah, this is part of me, but it's not the only part of me". And so I think it was really important to me to make sure, almost to the extent that it might have been too much, that I achieved that balance. But I think that was based on experience and my evolution as an athlete. That was when I was still quite young as a high performance athlete.

It was thought that a multi-dimensionality was critical for living fully and providing emotional balance.

MEAGHAN: I heard Reggie White say this and I totally agree ... It should never be who you are instead of what you do. And you know that's ... I think ultimately that would be the one thing I would say about sport is that it's great for now and yet you have to be able to move outside of sport and do other things and have another life really.

This athlete, world class in his sport, placed value in a broader sense of self.

JORDAN: I was never an 'A' student in school because I think if you're an 'A' student, you're spending too much time in school. And I always wanted to be a little bit more broad.

JORDAN: It's like when you're investing; you're going to buy a balanced portfolio that's going to hold up the best. You're not going to get maybe the best performance, but some are going to go up and some are going to go down. If you have more that are going up than going down, then you're going to have perspective.

Another maintains that attention to other pursuits and relationships is vital to the pursuit of personal excellence.

RILEY: Well I think you come to a certain level and I think the way my whole life has been structured, I've always made sacrifices for the game, but it hasn't been the end all thing. I've always wanted to improve my hockey, but I always wanted to have my education too to fall back on. I've always wanted to go to the best place to be to improve my game of hockey, but I've always kept in touch of my relationships with my parents and my friends back home to make sure that those relationships continue to grow, and that hockey doesn't shut them right off. And I think we dedicate a lot of our lives to improving as individuals, as a pro athlete, but the bottom line is you work at this game, on a game day you'll probably play the game of hockey for 2 ½ hours in the evening and maybe an hour in the morning. And then on your off days, you're practicing for an hour and maybe weights for an hour, so there's two hours. Well there's a lot more time in the day for other things, and it needs to be filled up with other things. And if you don't have those relationships and friendships, what are you going to turn to?

A philosophy of holistic development procures spaces for multiple dimensions in one's life.

RILEY: I think you still need to be a well-rounded person, maybe not in your athletic endeavours, but in your life endeavours. And whether it's through education or just through reading, some type of education, whether it's going to school and taking classes or reading books, or just like picking up a newspaper every day, have a life outside of the game. I think what helped me out so much at college is that when education wasn't going well, I could fall back on hockey, and say "look, things are going well at the rink, I'm having a lot of fun there and doing well there". If things weren't going so well at the rink, maybe we lost a couple of games, I could say "well look at my GPA, I feel like I'm developing a good rapport with my teachers and I'm enjoying my classes", and they balanced each other out. And then you add another dimension of the relationship with your friends and family. They were always there to be supportive and to help you through things.

This same athlete made observations about the potential consequences of unidimensional living by others in his sport, and a simple solution to the problem.

RILEY: A lot of people turn to alcohol in pro sport, or major juniors who don't have success, or they don't have strong relationships once they get out of major junior because they haven't kept them up at all, and the main thing is: work as hard as you can for the couple of hours each day on the game of hockey and don't be stupid about things away from the arena, but you still have to have a life away from the rink, and you still have to develop relationships and try to become a more well-rounded individual.

The importance of experiences outside of sport to foster a sense of being multifaceted and having depth is highlighted.

MEAGHAN: When I moved to (name of city), it was hard because I was 17 and I'd just finished high school and I was pretty timid when I came here, and so I thought if I know some speedskaters, I'll live with them. And my mom really wanted me to live in residence, because for her it was very important that I had friends outside of skating. And I mean that just comes back to she didn't want my life to be skating. Because to her that was scary. And I think that was the best thing she did. Because within a week I knew so many people outside of sport, and I would say my closest friends don't do sports just because it's what you do but ... I mean it's sort of an escape when you can get away from your sport, and I guess have a view from another perspective.

These out of sport experiences are seen as important buffers for setback, allowing athletes to step out of their sport worlds when the frustrations and disappointments are overwhelming. Observations about athletes without such buffers reinforce their importance.

JORDAN: But not qualifying for the Olympics this time. I've been to two previous Olympic qualifiers but this time I wouldn't say we expected it but there was the potential to. After we lost to Poland, you know, I was very upset. (Close friend and teammate) came up to me and said "it's been a pleasure playing with you" and as soon as he said that, it was just total waterworks. And that was very, very difficult for me. But I know a lot of guys on the team are really messed up about it still. And I think it's because they didn't really have a whole lot else going on. And I think that's kind of what we're speaking about here. And I know people that, for that reason aren't doing that well with it.

These additional pursuits can even serve to refresh the individual following frustration in sport.

JORDAN: I even found, when I started to work at (name of organization), I would have a terrible practice, and then as soon as I got to work, there were new people there and a fresh start, so I was able to forget about the bad practice and continue on with my day in a good mood.

Alternative pursuits and activities seem to alleviate a 'heaviness' associated with taking one's sport home.

RACHEL: I think I used to take all those things so seriously. I'd get so caught up in it. If I did badly, I was so upset. And you know, if I did well I was happy. But it was such a huge, huge focus, like tunnel vision, that was it. And I think in the last two or three years especially, I've really tried to, when I'm done my work at school, I kind of try to leave it there. Especially if it's a bad day. You just leave it there, go home, enjoy my friends, enjoy my family, you know, my fiancé, it's something fresh to look forward to, getting married. Like those are sort of the things that I use outside of diving to keep myself distracted and you know, some kind of stimulation that's not sport.

CHRIS: "So once we're outside the rink, we have lots of other people to do stuff with, to kind of get the focus off the rink, so that makes it a lot easier too."

Again, implications for transition are implied. Retirement is a loss, but not a loss of one's entire experiential spectrum.

MEAGHAN: Of course, you know, people say it's hard to retire, and I think it is. You'll miss it but you'll miss it probably until the day you die. But just because you'll miss it doesn't mean that there aren't other things that you can do in life. My theory of life (laughs).

The possibility that constant focus on one's sport may be an escape from considering life outside and after sport is also suggested.

MIKAELA: When I was training for Sydney, I was able to shut myself out and say I was focusing, so I didn't have to deal with the people I didn't want to deal with. So it was easy. And then when I didn't make it, or things weren't going the way that I'd hoped for, all of a sudden it was like "okay, don't shut things out anymore". You can't just use your hopes and goals and aspirations as an excuse to keep you away from the rest of the world. I think that's why a lot of athletes have problems when they finish sport. It's because they have closed themselves

off and "I can't do this or I can't socialize because I'm training, and I've gotta train, and I've gotta be focused", and then, all of a sudden, when training's gone, they're like a fish out of water. You know, everything's always been about "my sport, my sport, my sport". You know, they never took the time to try and explore other avenues of themselves outside of sport while they were doing their sport. Then they leave their sport and they have no idea what to do.

In contrast, there is considerable comfort in recognizing one's multifaceted nature and versatility.

MIKAELA: Being in sport for over twenty years, sport's been a huge part of me, but as I've started to think in the last little while, if I lost that part, there's still so much more of me. It would be like that piece would go away and then I would evolve and the other pieces of me would start coming out and fill whatever spot that would be. So if I walked away from sport, either my interest in coaching or something like that would take over, but probably my interest in art or music or something else would take over and I would just evolve into the next level of whoever I am. Whereas when I first started, I was like "well if I can't do this anymore, then what would I do?" And now it's like "I've got lots of things that I could do. There's lots of things I could be. I'm not just stuck in this one spot."

An underlying philosophy of being multifaceted and a celebration of that characteristic was expressed.

MIKAELA: I think the whole thing is the idea of self-discovery and realizing that you're more than one dimension. You know, realizing that being an athlete is a huge part of who you are in the moment, but it's not all of who you are. I've learned that I'm not just an athlete. I'm an artist and a singer and a poet and a business person, and all these things, and also I'm a person who can go out with friends or be a recluse, and I can respond to all sorts of different situations. All the pieces fill the puzzle of self-discovery. And I think sport should be more of a way of developing, and a way of growing, and a way of discovering what your overall talents are. You know, discovering that you're really determined, or you are able to fight back from adversity. That's what competitive athletics is for.

I: "If I asked you to define yourself, what would you say?"

SCOTT: "I couldn't do it. I'm too complex. And I think anybody who tried to would be shorting themselves. I think human beings are just too complex to be defined."

One of the main ways in which this multifaceted nature was evident was in a dichotomy of the self that most of the athletes had established and grown comfortable

with. They perceived two distinct parts of the self, each allowing them to experience an important mode of living. While this may seem antithetical to the concept of an 'enduring self', arguably the self can be enduring but multi-modal.

MIKAELA: I've been in sport for such a long time that I've just kind of developed the way I am; when I'm out with my friends, and I'm out doing things in the outside world, I'm probably a totally different person from how I am in my sporting clothes. They inter-link and interconnect, but yet they're still two separate parts of my life so to speak. And so when people say "you were laughing and partying and were bubbly and telling jokes", it's like "well, yeah, because that's my social time, and in my social time, that's who I am. When I come to train, or I come to compete, that's what I've come to do." Yeah, I'll joke around a bit with the people I train with, but I don't make a point of coming to practice and trying to make everyone laugh or make everyone happy. That's not what I'm there for.

JORDAN: Outside of sport, I'm a lot more laid back. I can see things a little bit more objectively, I think. Like, in sport, I'm fiery and competitive, outside of sport I'm more casual and laid back. Inside of sport, there are fireball relationships. Outside of sport, there probably are some where you're able to step back because you're not as involved, like in a physical, emotional way, as much.

JORDAN: I have, it's almost like, a Jeckyl & Hyde kind of personality. In the water, I'm one of the most competitive people you'll ever meet. You've seen it in me, like I will do everything in my power to win, within the realm of the rules to a certain degree. And then there's the relaxed, like I have no problem sitting on the couch and watching some CFL, or watching a movie or whatever, just relaxing, going out with some friends and just laughing, like I'm not a competitive person outside the sporting realm, not a terribly competitive person, like to the point where everything has to be a competition. In the water, in the athletic realm, I'm very competitive. I don't like to lose. I never have been a big fan of losing. But I'm certainly more laid back outside the sporting realm.

One cannot help but be reminded of the Yin and the Yang of Chinese dualistic philosophy.

RILEY: I think I'd say that I'm an individual who's very goal oriented, who when I focus in on something that I want to achieve then I'll work extremely hard to achieve that. I'm a person who is well-rounded, who knows what's going on in the world around him. He's focused on his goals but is also educated in things that are happening all over this world, and especially that are affecting the people around him. And a person who, when he's not striving for those goals is very

humourous, I guess, or light-hearted, doesn't take things as seriously, enjoys just relaxing, enjoys the simple things like T.V. and just hanging out with his friends and enjoying relaxing time. So I think he's pretty much two different people: He's an intense, goal-driven individual at times, and he's extremely relaxed and at ease with the world at other times. There's sometimes not the in-between stage. There's one or the other.

The challenge may come in transition from one mode to the other.

CHRIS: Once you get back home, seeing ... I've got a little 18-month old boy and right there, that's enough to get you away from the whole game think back to family. And our house, unfortunately is sometimes like the big hotel where everybody comes to stay, so we've always got lots of people around, always doing lots of stuff, so it's not that hard of a transition. The tougher one is probably going to the rink, trying to get yourself back into that frame of mind where you have to be that ruthless kind of guy, where you have to compete as hard as you can and do that style for the game. Coming home it's almost more of a relief where you throw it out the window and don't have to worry about it anymore and just get back to living a normal life.

One athlete admits that the emphasis of outcomes can exacerbate this transition.

CHRIS: During the season, there's that magical winning and losing, and if you're winning, everything's great and everything's roses, and you walk around and everybody's saying "good job" and patting you on the back. So when you're winning, it's easy to get out of that whole being at the rink and having to be that 'on edge' kind of guy. But when you start to lose, you think about it more away from the rink. You start to think about things that you could change and do more of or try to get better and the whole deal.

Public and social influences can make this transition challenging, necessitating conscious efforts to maintain the sport-self/non-sport-self distinction.

CHRIS: Actually, when I get away from the rink, I try to pretend that I'm not a hockey player. I just try to go about my business and be normal. I think the more you put yourself in the position of being special, the more you want to believe it. I don't want to be in those situations when I'm away from the rink. When I'm at the rink, that's fine, people want to be around. But when I'm away from the rink, I just try to get myself away and come home and do stuff with my son and with my wife, and go out and do normal things, just go out and walk around the mall, just little things that make me feel like I'm more than hockey. And that way I don't have to worry too much about the game. It kind of stays at the rink.

JORDAN: For the longest time, I thought my identity was my sport, and any time someone introduced me it was with that label. And it gets ingrained in you and

all of a sudden you don't separate yourself from your sport, whether you wanted it that way or not. But now I make a conscious effort to keep those things separate. "If you want attach something to my name, how about 'nice guy'".

To summarize, the athletes in this study defined the 'self' in certain distinct ways.

- One's personal value is seen as a product of one's attributes and the value that one adds to the experiences of others, rather than being contingent upon sport outcomes. This implies an experience of self that transcends any given pursuit, whereby the essential elements of each individual stay intact regardless of outcomes.
- The individual is seen as multifaceted. One can experience two (or more) distinct sides of the self, in and out of sport. Different relationships, pursuits, interests, and activities provide emotional balance in spite of the disruption of any one component of the self.

These perceptions of the self allow the athlete to experience failure, frustration, and transition without threatening the enduring 'self'.

By contrast, perspective can be lost through the tendency to define oneself and one's value through sport and performance outcomes, and to view oneself unidimensionally and in oversimplified terms.

The 'perspective end' view of the self frees the individual to experience the self *through one's activities*, rather than being defined by them and drawing personal value from them. This philosophy of the self cuts across subsequent sections and is a central piece of the perspective process.

Living Authentically

The second of the primary categories in the model is *living authentically* (see Figure 1). When individuals define themselves in enduring ways and non-contingent

terms, acceptance of the self for what it really is becomes easier. A recurring priority in the lives of these athletes involves the freedom to be themselves. The interviews reflect an importance of being able to project a self that is congruent with the 'real self', not just outwardly but inwardly as well. This basic notion provides the foundation for the second main category: living authentically. The basic idea of authentic living was captured more explicitly in a small set of quotes. The subcategories of intimacy, emotional expression, humility, and support & sharing complete the category.

CASSIE: For me to fully experience the world, I have to be as authentic as I can. And I hate not being who I am. And I find that a lot of the time up to this point, I have been who I am. And now I'm finding that's getting me into trouble because I wear my emotion on my sleeve and people have issues with that. But I think I'm being real; it's just a matter of how I'm doing it, I think (laughs).

Authenticity carries with it a sensation of freedom, as described by this athlete.

I: You said your family allows you to be free. What do you mean by free?
COURTNEY: Well, as I said earlier, I'm kind of this person where you get what you get with me. Sometimes I'm too direct maybe, but I'd rather be like that and speak my mind, and to me that's being free. It's just being who I am, and as I said, if I'm in a good mood you see it, if I'm in a bad mood you can see it, and that's what I mean by free. You get what you get with me, and that's how it is. You know, that group of mine, family and friends and my husband, they let me 'be' in good and bad times.

This freedom is enhanced when one is able to focus on the obligation of being true to oneself, rather than how others are responding.

MIKAELA: And people around me can accept me or they can choose to be afraid of it or envious or jealous, you know. And it's no longer my duty or my obligation to make people feel better around me. My obligation is to stay true to myself, and be honest, uphold my integrity, keep my boundaries, and say "this is who I am".

SCOTT: "When you're comfortable with yourself and what you're doing, and you realize that who you are isn't what you're doing, I think you can be authentic with people."

Authenticity involves the removal of false representations of the self, or “no illusions” as one participant succinctly put it.

CHRIS: I try to be the same person throughout any situation, whether it's at the rink or away from the rink. I don't think I'm too much of a different person when I get into different situations. I don't want to try to fool anybody into thinking I'm something different than I am. The way I feel about myself is probably the way I want other people to feel about me also. Um, basically, just a hard-working, honest, you kind of get what you see kind of thing. There's no illusions. Pretty humble. Pretty even-keeled. You know, a very honest, hard-working guy that showed up to play every night. And that's probably how I'd want people to remember me.

This includes accepting fallibility in order to take responsibility for one's actions.

COURTNEY: It's more than just public scrutiny too, because sometimes I think that when you look in the mirror, sometimes you don't like what you see. Maybe you've reacted in a certain way in a certain situation and you know you're better than that. If you don't have to be infallible, then if you had a bad day, didn't think about it, responded too quickly, then you can take responsibility and ownership of it. Because you're not perfect all the time. It's too hard.

MEAGHAN: A few weeks ago, we were really in hard training, and I was just so tired and it was so hard that I was just getting irritated. And so I just skated away because I didn't want to talk to people, because I didn't want to be artificial, pretending that I was not tired. And I talked to (sport psychologist) and she said “as long as you know you have to get away, then skate away. That's fine. That's not being ‘not-teamy’. That's not being anything, but that's being you.” And that's expressing to people “You know what? I need this time.” And so, in a way, to me, that's being authentic, because I don't want to sit there and complain to people.

Before presenting oneself to others authentically, the vital step of authenticity with oneself much be taken.

I: Considering how you were treated after your positive (drug) test (earlier in career), one might expect you to have an ‘edge’ and an anger about you that you don't seem to have.

SCOTT: The people that were my friends, and remained my friends, they helped me deal with that. I think another thing that helped me, and give credit to the Lord once again, is that I came out and said “hey, yeah I took the stuff”. And as far as I know, I was the first person that ever did that. I just came out, admitted it, and tried to clear my conscience and clear the slate as best as possible. And

that helped me deal with myself, and then I could worry about dealing with other people afterward.

The 'pedestal myth' of sport heroes being perfect and infallible is a barrier to this realness.

MIKAELA: Some people can do that (be role models). Some people are that graceful elegant person on the field and off the field, you know, and they have this attitude and they carry that all the way through because that's the way they live their life. But again, if you try to bring something that's not you into your sport or into your life, it's going to show sooner or later. It always makes me laugh, the "ah, he's a gold medalist, he must be this awesome person" and then you meet him and think "ah, what a let down".

MIKAELA: I mean there are so many different levels and so many different things can happen and unfortunately I find a lot of people equate how good of a person you are with what level you've attained. You know, people look at Donovan Bailey and it's like "well, he won the gold medal so he's this awesome person", and then you read about him crashing his car and walking away and having fights with his coaches, and then you meet him and people go "ah, what a jerk". And if they had met him before he won the gold medal, they'd realize he's pretty much the same person. He's a little more outspoken and whatever, but he's pretty much the same person. It's just that now he's got all these people that are expecting him to be something that he's not, you know, this role model or this icon or whatever.

The freedom of being authentic seems to be of tremendous relief to the athletic performer, whose moves are closely scrutinized and whose role carries heavy expectations and pressures. It's the athlete's 'off stage'.

I: Where do you feel most yourself?

RILEY: Um, I think when I'm with my college friends, and when I'm in those comfortable settings, whether it be a family ... I guess there are a few different situations: back at the University of (U.S. state), where I had that core group of friends that I really got to know extremely well, when I'm back on the farm with my parents' family, my dad's family, and talking about jokes and farming and everything like that, or on my mom's side with my Grandma having orange peel fight and stuff like that, or with my girlfriend, hanging out, I feel myself in those situations. I don't have to impress anyone. People know who I am and what I'm about. I don't need to be funny, I don't need to be serious, because people know the way I'm going to be. They've known me for years. They know what I'm like and my sense of humour. I just enjoy those situations because I'm not on stage at

all. You're just at ease with people. And I think I'm very fortunate to have so many different groups of individuals that I can feel that way with.

Intimacy

An important part of living authentically is having close relationships in which one feels safe to be fully oneself (see Figure 4). While the world of elite sport can be highly conditional, fickle, and intolerant of weakness in any form, these participants paint a picture of intimacy that appears to balance the sport world realities. When a significant other fully accepts the individual, the defenses can be dropped, providing a heightened level of comfort, safety, and genuineness.

COURTNEY: Well, like I said, my support system is really good. My significant other has been really, really supportive.

I: Tell me a little bit about him.

COURTNEY: Well, we talk about balance, and we balance each other out really well. He's seen me struggle through all my ups and downs in my career, from indoor to beach, and with my family. He's my little solid rock. And I'm the one that ... I'm really emotional, so when I'm happy you can see it, when I'm upset you can see it. I kind of wear my heart on my sleeve. Where he is probably more even-keeled, yet he feels the same stuff that I feel, it's just that mine comes out more than others. So he's been super through all of this (adversity). So I'm very lucky.

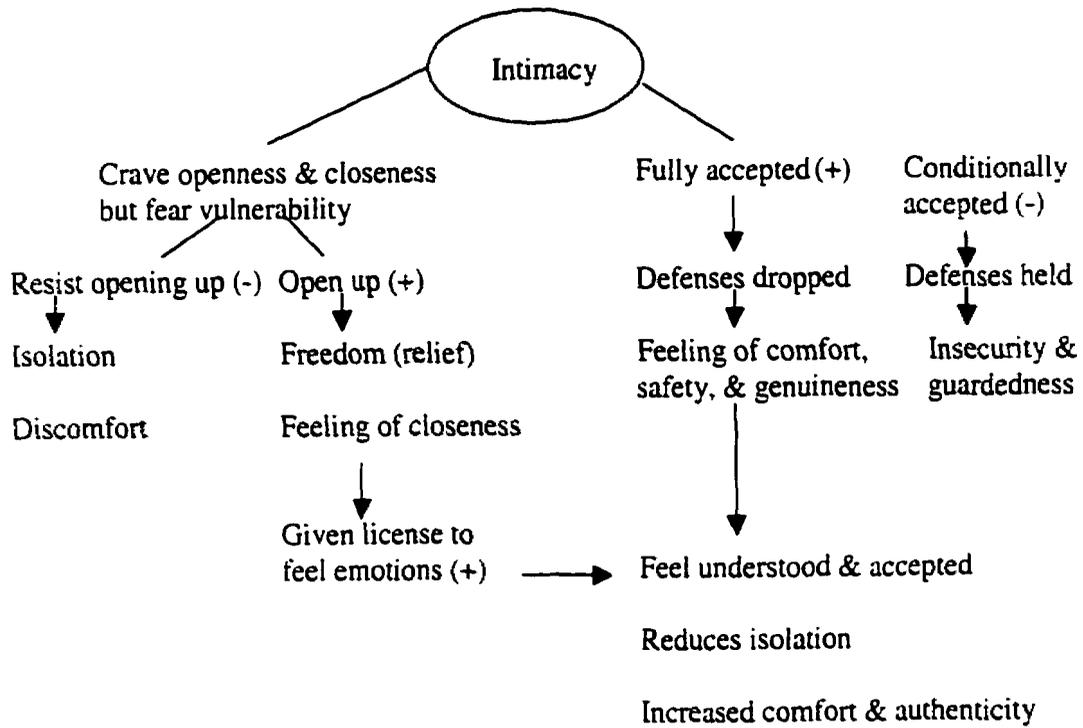
This safe forum to express, without being judged, appears to offer the individual both safety and strength.

COURTNEY: And I know that I need to have him there for me to stay healthy, and it gives me the strength to do it. But having a place to go and just unload and be in a bad mood if I want to be in a bad mood, or be in a good mood if I want to be, and he let's me do that. It's okay. He doesn't judge me. And I think, you know, those are the people you want in your life. And I have a couple of other really close friends. So I definitely have this circle or network that are there for me.

And this support may motivate reciprocal support from the individual.

RACHEL: And when I started dating (significant other), I think he's a big part of it. It took a good guy to break me down (laughs). He was just so nice and kind and caring, and all those things. And it was so weird to me that I could be grouchy as a bear or just terrible sometimes, and this person would still want to

Figure 4. Intimacy.



be around me, and still care how my feelings were. You know, I don't know when it was for sure, but there was just some turning point where I didn't feel like caring for someone else was like a burden.

Adversity can play an important role in helping individuals to identify those people whose support is genuine.

SCOTT: And during that time (adversity) it showed me really who my friends were and it showed me really what type of relationships I needed to pursue and stuff like that. Like I say this all the time, but if I hadn't gotten busted (drug use) during that time, I'm not sure that I would have married (significant other's name). I probably wouldn't have been married to her. Like, the pattern I had set was, you know, the longest girlfriend I'd had was about three months, before (significant other's name). And if it wasn't for the way her parents treated me and she treated me ... before I'd been going out with her for about a month and a half, and the way they treated me compared to the way people who had known me for a long time treated me was like "woah". It was an eye-opener. And I gave (significant other's name) an opportunity that I didn't afford a lot of other girlfriends at all. And because I gave her that opportunity, I was like "wow, this is a great girl!"

While one can be resistant to opening up, ultimately the experience is a positive one when one is fully accepted.

HOWIE: Well, it's hard letting that down, that guard. It's been the hardest thing for me. I battle it everyday I think. Whether it's a conscious or unconscious level. I mean, in sport, when you're competing, you're competing to win. So there are certain things that you're just not going to let happen. And now you have a unique situation where you have somebody that you feel you can relax around. You know, you can let it go, and sometimes it's hard to let it go. And that becomes a tough spot. Then when you finally let down and you know you've let somebody in, then the insecurity comes around, but then, later on, you feel kind of better about it. Part of you feels a little silly about it because then you think "oh, man, what is she gonna think of me now?" Then you realize a little bit down the road that it brings you a little bit closer and maybe she understands you a little more, and then you feel okay about it. Then you feel the relationship building up. But it's still definitely a hard thing for me to do. And there's been a couple times when I've let it down and she's been, for the most part, fantastic.

RACHEL: It's so important to have that support network. And I think it's something that I started off, at the beginning of my athletic career, not understanding. It was there but I didn't take advantage of it. So I'm not afraid to show my moments of weakness, I think. I'm getting better at letting other people see that side of me. I don't have to be the tough guy all the time.

I: So ironically, in accepting that vulnerability in yourself, has it made you a stronger person?

RACHEL: I think so. Yeah, I feel I am. But if you asked me that 4 or 5 years ago, I would have said "no way, you're such a baby", you know, and that's the truth. That's how I feel about it now. I feel needy sometimes. That's what the word is. And I don't like feeling needy. Even now, it still bugs me sometimes. But you know, I just realized it's human nature to want affection or to want to be understood, and I shouldn't think that that's such a bad thing if it's in me.

Individuals seemed to crave an openness with another. This openness provides freedom and closeness that the participants valued.

HOWIE: I honestly can't remember when I first told her I loved her. I just remember being so uncomfortable, and I knew I had to say it because it was just killing me. Like, it was driving me bonkers. I knew it, because I knew it long before I told her. But it was killing me. I wanted to tell her. I just wanted to tell her. It's like something you're carrying around like extra baggage. And I felt a lot better when I told her.

The need is not simply to express, but to feel connected to another.

CASSIE: So I think maintaining those kinds of intimate relationships, for me there are very few people that I can feel totally 100% comfortable with, saying absolutely everything about what's in my head.

I: With those few that you can, how important is that to you?

CASSIE: I think I need that for sure. Yeah, it's really important to be able to do that. And I think I lack that. Sometimes I lack the opportunity. And that can be tough. So then you just go to journaling, where you're just kind of doing it. But I need that interaction and some feedback, or even for someone to relate that way to me.

I: That human contact.

CASSIE: Exactly. And I think that level is really important to me. I don't get it a lot, which has kind of been an issue lately, I guess. But I definitely rate it high.

This complete openness and acceptance of vulnerability seems to be critical to full intimacy.

SCOTT: She's a big part of my whole 'keeping things in balance'. We're best friends, like we talk all the time. Like, we can still sit down, if I'm on a road trip, I can sit on the phone and talk to her for like two hours, you know, which is really cool still. And I think that's important. We can gab about a lot of things, and there is absolutely nothing of significance in my life that she doesn't know. She knows everything. Like, the worst things I've ever done, and like everything. And

I know everything about her. We don't keep anything from each other. We don't believe in that. We don't believe in separating anything. We work together.
I: So you can be completely vulnerable with her?
SCOTT: Absolutely.

Significant others have the power to give license to feel emotions fully and to accept this vulnerability.

MEAGHAN: I think that's exactly what I said. If your relationships are based on sport and not more than that, then there's no intimacy because that's all that makes you up. And then you really can't be open. You know, if people only have a relationship with you based on what you do or how good you are at something, then you obviously can't share your fears with them. If somebody thinks you're great in a sport and you go "man, am I ever scared", they'll think "woah, you aren't who I thought you were".

Accepting vulnerability may be particularly challenging for males, due to societal expectations. But the payoffs are significant.

SCOTT: You know, when I was younger and stuff like that, you know, men don't cry, and they're not supposed to need others, and I was always the kind of person that was like "well, I can handle it. I can take care of it. I'm a take care of business kind of person." And when you're that kind of a person, you put expectations on yourself that are sometimes unrealistic, most of the time unrealistic. And having to depend on (significant other's name) for some things or, not really depend, but just needing her, it's almost as if she's a part of myself. It's a part of myself that I've become aware of kind of thing. I need her input. Like I need her input for a lot of things. It's not every decision I make that I need her for, but she brings a sense of balance to my life. It's kind of tough to explain.

CHRIS: I think over the years, we've been married four years now, and I think I'm slowly starting to try to get her involved a little bit in it and tell her more, just so that maybe she can help me out with it and so that she kind of feels a part of it also. Earlier on it was probably more just trying to hide it from her and coming home and putting on the false front of everything's okay. But she's a smart person too, and she can see right through that. So I've been trying to more lately as we go with everything, not just hockey but absolutely anything, is try to talk more and tell her more about the way I'm feeling, and then she can help me get through it.

I: What kind of difference has that made for you?

CHRIS: Um, it not only makes your marriage a little bit better if you can share absolutely everything and there are no secrets, you know, I don't sit up in bed and just fume and worry about the next game or what happened in the last game. It's easier to get it off your chest. And it seems like once you get it off your chest and

actually talk to someone about it, there's no problem anymore. It's amazing, once you do it, how it kind of just takes care of itself.

Having a significant other with competitive sport experience was seen as beneficial in enhancing the understanding of the 'athlete's world'.

CHRIS: And part of it too is having a good support group behind you. I've got a great wife that understands. She played university level basketball, so she knows a bit about the stresses of the game and that kind of stuff. And that always helps too.

The athlete/ex-athlete significant other can help to break down the sense of isolation sometimes experienced by elite performers. This provides intimate support from one who 'really gets what it's like'.

CHRIS: It's nice that she's (significant other) played a sport before and kind of knows what it takes and knows ... you know, she's rode the bus, she's done that kind of stuff, plus her schooling, so she knows what hard work is and she knows what dedication is. So it's easy for me to deal with it with her help, because she knows what it feels like.

However, one participant eluded to the possible value of having feedback from someone who is not from that environment.

CASSIE: I'm just trying to think, on our team, there are two that are married now. One is married to someone on the men's national team, so they can relate to each other, and the other one is married to a hockey player. So they're in a situation where they can relate, and that's what you find is people who are in situations who can kind of relate with what your demands are, then it'll work, but otherwise it's difficult.

I: And you feel like the people in your life can never quite understand what you're going through?

CASSIE: Yeah, I think you hold things back more because you don't think they'll understand, but I don't know, I think sometimes you have to give them the benefit of the doubt. And okay, maybe they don't understand in relation to your world, but maybe they have a good perspective to offer, because maybe it's better to have them on the outside.

There is a perceived danger in relationships involving an elite athlete. When one's demands are extremely high, the significant other can give much more than the athlete. So the participants expressed the importance of finding a balance.

COURTNEY: I think this year was a lot about me because of everything that happened with my family, and things weren't going well professionally, with volleyball, and so I think I probably sucked his energy quite a bit. But that's part of a relationship too. And I think, because we have open communication, and because I'm the way I am, it's just out there, he knows where I'm coming from. And this year, it was just like geez, you know, like he didn't like to see me that way. And so, I don't know how to explain it but there's give and take, and this year happened to be taking for me in that chunk of time because I needed it and I really felt that I needed him to get me through. But now I think it's all in balance because now I have the time and I'll give back. And that's the whole continuum. It's not always a balance. You want it to be but when there's a crisis, sometimes you have to sway ... does that make sense?

The consuming nature of elite sport produced two philosophies within these participants. One couple viewed the athlete's sport as a joint venture, something that both partners invested in and shared.

MEAGHAN: And so, you know, we're in the position where, I guess we've put skating first, right now as a sport. Not sort of before us, but in the activities in our life. And, you know, we both decided that that's where we're at right now and he supports me in that, and after that's done, I think we have a good perspective of sport and life that once skating is over, then we move on.

MEAGHAN: It has to be something that's a two-way street. If it's not then it just won't work. And also, if you lose that, then you've lost something and the other person hasn't, you know. It has to be something that you both have and both lose or gain. But even though skating is sort of our priority right now, we can't have our whole life around that. That's just not healthy. And it's not us.

Another insisted that he and his girlfriend needed to each have their own pursuits that they could support each other in.

RILEY: My girlfriend is very supportive. She knows how much dedication goes into being an athlete too. She was an elite gymnast. So she realizes the demands and the pressures that come with being an elite athlete and the sacrifices you have to make. And I think that's the main reason why our relationship has been able to last for so long. Although it's been a long-distance relationship, she realizes the

situation. She has a career now at school and she doesn't want to sacrifice that, and yet she also realizes that I have to travel all over the continent too. And I think, because we have that type of respect for one another, that's why it's been more successful.

RILEY: Yeah, you look at situations, and there are so many situations in pro hockey, a lot of my friends and former teammates got their girlfriends down there or their wives down there, and they're from Canada so the wives can't work down there and they just sit there. And they don't have anything to fall back on. And if things don't happen to go well in the relationship, and they're just pretty much bored. Their whole entertainment comes from their spouse or their significant other there to entertain them. And I just don't think that's the way to live your life. I think the thing that I was attracted to in (significant other) is she has a set of goals and is a very determined person, just like myself. So I think the reason that we're so compatible is because we're both hard-driven individuals who have high goals and we want to achieve those goals. And we realize that it's difficult sometimes, very emotional departing from one another, but I think if we did it the other way it would be even more difficult for us in the long run.

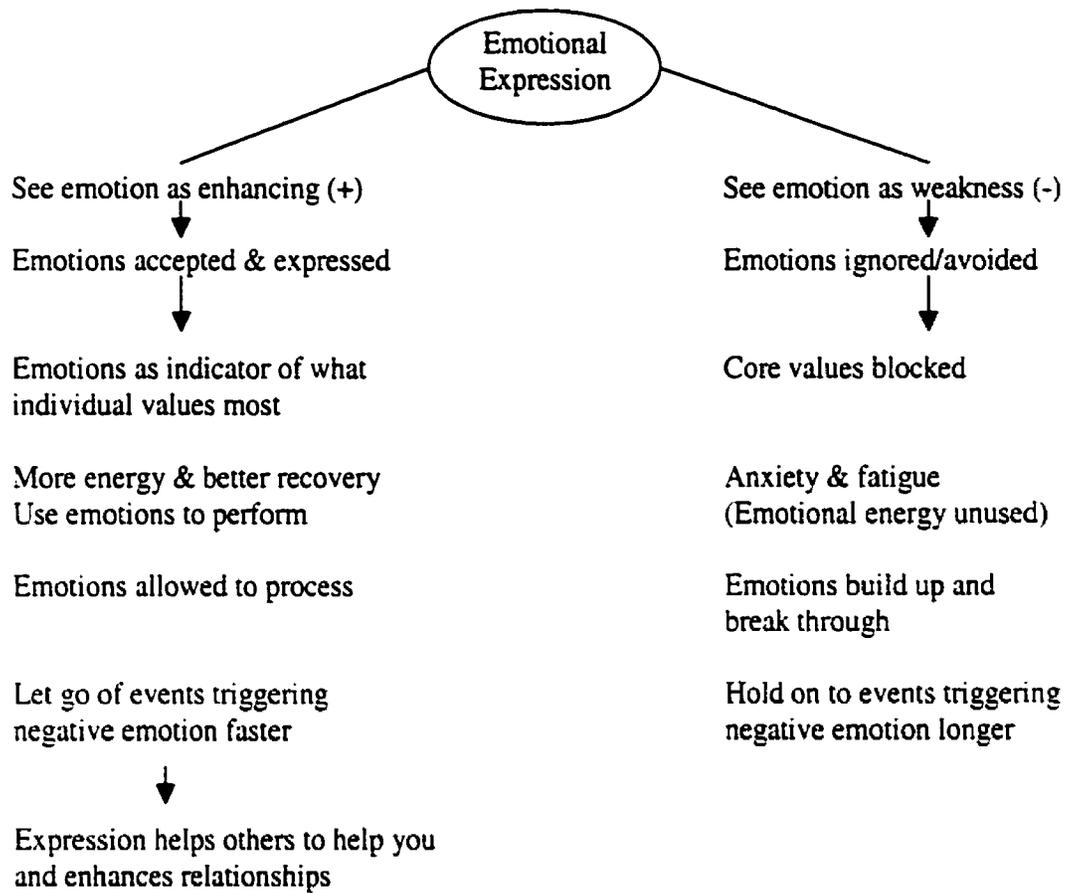
In short, having a significant other with which one could be completely open and feel completely accepted appears to break down some of the potential isolation inherent in elite sport, as well as providing refuge from the demands of elite sport. But the significant other must be given the same gifts in order to sustain a healthy, happy relationship in the long run.

Emotional Expression

The second subcategory of living authentically is the importance of emotional expression (see Figure 5). These athletes all recognize the value of emotional awareness and expressing one's emotions in some way. Rather than seeing this as a sign of weakness, they refer to it as a healthy practice that can enhance one's experiences.

Accepting and expressing one's emotions may represent the ultimate step in being authentic with oneself. The emotions can be seen as one's best indicator of what's most important to oneself and what lies within.

Figure 5. Emotional expression.



COURTNEY: For me, my emotions reflect what's most important to me. That's how I live. And sometimes it's too much for people. But that's who I am and I'm okay with that. And for me, to suppress some of those things, which I had to do, it's not good. Like, for me, it's just not healthy. So I'm a big believer in that. You know, because you can only grow from that. And I may be way off, but if I put it out there, I get the feedback that I need to go "okay, yeah" or "let's talk about that". That's me, but it's not everybody, believe me.

I: (Hypothetical) So your daughter comes home from her soccer game. She just lost and she's fighting back the tears. What do you say to her?

COURTNEY: I'd say "It's okay to feel the way you're feeling. You feel bad for a while, and then you'll want to get back and feel that desire that you have for playing soccer because you love it."

Expressing in the moment simply becomes part of being oneself, being authentic.

MIKAELA: You know, bad throw, you say whatever you have to say, it comes out, and then you go back in and you can refocus. And I've found it's so much healthier to say what you have to say in the moment rather than holding it in. And some athletes are really good at that while others are too worried about what happens on the outside. And I'm finding now that it has to be a happy medium, a happy balance. You know, just bring who you are to wherever it is you're going.

Accepting and expressing one's emotions is seen as good 'economics of energy'.

COURTNEY: And I think that if you can be open and be yourself with those people (supporters), it helps you to re-energize too. You know, you get that from those people. You know, that's not my motive in being with them, but by getting it out there and releasing it and whether you figure it out or you don't, it's out, and for some reason, you feel re-energized.

However, these lessons can take years to learn and accept. Individuals slowly discover the function of expressing rather than internalizing emotions.

COURTNEY: And that's who I am as an older athlete, and being 31 I can say, because I've been through the trenches and I've been through all of that, that it's okay to feel. And that's the biggest thing that I've learned in my career is the emotional aspect of it because it will eat you up if you don't ... for me, it does if I keep things inside and then you wonder "is this how I'm really feeling?" or "is my partner feeling what I'm feeling?" instead of just putting it out there and being open and being free to say "yeah, that pissed me off because of this" or "I'm really upset and I need some help because of this". You know, and then you get results a lot quicker and because I'm a (hand motion indicating quick & sequential) kind of personality like that, it works better for me.

RACHEL: I think I just know better now to let it go. And just to let it go because you waste so much energy being upset about something that, in most cases, isn't a big deal. But the more you think about it, and the more you let yourself boil, it just becomes bigger and bigger, it just snowballs. And that's totally yourself making a bigger deal of it than it is. And that's what my family tells me, the people closest to me are just like "you know what, let it go. It's never as bad as you think. Just don't worry about it. Tomorrow is a new day." And I think, at this point in my athletic career, I've been doing the sport long enough that if you have one bad day you go home and have a sleep and the next day you come back and feel refreshed. You know, it's not like if you have one bad day at practice you've lost the dives or the technique forever. Sometimes you have bad days.

So a habit is made of getting the emotions out. This practice 'lightens the load' of the individual, because once expressed, the emotion and the event that triggered it can be put in the past, or 'let go' so to speak.

CASSIE: Like one situation in that tournament, I got a yellow card and I thought that affected the way the team played, and we ended up tying the game instead of winning it, and I totally took responsibility for that game, you know, and I could not shake it, and then letting it out kind of helped me. It's like "yeah, I fucked up". But you know, things go on, and that's why we are a team, and it took me a while to realize that, but I needed to kind of write it out. And I think also talking it out with people, and people who will listen to it and give me feedback in a way that I know they're understanding what I'm saying, I think is a good way for me as well.

MIKAELA: You have to be able to let things go. A lot of athletes can't. They still live off of the last competition that they had when they lost or when they won or whatever. And you can dwell on it for a little while, but then you have to go on and move forward. It's becoming more and more important to me. I can express it in the moment, get it out, over and done with, and then always bring myself back into who I am, always expressing who I am.

This open expression can be a powerful shared experience.

JORDAN: I found, when I was playing in (home town), my best friend, we played (athlete's sport) together, and (athlete's sport) in (home town) was quite frustrating for the pair of us. And every time after practice, we'd get changed, we'd get in the car, and we would allow ourselves to bitch from when we got in the car all the way home, which was only a five minute drive, and then as soon as we got home, we'd just leave it in the car and then we'd go and play futsal or watch T.V., whatever the case may be. And (friend and teammate) and I had the same sort of thing, like we would allow bitching on the way home, and then after that there weren't any problems.

RACHEL: I think, in your darkest moments, it's easy to just feel sorry for yourself and be outwardly grumpy and just verbalize it. And just verbalizing it makes you feel better. And my fiancé knows me pretty well, and I think he, like my parents, is probably one of the first to tell me what I don't want to hear. But it's never in a way to make me angry or make me feel bad. But I'm mad for a second, like "I hate it when you guys are right!" (laughs) So I've got good people around me that are pretty good at telling me "leave it alone, let it go" and if that doesn't work, they just leave me in my own space for a bit and cool off, then I'm fine. They let me feel sorry for myself, and then they laugh at me later (laughs).

And sometimes human contact, even without words, can convey shared burden and lessen the load.

RACHEL: Sometimes a hug is just the only thing you can do, you know, you can't even talk. That's the only thing that can make you feel better. It kind of feels nice, you feel like you have a weight lifted off your shoulders when you can share it with somebody else, even if you don't even talk about it, just that they know you're feeling off.

The need can even be less about finding solutions, and more about just 'being heard'.

CHRIS: And once you get it off your chest, it just seems like there's a big weight that's been weighing you down the whole time and she can help you deal with it if you have to deal with it more, and if it's just something that's been bothering you, then it just seems like it's not a problem anymore once you actually say it.

Individuals recognize the dangers of keeping their emotions bottled up.

CASSIE: It's interesting because in one of my classes, I said that when I get tired and those types of things, then I get more emotional, and the instructor said "oh, when your guard is down", because when you're tired, your guard is down. So I think I'll express to a certain point, but with frustration and tiredness, it's out of control to the point when sometimes I think it's inappropriate. Or I just get super-emotional, like T.V. commercials will make me start crying, and I go "okay, what's going on?" But at the same time, I think it's really important to express that in some form. I think it needs to be a continual thing, and our society says that we should contain our emotions in this way.

COURTNEY: Yeah. I would have liked to have done that more (expressed feelings openly), and I don't know if that's an age thing, or if when you're in sport longer, you learn more about yourself. I think it's a combination of all of those things. But at times, I think at the beginning of the interview here I said I kept some things inside and only showed certain things. It drove me nuts inside. It's

not good for me. It may have been good for my teammate but it's not healthy. That's what I learned.

I: It's inauthentic.

COURTNEY: Yeah, totally. But sometimes people can't handle that. And sometimes it's better not to say anything. I do believe that. But you don't want to be doing that on a regular basis or you'll kill your spirit.

The role of close friends and family in this process is also critical. Inhibitions around the acceptance of vulnerability can be overcome with certain key individuals.

CASSIE: I think it's important to express the emotions. But I don't like to cry a lot in front of others, and I guess it's a vulnerability thing. I can express other things, like anger, but I don't like to do that. So I know it's important to do it, but at the same time, I can honestly say that I know I guard against some stuff, or it has to be with certain people.

But sometimes breakdowns end up looking more like breakthroughs when one learns to accept help from others.

RACHEL: And I think it was scary, and I don't know how to explain it any other way than that, to feel like you need somebody. And I remember there was a time, it was last year before (major games), I'd taken a bunch of time off, and in that time, I was almost ready to quit. Like, I took a few months off and you know how people take time off and they never come back, because you get so into the other parts of your life. And I was feeling frustrated with the sport and I remember sitting at the pool one day with our sport psychologist, and I just broke down in tears, I'm like "I need your help. I don't know what to do." And I was just overwhelmed because I'm like "oh my gosh, I'm crying, this is so embarrassing". I just felt so exposed. If that makes any sense, I don't know, but it was just weird to be totally not in control of the fact that I was so emotional and felt like I needed somebody else to help me get out of the place I was in. I think that I'm not afraid to need other people's help now. Whereas before, I always thought it was like "oh, you're a baby. You're weak if you need somebody else to help you." And I think by allowing other people, especially the people closest to you, to see you vulnerable or in a period of need, it enables them to help you out better. They know where you're at. If what you need is to be left alone, and they can see that, fine. But if you don't open up to that, people don't know. So it's just kind of opening a door and, I guess, growing up emotionally. Letting people in. And it's scary at first, you know. I'm still not good at it, because (significant other) said to me a couple months ago, like lots of weird things happened. We had family friends that had cancer, my grandfather died, and he said to me "you still do it, you still run a little bit. When things get tough and rough, you still run away a little bit. You bottle up and ... but you know, you're getting better at it."

Open expression can also enhance the connections that one has with others.

RACHEL: When I was younger, I was always very independent from the time I was little. I'd come for a hug for like two seconds, and then I'd be like "alright, alright, get away, I'm doing my own thing", you know. And in my teens, when I first started getting competitive at a higher level, I always thought I was tough as nails, you know, emotionally tough as nails. Nothing affected me. I never got emotional about this, and never got emotional about relationships, anything. Or worrying about somebody else's feelings was too hard when I had to take care of myself. But I think especially in the past three years, I've become, I don't know, I think I'm more sensitive to other people. And I realized, I'd watch other people's feelings, and I understand more about what affects other people or what offends them or that little single word you'd never think of can make somebody's day. And my mom even said that to me. She said "since you've been dating (significant other), you're so much nicer" (laughs). "Not that you were mean before, but you're so much nicer".

Relationships outside of the sporting realm can necessitate changes in the way one expresses. Acceptable emotional expression is certainly contextual.

JORDAN: I used to let it bottle up inside of me and then explode, but I've been making conscious efforts to work on that for the betterment of my relationships. But I also handle those things differently in the sporting realm. In sport, it's okay to yell and get things out that way, but in the social and personal realm, it's a different story.

Ultimately, the emotions can be tapped as a source of energy and passion for pursuing one's sport and other activities.

MIKAELA: It's like, the only way that you can have drive and the desire and the love and the fullness to go for your dream or to walk your path is to do it with grace and to do it with gratitude, and love and knowledge and compassion, and all of that. That's the only way that you're going to be able to access your true emotions, your true feelings and your true energy is by having that. And a lot of times people think it's contradictory, you know, "you can't be graceful and yet be driven", and at the same time, it's like "yes you can; that's the only way that you can do it". It's sort of like you have to be able to notice everything and have compassion for everything around you, but yet not get totally wrapped up in it so that you lose yourself or lose where you are.

The emotions are not allowed to 'run amuck', but rather are 'harnessed' and directed constructively.

SCOTT: Some guys just lose control, you know, and blow up for no reason. You see it in athletes, you see it in coaches, and other things. Yeah, you've got to harness some of those anxieties and even some of the frustrations that you bring from the office to the track once in a while, you know, and use them. Sometimes I think, if used properly, they can cause the body physiologically to get into a fight or flight mentality, you can possibly use that to your benefit. But you don't let any of your emotions sort of take over and dictate what you do. I think ultimately you've got to be in some sort of control. You can't let them run wild. But I think that if you use them, you can benefit from them. I use Christian worship music to warm up because it just makes me happy. It gets me into a happy mood, and when I'm happy, I feel better about my jumping. And the last few years, I've jumped best when I'm happy. When I'm just feeling really happy, feeling close to the Lord, and it's almost like a carefree, happy-go-lucky kind of mentality or space that I'm in, and that's where I like to be. And worship music gets me there. It's not typical warm-up music, but it works for me because I know the type of feel that I want when I'm competing.

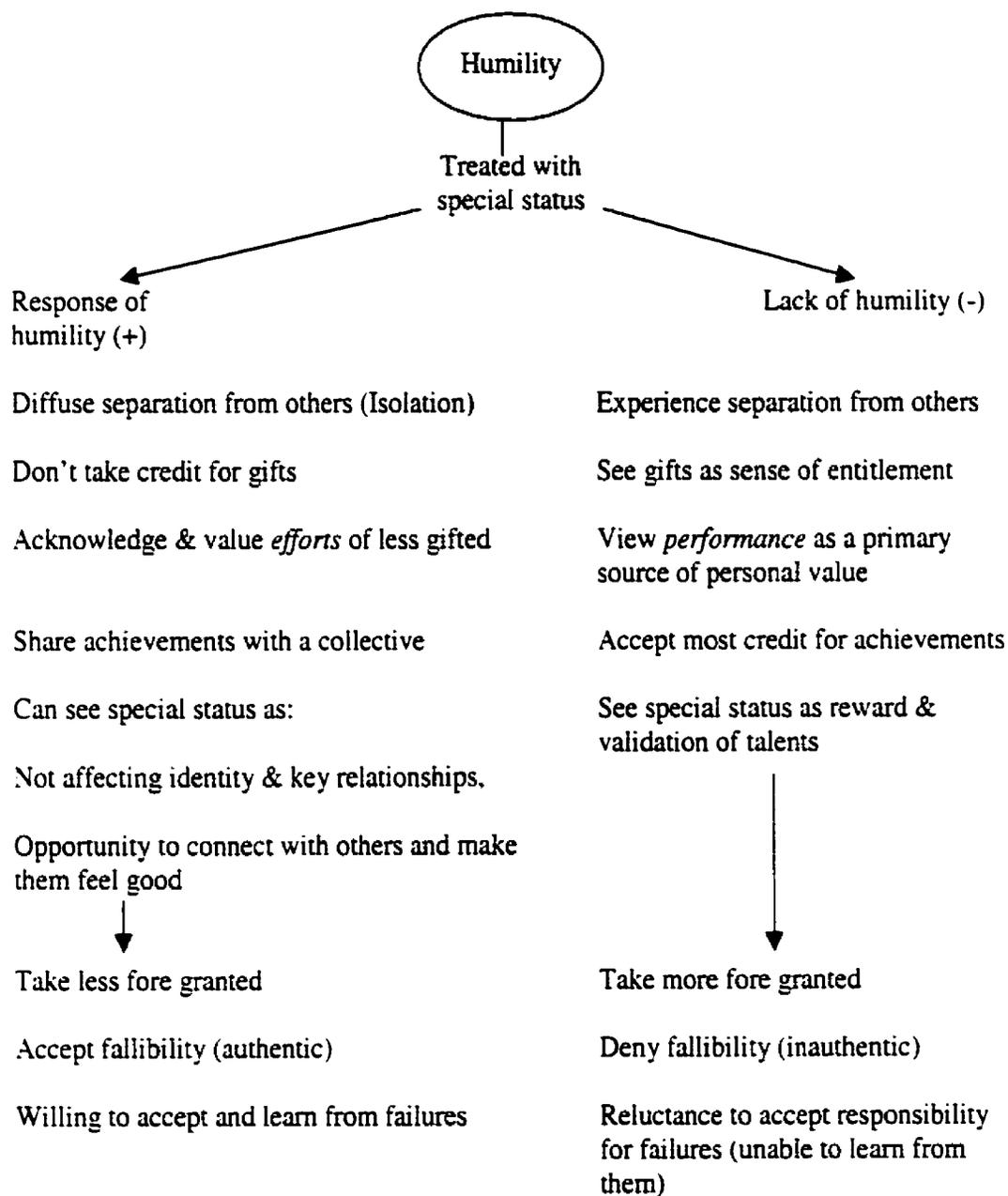
So the acceptance and expression of emotions serves multiple functions.

- Staying fully connected to oneself and the things of primary importance.
- Responding to events in a way that allows momentary experience of feelings, in order to get one's head around what has happened, then leaving it in the past and moving on.
- Being authentic with oneself and others, rather than experiencing dissonance between what one feels and what one feels is *acceptable* to feel.
- Accessing energy and motivation to pursue activities fully and passionately.

Humility

The third subcategory of living authentically is humility (see Figure 6). Humility goes hand in hand with one's attempts to project the self as it really is. If individuals wish to be seen (and to see themselves) as a whole package, including the vulnerabilities and weaknesses, then an attitude of humility can help to curb the temptation to project a 'superhuman' image.

Figure 6. Humility.



Maintaining humility was seen as vitally important to the participants of this study. This attitude is consistent with the idea of separating athletic achievements from one's worth and identity. If we accept that we all have qualities that make us unique and intrinsically valuable, then we should see success as an enjoyable experience, not as a source of entitlement and special treatment. Similarly, we should accept failure as a disappointing experience, not as a compromise of our personal value.

The pedestal on which elite athletes are sometimes placed can create a distance between them and the people around them. Humility allows them to diffuse the separation that might otherwise occur between themselves, as top performers, and these people. They seem attuned to the idea that the most exciting discovery that one can make about an elite athlete is that "she's just a regular person like you or me".

This breakdown of isolation was an experience common to the participants.

MEAGHAN: I think humility is one of the most important things, because if I look at (athlete's sport) and, you know, walking into the (name of training venue) and training, the thing I like the most is, when we have training camps, not just with our national team, but with the developmental program teams and all the younger people, and maybe older but who haven't reached the same level, I love that because I don't want them to look at me, I mean, they might look up to me in my ability and what I've done, but I want them to look up to me in the way that I don't see myself as any better. Because in training camp, we do events where, this is off the ice, where you become absolutely raw in front of people. I mean you do hill runs where you're on the verge of throwing up, you're on the verge of crying. And if some provincial club athlete is stronger at it than me, well good for them. And you know, if they see me struggling with it and they can say a word of encouragement, I love that, you know, and that's good for me and that's good for them because I need that. And I don't want them to look at me as "I shouldn't say anything because I'm not at her level". I mean, we're at the same level. I might have accomplished something more on the ice but I don't want anybody ever to look at me and say "she thinks she's better because she's done this" because I don't.

At the end of the day, these individuals want to belong, independent of accomplishments.

MEAGHAN: And so, when I leave the sport, I really think that the most important thing that I want people to look back on is to say "we respected her for how she handled her success". Or my failures, and I didn't sort of want pity when I didn't do well, or I didn't want to be praised when I did well. You know, I just wanted to be one of everybody.

Again, most fundamentally, the individual should not be changed by success or failure.

MIKAELA: It (success in sport) doesn't mean that you're any better or you've got a pedestal higher than anybody or you can step on people's heads just because you beat them by a foot or a centimeter or whatever else. What happens in the pool or on the track or on the field happens, and when it's done, it's done. And it doesn't mean you're any better or any worse than you were when you stepped on. But if you're successful, you're still an ordinary Joe. You still put your pants on one leg at a time and all that kind of stuff. And you're still the same person that you were before you won, or before you lost, or whenever.

Some athletes are careful not to take credit for their athletic 'gifts'. They attempt to honour their abilities, but do not see them as a source of separation from others. They also acknowledge and value the efforts of those with less natural ability.

MEAGHAN: I mean, I do believe that it's a gift that I have and I've used it to the best of my ability, but I don't take credit for it. You know, I've done the work but a lot of people can do the work and they just won't be at the top. You know, there are people that work just as hard as me or harder, but they just don't have the natural ability, and that doesn't mean that they're any better or worse than I am.

MIKAELA: (Name of athlete) had so much desire and so much, you know, wanting to make everything happen, and he had some talent but he had to work really hard for it. But he didn't have the actual physical prowess to make it all come together. But yet, he put it out there all the time, you know, and he's still this awesome guy. But because he didn't make an Olympic team or whatever, that doesn't diminish what a great guy he is or what contributions that he's made. I mean, he's an amazing guy, he's done some amazing things, but people will always equate Michael Smith better than (name of athlete) just because of the status, you know, of what they've done as an athlete. And I think that's ridiculous.

This value of humility can have its origins in an individual's spirituality.

SCOTT: The bible says pride comes before the fall (laughs). So, you can't really approach God without being humble. So if you're not humble and you're boastful and stuff like that, you just don't get to really know who God is. So it's extremely important to remain humble and to recognize that "hey, you've been blessed by

God". You know, those talents, those gifts, whatever else you have, those are blessings in your life. It's not something you've worked so hard for and you've accomplished by your hard work and your sweat and whatever else. I mean, you have to do some work, but I think ultimately, those things are a gift and a blessing of the Lord. That's what I attribute that to.

One can also gain respect for the narrow margin between success and failure over the course of a sport career.

RILEY: And I think what keeps me grounded quite a bit is realizing that there's such a little difference when you compare me to one of those players whose careers are over with. The difference between making it and not making it is so slim.

Efforts are also taken by some to share achievement with a collective, acknowledging the efforts of many in the performance of one. This again allows the athlete to stay connected with key people within sport.

I: Did your success change you? And if not, how did you keep that from happening?

MEAGHAN: You keep it from happening by how you ultimately view everything. You know, I view an Olympic medal as obtaining a goal. And not just sort of from what I did but collectively all these people helping you. I mean how many years ... I've worked with (exercise physiologist) for ten years, you know, and different coaches, but you can't just go out on the ice and win everything. I mean there's obviously teamwork involved. Like, all these people that make your program etc. who are never acknowledged. It's only ever the athlete on the podium who is acknowledged.

That athletes often receive the sole accolades can run counter to this philosophy, but efforts to share the credit can diffuse this pattern.

MEAGHAN: It is the athlete that gets the medal, but it's never a coach. You know, it might be mentioned but it's never the coach that's asked to come up and give their athlete the medal. So many people help you get there, and I mean, you look at the people that volunteer for the World Cups. You know, whether they're the ones giving out the food, they're the ones that you sort of sit back and go "wow, you're doing so much" and they just do it because they love it. You know, it's all the people that volunteer for an Olympics, to them that's the greatest thrill. And, you know, there'd be more people than you could ever imagine or that you would ever even know about, but you know, it's so important to acknowledge that people had a step in what you did. As an athlete you want to sort of sit back and

show people those behind the scene, because they're really the people that started everything out.

Still, when the public response places athletes in a special category, it can create a feeling of separation.

MEAGHAN: Last night we were in Canadian Tire and this guy came walking by and said "can I get your autograph?" and I said "sure". And I mean, I'm in sweats and a hat, and he said "I saw your vehicle outside, but I didn't think you'd be shopping in here". And afterwards I thought what does he mean? I guess people think you live in a different world. I'm like "who doesn't shop at Canadian Tire?"

JORDAN: It's nice to get praise once in a while, but then again, I'm not good at receiving praise. I feel embarrassed by it. I never tell people that I'm on the national team. It's not that I'm embarrassed by it, it's just I think it's like bragging and I'm not big on bragging. I'm not looking to be set apart.

But most athletes are not so far removed from the other side that they cannot at least understand how it happens.

CHRIS: I can remember as a kid, seeing a pro player up close and thinking "wow, I can't imagine being that player". But when you're in that situation and you see a bunch of little kids running around, it doesn't seem like I'm so far away. I don't understand why these kids are so in awe. But then when you put yourself back in their situation, you can.

One athlete was not bothered by the special attention because she felt her key relationships are not affected by it, and ultimately she remains unchanged.

COURTNEY: I love kids. Most of my friends have them. And, yeah, kids are great. So any time we can do anything to help. They make me feel special too. It's not that ... you know, whether I'm inspiring them, you know, I'd like to think that I am, and that's why they come over, because they've just seen me play and so, yeah, it's a good feeling.

I: Do you feel they put you on a pedestal?

COURTNEY: That's not a bad thing, right? That doesn't change who you are. If people look up to you, you've got a unique gift. That doesn't change who you are and how you live your daily life with the people that matter to you. You know, people are going to have preconceived notions about you and if they think you're a superstar, well, you know, to them, in their eyes you are.

Some see this public response as an opportunity to step onto even ground with others and make them feel special.

CHRIS: It's kind of cool, because I look back to when I was a kid, and if anybody that was in the position that I'm in now paid any attention to me at all, well I'd remember that forever. So it's kind of fun to be on the other side of it and be able to give back and realize that that kid is in the exact same position that I was in, and I would have loved if he would have given me a pat on the butt and said "good job" or made a little joke with me. I mean, that would have made my year. I still remember some stuff that players that were instructors in hockey schools did for me, and that also made me want to continue to play hockey. So it's kind of fun to be put in that position and be able to help out some other kids.

JORDAN: It's a great opportunity for me to go to schools. I get to speak to these kids and share some of my experiences so they can hopefully learn something from it. Yeah, it's an honour. I love to go there. And I love just to play with the kids and goof around with them, and you know, show them a waterpolo ball and dress up, and put the speedo hats on some of them. It's just fun. Forget the waterpolo and the politics and you just get to go and have fun and just play. And for the most part they get pretty excited about it and they learn something and they don't have to do math while we're there. So it's a win-win. But I love doing it. It's really fun.

Two athletes made reference to the role that humility plays in achieving excellence.

SCOTT: I think you sort of realize that you've been blessed with an ability and you don't take it for granted. There are some athletes that are awesomely talented but they never last very long because as soon as they get to a point where they have to actually put in the time and the effort in order to continue to progress, their pride or whatever kicks in, and they don't want to do that because it always came so easily. And if they had really appreciated the abilities that they had humbly, they would have continued, but they don't. They wanted the quick easy fix, or whatever, and it doesn't quite work that way.

RILEY: I think I've always tried to be a good friend, someone other people could come to and talk to. And as a captain, you have to be there and listen to people's problems and help them through situations, and they need to feel comfortable coming to you. And if you're an individual who doesn't have his feet planted on the ground, people aren't going to come for your advice, they'll just blow you off. And the main thing that I think is so key is just to look at someone in the game of hockey like Wayne Gretzky. He accomplished pretty much everything any hockey player would ever set out to do, and yet he never boasted about himself or his accomplishments, but you could tell that he had an inner confidence about himself and about his game that he realized that he could go out there and do things and help his teammates win championships. But he didn't go out to the media and

boast about it or anything like that. And I think that's the sign of a true leader and a true gentleman and a true professional.

Another athlete emphasized the role of gracefulness in response to *failure* in seeking excellence.

RACHEL: You know, success is one thing. People usually deal with success pretty well. You know, some people let it go to their heads and then it gets blown out of proportion. But in general, people deal with success a lot better than failure. But I think if you can learn to be as gracious when you fail as you are in success, and just kind of try and take something positive out of it, and apply it to your next training session, your next competition, your next year, I think that's the best way to be successful.

A distinction can be drawn between 'humble before the cameras' and a lifestyle of humility which was valued by these participants.

SCOTT: And people say you're supposed to be humble, but it's a false sense of humility. It's humble in front of the media and humble in situations where you're supposed to be, but you can go and talk trash all you want. I think if you're not living a humble lifestyle, if you're not living with an attitude of humility, it's gonna come out. If you're arrogant, it's gonna come out. You know, Donovan could only keep his mouth shut for so long. (Laughs) But the thing is, he's always been that way, right? He can only keep his mouth shut for so long. He's an arrogant guy, come on, let's face it. It's going to come out. I think if you live that lifestyle, it's going to be apparent. There's guys like Wayne Gretzky. He's awesomely talented, you know, best that probably ever played his sport in his position, and you never hear an arrogant word. With twenty-some years of being in the sport, some people like him, some people don't like him, but he never came across like he was better than anyone else. And look how much he's respected for it. Look how much he's progressed the sport for it. You know, I think people appreciate an attitude of humility. People recognize that, and when he goes through his bad times and slumps and things like that, they also protect him.

The roots of this lifestyle are commonly found in upbringing and the influence of parenting.

CHRIS: The biggest thing, I guess, is my upbringing. I was brought up to be a pretty humble kid and to never think that you're something that you weren't kind of thing. You know, it was always Mister so-and-so or Missus so-and-so and just a lot of respect for elders and that whole deal. And I think when you grow up in those kinds of situations, it doesn't matter what you get into later in life, that kind of stuff really shows through later in life. You know, I guess it's the kind of

people that you put yourself in and around too. We have some friends, both my wife and I, they bug me and they get you and start fooling around and don't let you become fat-headed or big-headed at all, you know. They keep you level headed and going that way too.

One athlete felt that maintaining humility is made easier in Canadian culture. This may be important to note, since all of the participants were Canadian.

COURTNEY: I think Canadian athletes have that more than probably most athletes in the world because of how we view sport. And they don't have a full understanding of what ... if I say that I'm a professional athlete, that's my job, you know, and they don't get it. So I think that helps to make it easier to connect to the regular Joe Blow.

COURTNEY: It's been important for me not to have an exaggerated sense of who I am. But I think that's part of our system too. If you compare it to the Americans and the way I see the athletes down there, it's totally different.

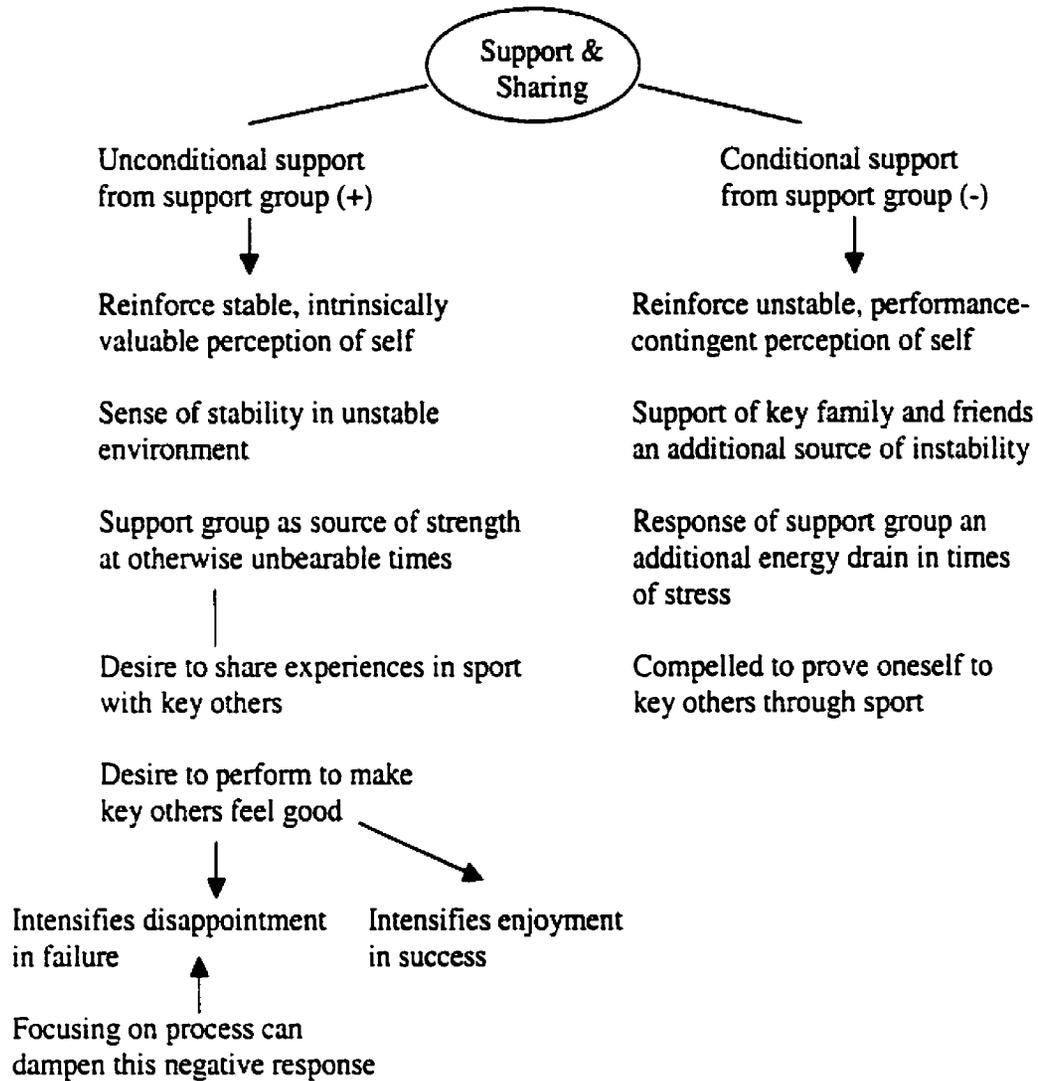
In summary, an attitude of humility allows athletes to be more authentic, breaks down isolation between themselves and the general public, and offers additional opportunities to touch the lives of others in a positive way.

Support & Sharing

The last subcategory of living authentically is support and sharing (see Figure 7). Like the intimate relationships, the presence of a supportive family and network of friends can further reinforce the individual's ability to express the 'unedited' self. The athletes had considerable reverence for those relationships that were 'real' and unwavering.

The role of family and friends in supporting the elite athlete appears to be a huge one. The participants attributed a great deal of their success, fulfillment, and perspective to the presence of accepting, supportive relationships. In addition, the unconditional support of these people allowed athletes to *share* their experiences with their support group, rather than having to *prove* themselves and their worth.

Figure 6. Support & sharing.



These relationships seem to reinforce the healthy perception of self that was described in the first section. For instance, separating worth from accomplishment is a recurring theme when these relationships are explored.

MEAGHAN: And I think the fact that, if your relationships are built on the person and not what you do, then your world won't fall apart. If I was friends with people just because I did well in skating, or if my husband was with me because I did well in sport, and something happened and sport left, well obviously my world would fall apart.

COURTNEY: I think that when our sport psychologist worked with our team before 96, we really talked a lot about perspective, and so I think I had a good feeling or good perspective going into 96. We were there and it was for us, and not because I have to do it for my mom and dad, I don't have to do it for every Canadian that's watching. And try to live that experience. But for this Olympics, because I was in the Olympics and now I'm still fighting for my position to get there, and being where I've been, I'm doing this all for me, but I'm bringing those people along with me. But there are no expectations like "you need to have the gold medal" because in their eyes I am that. And I feel that. And that's the best feeling.

The importance of this support takes on additional meaning when one articulates the 'nakedness' inherent in athletic performance.

I: It sounds like you have a group of people, particularly your parents and (significant other), with whom you can be completely vulnerable.

COURTNEY: Right.

I: And who love you unconditionally.

COURTNEY: Right.

I: How important is that?

COURTNEY: Well that's the ultimate. That's everything to me, because it allows me to be free. You're extremely vulnerable in sport. You know? If you're having a bad day or something in your personal life is going on, how do you hide that or how do you put your armor on? Well, I've been struggling with that for the last little bit, and your play shows it, there's nowhere to hide. And so, knowing that regardless of what's going on, you have that is huge.

But irrespective of the sport outcomes, support is unwavering.

COURTNEY: I think I'm really lucky because I have a really good group around me. Some have experienced sport, some haven't at all, but it's always the same when I talk to them. Whether I just won Canadian nationals or I'm really down, they're always really supportive, so I feel really lucky that I have that.

MEAGHAN: Um, I mean it was hard (major let down early in career), obviously I needed the support of family. You know, realizing that my family didn't think I was less important. And that's a big thing because I mean you have to decide why you're doing the sport. And I think for most people it's themselves, but also whether they want to succeed because they want people to be proud of them. And I think that's a big thing. You know, and that's human nature. And to have people say to you, "you know, it doesn't matter to us whether you're first or last", you know, really puts things into perspective.

Parents can also do their athletic offspring a service by taking pride in the accomplishments, whatever they may be.

RICHARD: And I know, even if I don't go to the Olympics or ever get a gold medal at this meet or that meet or break a Canadian record, that they'll always still be very proud of me for what I've accomplished and be able to look up to me and say "that's my brother" and be proud to talk about me.

RILEY: I think I've always had a great relationship with my parents. They've always pushed me to do well at the educational level, both of my parents being involved with the educational system. And when it's come to sports, they've just always been supportive. My mom never wanted me to play hockey. She always thought it was too much of a rough and tumble sport. To this day, she still says that if I want to quit at any time, that's fine with her. But the best thing that they've always done is they've always been my greatest supporters. They've always been there cheering. And there's so many times that the first question kids get in the car after the game is "did you score a goal?" Well, I could probably give the puck away in front of my own net and the other team score the winning goal in overtime and I'd still go back and my parents would try to find some other play that they really enjoyed and comment on that, instead of harping on the negatives. And they always made whatever sport I did interesting and enjoyable.

This positive support can be in powerful juxtaposition to the negatives that are pervasive in many performance environments.

RILEY: And the main thing too is that she (significant other) loves watching me play and she always tries to find the positives in things, just like my parents. You know, between coaches and the media, there's always going to be enough negative vibes around. With elite athletes, the more support you can have the better. I think, and that's why she's been a great supporter for me.

The presence of unwavering support can provide stability in an environment wrought with unknowns, inconsistency, and disappointments.

COURTNEY: And so lots of things were going wrong at that time, and my dad was not doing well, he was diagnosed with cancer. So all at the same time I'm thinking "oh my God, what am I to do?" But what saved me, I think, was that I'm a good communicator and I've surrounded myself with some pretty important people to work through when you go through trying times, because sometimes the forest gets pretty bushy and you can't see the path. So I've been really lucky that way, and through the support and trying to find out why I should continue to play, it was tough, but it's simple too.

Such powerful relationships can provide enjoyment and inspiration for the parents as well. The benefits are clearly bi-directional.

COURTNEY: My family has been tremendous. My mom is one of those moms that, you know, ever since I started, she came to every game that I ever played. My dad too. So you couldn't ask for better parents because they just keep saying "you know, you're the greatest, you're the greatest", and when I feel lousy, they're the ones that pick me up, you know, they're so proud of me. It's funny. Like for example, my dad is on his death bed right now, and he's got my poster, my little poster up on the wall, you know "there's the volleyball star in the family" and it's just a game, and he's fighting for his life, you know. That gives him pleasure. So they're pretty wonderful. Pretty wonderful family and I have great friends that are helping me through all of this.

It is worth noting that these athletes had experiences with their parents that were characterized by a level of freedom to discover their passion, rather than having pursuits imposed on them by overzealous parents.

COURTNEY: My parents let me explore and learn. And sometimes I'm going to make a wrong choice, but that's okay because you learn from those things. That's exactly how I've been brought up and I think that's why I'm able to live in this world and do what I do, because they've let me experience the good, the bad, and the ugly, and sure they've made some suggestions along the way, but basically they've just sort of let me go and they never had any tight reigns on me to stop me from experiencing or developing who I am. I'm grateful for my family and how they raised me, because I think people have inside ... for me, obviously I had a passion to play (name of sport). And if I said ten years ago I'd be playing (name of sport) at the age of thirty, I'd think I was a wacko, and I'm sure some people are thinking, you know, "get a real job", and I come across that, like "what are you doing now?" "I'm still playing." "Oooooohh", it's like, ooo geez, you know, and I've never felt that from the people that matter to me. And so I would just help them along the way.

This relationship with parents can take on greater meaning as the athlete develops if the foundation is strong to begin with.

RACHEL: I can't imagine going through all of this, up and down, and these great accomplishments, as well as the failures, without having those people there to unconditionally support you and be happy for you and share in all of that experience, because I think having them be such a huge part of it helps me, and they can be the ones that are outside and objective, to say what I don't want to hear sometimes and also to agree with me when I think I'm right (laughs) and just go with it. And I don't know, they're just a key, major role and I can't imagine not having them. I feel bad for people that don't have parental support or that strong relationship with them. And I think that being reflective, just in the past few years, where it's become so much more important to me, my outside relationships.

The outside relationships (parents, family, friends) provide a sense of security and stability that may be badly needed by the athlete.

RACHEL: And I think the way those relationships look to me, if I picture them in my head, there's this huge rock that I'm attached to.

I: And if things get wavy, you won't get swept away.

RACHEL: For sure, there you go. You finished my analogy for me (laughs).

SCOTT: I've got a pretty good support network from my wife and close friends. I know a lot of people but I don't have very many close friends. I have a small group of really close friends that I can talk to about pretty much anything. And I think that brings a lot of balance and security to my life. If I'm going through pretty much anything I can make a couple of phone calls and I'll have people to talk with and, in a lot of cases, to pray with. And you probably know it's very therapeutic just getting the thing off your chest, just talking about it and getting it off your chest. And having someone there that's actually listening, and having someone there that you know cares about you, you know, almost as much as you care about yourself, it's nice.

SCOTT: If I'm struggling, going through a rough time in the year, I can phone up a former coach of mine, he's also part of my inner group of friends, him and my brother, and I just go "man, this is what's going on" and they totally know where I'm coming from. They both used to compete. They both have that experience. And they can give me some insight, they can give me some feedback that my wife may not necessarily be able to give me. And we can talk about it, or laugh about it, or cry about it, or whatever it is I can take care of it.

The place of humility in these relationships is also evident.

RICHARD: My family has always been there supporting me. And so I mean the support's always been there and maybe I'm a little bit guilty of not appreciating them enough. But any decision I've ever made, everything I've decided to do, they've supported me. And without them, I would never have been this far.

The support of key individuals can also help in enduring those conditions that might otherwise seem unbearable, in order to stay the course of greatest importance to that athlete.

JORDAN: I've always been very close to my parents. (Name of significant other) is very important to me, obviously. So again, I've surrounded myself with good people that are always going to look after me, like the team sport psychologist. If I ever need anything I can talk to him and he won't tell me, he'll listen and help me choose the right way. But again, I've been privileged to surround myself with good people that will help me keep my feet on the ground and hopefully on the right course.

Surrounding oneself with the 'right people' appears to go a long way in establishing one's resilience.

JORDAN: My girlfriend was really understanding. She used to be a competitive athlete, so she knows a bit about the grind. She was very tolerant, because there were times when I was just so tired, and I was really short and abrasive. I wouldn't say abrasive but just short and intolerant. And then our sport psychologist helped tons, just being there to talk, being my sounding board, and when I had everybody and their dog dumping their problems on me, I would in turn speak to him about it. So again we get it down to surrounding yourself with people that will help you and will be there for you. (Friend and teammate) was great too. Like, we would share each others pain. On Monday morning, he and I would load going to practice and we'd have to drag each other to practice, but on Friday night we'd have a celebratory drink together. Again, good people understanding, helping you get through those tough times. And there were tough times. For every good moment, there were probably five bad ones. But the good moment, you know, I don't even know the five bad ones now; the good moment was so good that you forget about the bad things.

Given this unconditional support, it should not come as a surprise that these individuals had a desire to share their athletic experiences with their supporters, rather than using them as an opportunity to prove their worth, and perform *for* them. In other words, when

one's esteem from others is not riding on athletic outcomes, this provides a freedom to experience the sport and to share that experience with those people who are closest.

COURTNEY: And they talk about energy levels and having auras, and that could be hocus pocus but when I looked up in the stands, my Mom had glow around her, just so happy to be there and share in Atlanta, and I had my jogging partner and I said "look at my mom" and she's like "oh my God, I'm gonna cry, look at your mom". And so that was a big powerful feeling to have. And then our last match that we won in five, it was midnight. We had a 10:00 match, and it was a battle to the end, and we won, and we were taking team photos and we had people with the maple leaf in the crowd, and there was this one lady and she's waving the flag and she's bawling, and I'm like "who's mom is that? Get her in the picture" and it was nobody's. She was totally a proud Canadian and it's moments like that that I just go "wow". you know, that's the enjoyment level besides playing well.

MIKAELA: But it's neat, when you develop who you are and you share that with other people, then they can learn, either vicariously through you or they can feel different feelings, things that maybe they've never been able to experience. Maybe because they are in a different field, or a different area or time in their life where it's not possible to do those types of things. And it's neat to be able to experience those kinds of positive experiences and positive emotions and stuff like that, and it's nice in a way to have people that understand when things don't go right, that hard emotional type stuff. And they can empathize or know exactly how you feel (well, not exactly how you feel), but they're able to be there. But when you're able to share it, you don't feel as lost, maybe you don't feel quite as alone.

Sharing of one's experiences can provide additional meaning and enjoyment.

RACHEL: I want to share my experience more with my family and the people closest to me, because they are the people that are most important to me along the way, that have gotten me here and given me that unconditional support and love and encouragement. I feel a lot more open minded and relaxed about things than I used to be in the past.

RICHARD: And when the recruiter came to my house, I wasn't just happy because here was this guy, talking to my family, wanting me to go to school because of what I had achieved in my sport. But my brother, at the time, was five years old. And he was so impressed with the recruiter and so happy for me, he said "I want a scholarship to your university too". When he was five years old. He went into my room and got my Team Canada bodysuit, put it on, and it was obviously too big for him, it was down to his ankles, and he was running back and forth in the backyard trying to show the guy that he could run too. And every time I think about that it makes me smile. And it's because of something that I did. I think that's the first time that he ever really showed any desire to achieve

something. And he was five years old. So I mean, that made me pretty proud that I could be a part of that. I don't know, I'd say that would probably be my shining moment from sport, seeing my brother respond the way he did, as opposed to any personal accolade I've ever gotten or time I've ever run.

But certainly, the tendency still exists to want to perform for one's closest supporters, not to earn their affection but to give them a reason to feel good. This can be experienced very positively when successful, but can heighten disappointment if a failure includes a sense of letting key family and friends down.

RICHARD: I remember talking to my mom one day, and this was back in the time when I wasn't competing well. And I was talking to her a bit about the way things were going and she was a little bit worried about me. And I remember looking out the window and my little brother was playing basketball, and I said to her "what hurts the most is I don't want to let him down". And he doesn't even expect that of me but I just feel so obligated to set a good example and be something that he can be proud of. That was one of my driving forces. I've never cared about what anybody else thinks about me. I could give a damn if I ever get my name in the paper, if anybody wants to interview me. I don't care about the accolades or anything. I'm doing this because of a personal drive to achieve and to see how well I can do. And I'm doing it for my little brother, you know, because I see what he sees in me and he tries so much harder in what he's doing, and because of that he's going to succeed. He's gonna be pretty damned good at whatever he decides to do. And I just want to be that kind of role model for him.

At such times, it might be wise to remember the importance of process that these athletes hold as important.

RICHARD: I just want him (little brother) to see how hard that I work and "don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something or you should do this". I mean, other people have already lived their own life, and if you have a dream and something inside of you that you need to fulfill, then to hell with what anybody else says. I'm doing this for me. And I just want my little brother to see that I wasn't afraid to take a chance. If he wants to play basketball, if he wants to try to get a scholarship in any sport, or if he wants to take anything in school that he wants, if he wants to be an architect, then go for it. I mean, don't be afraid and work hard while you're doing it. Don't do anything half-ass, and at the end of the day, be proud of what you did and achieved, no matter how far you've made it.

This idea is seen permeating the parental philosophy of one of the athletes.

CHRIS: I could really care less if he (son) wants to play hockey or anything like that. Basically, it's to have respect for other people. Work your hardest. It doesn't matter what you pick to do, just work your hardest at it. And that's basically it, just real simple. I think a lot of parents nowadays get too caught up in wanting their kids to be the best at everything. I mean, every parent wants their kid to be the best at everything, but there's that line that's drawn where you've got to let the kid do it themselves, and provide a good strong base for them and just let them go and let them run with it. I'm going to be involved in his life, but not to the point where I'm going to be at the rink, screaming and yelling at the ref to make a better call or yelling at other parents and doing that kind of stuff. I obviously want him to know that whatever he chooses, that he's all right with that, and that he's going to have my support. But he also has to know that he's got to work his butt off to do it. That's most of it, is hard work and dedication, that kind of stuff.

Not surprisingly, these athletes place their relationships in a position of central importance, ahead of their personal experiences in athletics.

RACHEL: I just try to stay happy by stepping outside of it every once in a while, and leaving it and recognizing it for the fact that it's an amazing part of my life but my world does not revolve around it. And it won't revolve around it for the rest of my life. And even more, outside of that little bubble, I have such great friends and have such great family, you know, and my fiancé is family. And it's just nice to be removed from it and spend time with those people who just care about you and support you unconditionally. And I think that gives me great happiness, knowing that my relationships are strong. My relationships are so important to me, and the people that I am friends with and close to I hope feel the same about me. So to me that's more important than a gold medal, and that's what keeps me happy.

SCOTT: You know, I think relationships, first and foremost, take precedence in my life. Sports and work and all that stuff is secondary. My interaction with people is the most important thing in life.

RILEY: The most important things in my life would probably be the relationships I have with my family, my girlfriend, and my friends, and the health of those three groups and myself, and then probably the next step lower would be the game of hockey.

In summary, individuals are living authentically when they are able to present and see themselves for what they truly are, without distortion. Key individuals can give license to this authenticity through unconditional support and acceptance. The awareness

and acceptance of emotions as indicators of what is most important to the individual is an important component of this authentic living. In addition, an attitude of humility can override the desire to live up to 'pedestal status' and keep individuals well-connected to the people around them.

Experiencing Fully

When individuals define themselves in enduring, multifaceted ways, and live in a manner that keeps them connected to who they really are, they have the freedom to experience themselves, others, and their environments fully. The essence of this category is the ability to take in the full spectrum of one's experiences without preoccupation with outcomes and their implications. The four subcategories of experiencing fully are experiencing self through sport, connecting with others, immersion in the moment, and finding meaning and purpose.

Experiencing Self through Sport

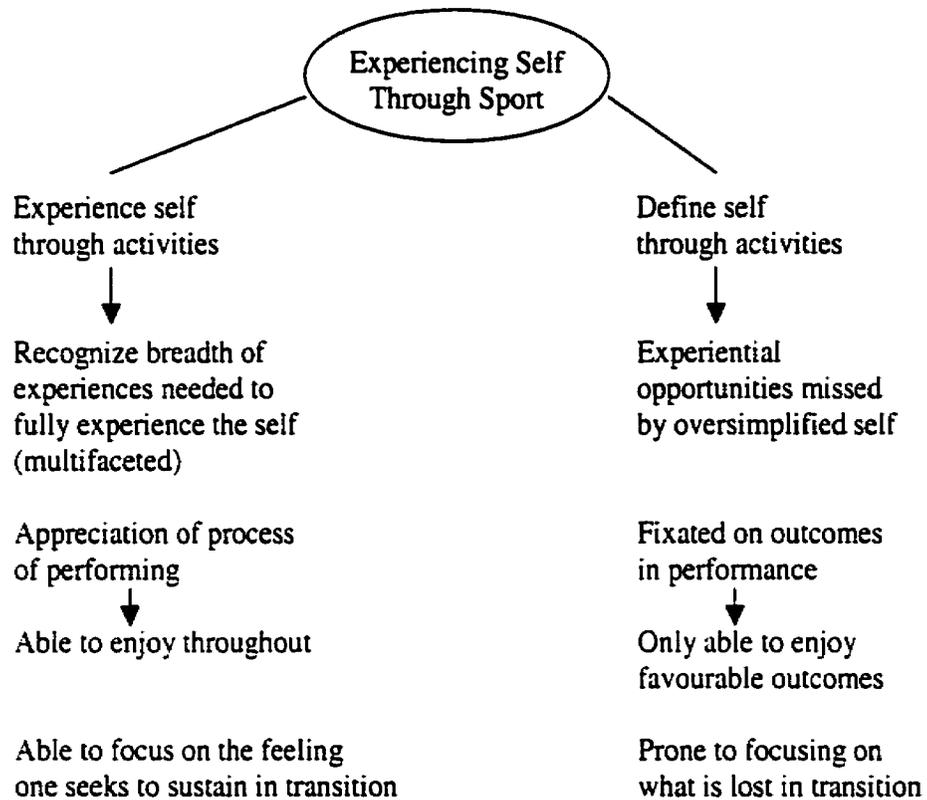
The notion of 'sport as a vehicle for self-expression' resonates with the athletes in this study (see Figure 8). The manner in which individuals experience their daily pursuits depends largely upon the focus that they take. While a whole later subcategory is devoted to the assignment of meaning, that theme is also evident here.

When the self is thought to have substance independent of one's activities, the focus can be on experience of the self rather than definition of it.

MIKAELA: Once I started kind of taking everything that I've learned and every thing that I do, and taking all the different parts of me and bringing that into what I do and who I am, it just became so much easier. It's just so easy now. Training is fun.

MIKAELA: You have to find a way as an athlete to bring yourself into your sport, and that's what makes you unique. You know, be who you are and bring that into what you do, and let it all shine through.

Figure 7. Experiencing self through sport.



This mindset allows the athlete to reconnect with the original spirit of sport, opening the individual up to full experience of the activity.

MIKAELA: Sport was something that was created a long time ago to give you a diversion from what your life was about, you know, or from your work. And now, sport has evolved, for some people, to where it is work. But it's still sport, it's still fun, it's still play, you still learn, you still evolve, you still grow. There's still so much that sport can teach anybody at any level. And it's not like once you get to the Olympic level, you can't learn anymore. You can learn more. It opens you up even more.

The attributes by which one is defined can be experienced through sport.

SCOTT: Sport is like an extension of yourself, but it's not exactly who you are. It's a vehicle to experience the parts of me, like the competitiveness, the dedication, the discipline.

Significant value is attached to the 'process' of elite sport rather than outcomes.

Athletes learned to focus on the daily experience of their pursuits.

MIKAELA: Regardless of what the end results are, I'm walking my path, I'm living my dream, I'm doing it. And I think that speaks volumes for itself.

One athlete drew the conclusion that her happiness would have to precede her success, rather than resulting from it.

RACHEL: I think it was from that movie about the Jamaican bobsled team, with John Candy. He said something to the guys. They were getting ready for the big race, and getting all psyched up, and they wanted to win so badly, it's all they could think about. And he just really gave them a personality or character check, you know, to put things into perspective. And he said "you know guys, regardless of what you do out there, it doesn't matter, the person that you are now, a gold medal isn't going to change that. If you're not happy with who you are and what you've done before you get it, it's not going to change that if you get that medal.

This insight is tied directly to the appreciation of one's daily living, finding enjoyment in the process of training and competing.

RACHEL: And I think success and failure as well only magnify the true person you are. And that's definitely something that our sport psychologist took the time to talk specifically with me about is just being happy with, you know, what I was doing, my own routine, happy with where I was at, because I truly feel that way.

Like, if you spend your whole life thinking that an Olympic medal is the only thing that matters, is the only achievement that means anything to you, if you get there and it doesn't happen, you could be a very grumpy, upset person, you know, especially if there's nothing else outside of that that's important or has great meaning to you.

Individuals recognized a breadth of experience that was made possible through their involvement in sport. For those willing to take them in, there is a wealth of experience that can enhance one's life.

CASSIE: The travels, the people, the experiences, living abroad, just the knowledge I've gained for this field that I want to work in, and people skills, because in sport you learn so much about people, and interactions and emotions and all those kinds of things. And just being able to work with people in general. I like people. I realize that I'm so fortunate to have experienced all of these things.

This appreciation is clearly enhanced when one is focused on the process of daily living.

CASSIE: I think sport has given me that opportunity to open my eyes to what's available to me in life, not only in sports. So I think, through that, with life, it's more "how much can I get out of today?" is kind of my philosophy. You know, like there's so much out there.

MIKAELA: So when I started looking more to having fun and loving what I do, looking at it more for the intrinsic values, what I gained out of it, I mean being an athlete kept me in shape, it got me to travel around the world, I've met some incredible people, I've had some incredible experiences. I've lived a full life. You know, I've gone places and done things that people twice my age have never gone or seen or done. And I see people around me who are afraid to go out after their dreams, and who are afraid to live their lives, and I finally got it that I'm doing that. I'm going after my dreams, I'm living my life every moment. You know, I'm walking whatever path it is that I'm supposed to walk.

The category of experiencing fully is articulated well by this athlete.

CASSIE: I think the biggest thing is to enjoy what you're doing. Figure out what you want to do but enjoy it. I think another thing is not to limit yourself. Because then you get all these amazing experiences. Get a variety of experiences within your life because that's gonna make it so much fuller.

The multifaceted nature of individuals necessitates experiences outside of sport to fully connect with the self. In other words, no single activity allows the individual to fully experience the self.

CASSIE: So I think, for me, re-energizing, I need to get away, like mountains are a big thing for me, skiing, activity, something like that, watching movies. You know, like to go to a good movie and go through all the emotions through someone else is awesome. Go away and get some chunky monkeys, so some ice cream, or whatever it is that's kind of something that can re-energize you.

Experiences outside of sport can have a powerful recovery effect after disappointments in sport.

CASSIE: But coming out of that (disappointing major tournament), I then went on a trip, it was in Zimbabwe, the tournament, and then went on this awesome rafting down the Zambezi River, and canoeing down the Zambezi River, with lions and hippos and crocodiles, and it's just perspective. Like, here we come to a tournament where we're not going to the world cup, upset about it, and then you're in this canoe in the middle of Africa, and it's like "Woah, yeah of course we're still disappointed, but there's so much to life, not just one facet of it". So I think incorporating trips and those kinds of things, and really enjoying the process helps to maintain that perspective. So that was a good thing.

The experiential focus can allow athletes approaching transition to attend to the feeling they wish to sustain, rather than the outcomes that have not been achieved.

CASSIE: And I guess part of it is finding that, like you say, that fire, that kind of peace, but energize at the same time and finding another medium to be able to experience that kind of thing. And I know, for me, the meaning has changed for sure. To me, it's not about the Olympics anymore, where it used to absolutely 100% be. To me it's more about that pinnacle of me as an athlete, and I haven't reached that. And that's where I'm having a hard time saying "okay, no, that's enough" because I know I have more to go in that. But it used to be about the outcomes and that sort of thing, but it's changing.

In summary, the freedom that individuals acquire through healthy self-definition and authentic living allow them to experience themselves through sport rather than being defined by it. In addition, seeking out the breadth of experience available through elite

sport and focusing on the process of daily living and performing further enhance the quality of one's experiences.

Connecting with Others

In addition to experiencing the self through sport, individuals are afforded opportunities to connect closely with other people through their sports (see Figure 9). One form of relationship that was considered to be extremely valuable was that with teammates. The highly emotional sport environment allows intense bonds to develop by virtue of the shared goals.

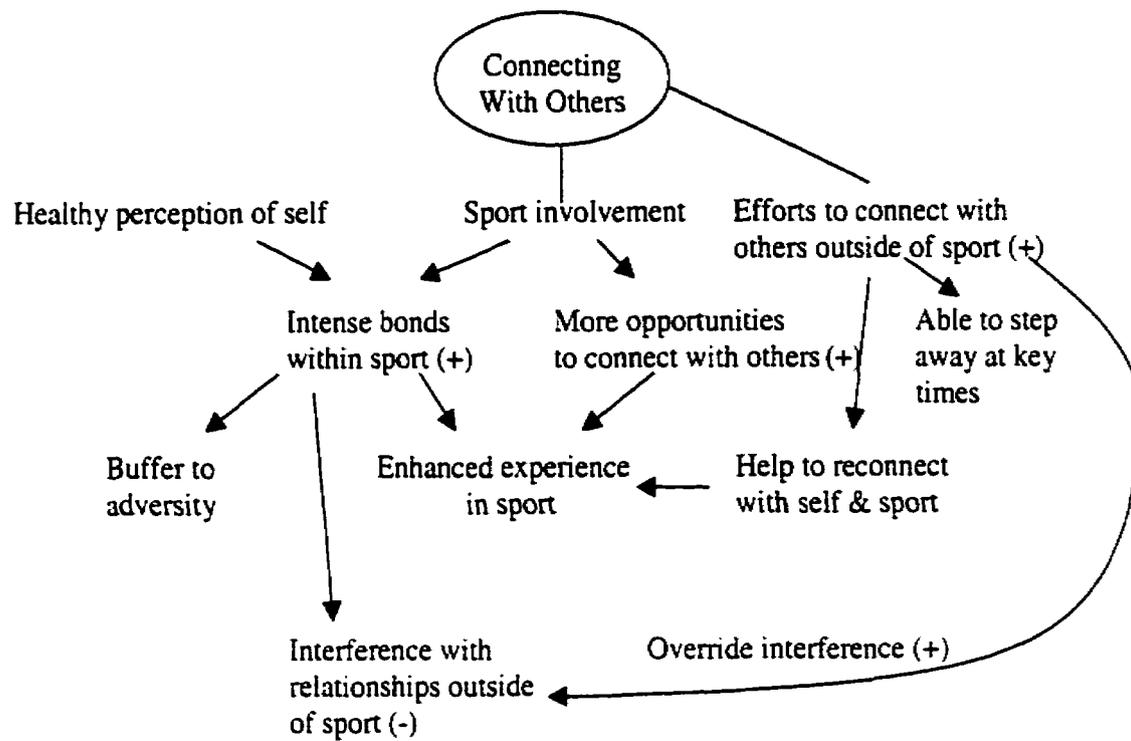
I: What have you gotten out of sport? What is most rewarding about the experience?

CASSIE: I think, number one, like (name of teammate), she's my best friend and will be for the rest of my life. Like, we are so compatible. And her family is my family. So I think the level of relationship that you can get through these people is pretty amazing. Especially because you are all going for this one dream goal. And I think that kind of a thing, the support of helping each other through, so I know if something happens in my life, I know I can call any of those people and say "hey, this is what's going on". And I know that they will accept me unconditionally. And I think I can get that from a lot of people, but they just don't quite understand as much. So I think it's also ... this experience has been awesome, as I said, like, the process through it. But to be able to tell someone about it and for someone to really be able to understand it are two different things.

The shared experiences and proximity can allow athletes to learn from virtually every teammate.

CASSIE: With sport, okay, I can do this, but what other things can I do in the realm of, you know, how many people can I meet? What can I learn that's new today, you know, from another athlete? Which is another thing, I think, when you're talking about enjoying the process is the relationship with team members. I mean, I get choked up when I think about it, but they're my family, you know. And I think respecting them in that way too. Like there was a young kid that came on to the team, and I'm like "yeah, whatever", but I didn't give her the full respect that I should have. I know that now. And I should actually talk to her about that now. I don't know if there's still something there. But I've learned a

Figure 9. Connecting with others.



ton from her in the last couple of years, and I think just keeping really open to everyone in that process. Everyone has something to give. And so I think from 95 to now, I'm much more open.

The intensity of the environment and the powerful emotions it produces contribute to the formation of intense bonds that many find difficult to fully articulate.

JORDAN: It's hard to articulate the bond, you'll know because you played a team sport, there is an incredible bond that guys get when they play together. And it's hard to explain it, it's just ... (significant other) and I will probably never have the same kind of bond, actually we will never have the same kind of bond that I had with this group of athletes. We haven't been to war together like the guys and I have been to war. And it's not to say that one relationship is better than the others. I suspect my relationship with (significant other) will be better than my relationship with the guys.

RILEY: I enjoy the camaraderie, being a part of a team. You're in a group of 25 men, who come from all over the world, but you're working together to develop and improve as a team. And I think that's just a great thing to be part of in life, and I really enjoy that. And still the adrenaline rush that this game gives you when you're out there and the game is tied or it's a close game and you're relying on your teammates to come through and your teammates are relying on you, and then you have the atmosphere of whatever arena you're in. It's definitely an adrenaline rush, and it's great to be a part of it and it's great to be a part of the whole thing, whether you're on the ice in a game situation, or you're in the locker room training together, or you're out at a restaurant, just having a good time together. you develop great friendships and it's just an enjoyable thing.

However, it is worth noting that perceiving oneself in a healthy manner may be necessary for the development of collegial versus adversarial relationships within sport.

CASSIE: I don't think it's about driving and comparing to others. It's more to myself. And of course others are there to be compared to. And I hate that. I hate that kind of jealousy or the feeling that you have to prove yourself with the insecurity or whatever. And so I really try not to go there. But I think that relates back to how you feel about you. So you have to be secure with yourself before you can really connect with your teammates.

The bond can also be powerful in response to events outside of sport.

CASSIE: So I think with this group of people, they can totally relate with me, and if I talk about something, I can say one word and we can all laugh about something, or if I say one thing we can all cry about it. And I think the perspective gained from others' experiences. This one teammate, I learned a ton

from her because her mother was diagnosed with cancer and, within a month, was gone. And then we left like two weeks later to go to the junior world cup. And I remember the whole thing, under this big oak tree after a 5K run we had to do, and everyone was just crying about the situation. And also the support that we gave to her and that kind of process, being involved in something like that.

Teammates are able to share in the experiences that shape each other's lives outside of sport.

CASSIE: A teammate was diagnosed with something, we thought it was cancer, but it wasn't. So she couldn't participate in any activity anymore. So her life gives you perspective on "yeah, we're achieving this, but there are other things". I think other family tragedies and different things like that, going along. Or you know, people getting into med school and physio, all different things that you can totally share because you know the amount of effort that is put into the sport, and also the amount of effort that is needed to maintain that balance. So I think getting out of it is just knowing that I'll be able to share such an experience with others.

However, the intensity of these relationships can be a challenge when relating to others outside of sport.

CASSIE: When you're with the team, you kind of use them as your support network. And you have different ... you need to get away from it, so when I come home, I come home to my friends, but whether they don't understand or whether I don't believe they ever will understand, I probably don't go into as much depth, or I probably don't let myself to establish a relationship like I would with one of my teammates about that issue. It's funny because when I come home, I tend to be probably a little more independent. Like, I have a ton of different groups of friends, but in terms of the actual intensity of the relationship with them, it's probably another thing.

CASSIE: Like, I have people that I totally support, that will totally support me, and I can totally rely on, and those kinds of things. And I know that they're proud of what I've done and also concerned for me when I don't do things. But in terms of that intensity, I used to have that before, like I've been away from (home town) for the last four or five years, and I think that's part of it as well, the inconsistency. But I've got a few girlfriends that I'm pretty tight with, but I'm not able to get to that intense relationship that I am with the others, I don't think.

But the importance of relationships outside of sport is also considered to be important in order to step outside of that realm.

CASSIE: The good thing about your friends too, when we were talking about not understanding, is that they don't understand, so it's good to go out with them and you can just be that other person, be their friend, and they're not going to ask you about sport or about school or whatever it is.

The perceived importance of these relationships (outside of sport) appear to gain importance over the course of one's career.

CASSIE: I've found with sport, because I've moved all around, when you come back, your friends are still there and your family is always there but it always takes a while to transition back. Like on our team, basically you're either married or you're single. You either have time to develop something before you get into it or you just don't. And that ... like a shooting star fell the other day, and I was like "okay, what do I want to wish for?" And it used to be going to the Olympics and those kinds of things, but now it's more on a personal level. Like I want to be able to start connecting with people and making those relationships stronger with family and friends.

The development of friendships outside of sport can become an important priority and a source of pride, a statement about one's versatility.

MEAGHAN: I make a point of spending time with friends who aren't athletes. I think it's important to step out of that world sometimes, otherwise you can forget that there's a whole other world outside of it.

JORDAN: I take pride now of meeting people and hanging out with people outside of the sport, so I can broaden my horizons that way. You know, a friend of mine, that I used to work with, (significant other) and I go over to their place. We have dinner, a bottle of wine. You know, he's married, he has a kid, and it's a completely different environment than having the shleps over here with a keg of beer and \$2 steaks on the barbecue. But as far as developing new relationships, not a problem at all. Will they be the same as the relationships I had with the guys? Not a chance. If I said yes, they'd be the same, then I'd be short-changing the relationships that I've built.

But the maintenance of relationships outside of sport requires conscious effort due to the demands of the sport environment. They too can deteriorate if unattended.

CASSIE: My friends have been left by the wayside because I've been so busy, which I don't like. I don't feel good about that. And once again it's like "oh well, they'll still be there" but no, they won't. I've had a few incidents in the last month or so that really kind of showed me that people aren't invincible and they're gonna go sooner rather than later. So some bad things but good things to

kind of awaken you to that. So I would say that it's really important to establish those relationships.

But these relationships can be maintained and fully enjoyed if they are assigned importance.

RILEY: And we've always been a fairly close family, even with my sister, going on trips pretty much every summer, camping trips or trips over to Europe and Australia. And that's definitely helped us to stay close. And it was a difficult situation with myself leaving home at age fifteen, but I think it's made us that much stronger. We've always stayed in touch on the phone and enjoyed the times that we've got to spend together. And although I'm a long ways away from my parents in most situations, and my sister, I'm always on the internet, trying to figure out how she's done, and I'm glued to the T.V. whenever she's on T.V. So it's been a good relationship and I hope that I'll be able to continue it.

The link between key others and one's ability to connect with the self as an athlete and immerse fully in one's sport was a convincing one in the data. Below is a set of quotations that illustrate the manner in which key positive relationships with others can enhance one's full experience of sport and vice versa.

The clearest pattern is the ability of the significant others and 'inner circle' to remind the individuals how they can best connect fully with themselves. The individuals may 'know' these things, but lose sight of them when immersed in the sport environment. Key individuals could redirect their attention to the process, the intrinsic value of their sports, and away from an outcome focus.

COURTNEY: Even though I said that it's taken me a little bit of time because I felt that this year was pretty tough on me, I went back to the (training venue), and that was hard for me to go there because it's been some time, they haven't seen me since the Olympics and Nationals. But those people made me feel great, and then it was like "wow, yeah, sport is good, life is good, (sport) is really good", so even though I'm connecting with others, it brought it all back for me. Like that feeling when you're playing, everything is in sync, and it's like "wow".

MEAGHAN: He (significant other) keeps me grounded. You know, he's the one who becomes a psychologist on the road, a supporter, everything. Because he knows how I work, and I don't open myself up to many people about my fears or

whatever, but he knows what I fear, he knows what I want, and yet he knows that I put the most pressure on myself. And so he sort of has to sit back and go "This is what you're doing to yourself. Don't do that." And, you know, sort of remind me of that. But you need to hear it. You need to hear that, even if it's on the ice and I might look at people warming up and say "man, they look good. They look really fast" and it's an easy thing to get wrapped up in that, but he sits back and goes "Do you know that they're looking at you and saying that?" And it might be something so basic that if you stopped and thought about it, you know that, but you need to hear somebody say that.

The importance of key supporters in staying connected to the things of most importance illustrates the ongoing daily battle that one fights in maintaining perspective.

MEAGHAN: And it's hard. I go back and forth, and that's the work of the support group around you, to re-emphasize that if you forget.

MEAGHAN: I think sometimes, to have some of these things with self, it needs to go across to the others. Like, a few weekends ago, we had the first race. We were leaving at 6:15 in the morning and I said to my husband "I haven't done a race plan." And he goes "that's okay, just keep it simple." And I'm like "but no, it can't be that simple". And so, to be in the moment and to be remember what I need to be focused on, I needed that input from someone else. Even if I know everything, I need one of the others to help me.

I: So someone helps you to reconnect with yourself, in a way?

MEAGHAN: Yeah.

Trusted companions, whose impressions are respected by the athlete, can provide an important 'mirror' function, reflecting back to the athlete at times when they may be losing perspective.

MIKAELA: And when you're in the moment, even your best friend can tell you "you're losing it" and you'll say "oh, no, no, I'm focused". And then you take a step back and go "oh yeah, maybe I did lose it a little bit. Maybe these people around me aren't just there to hold me and support me. Maybe they're also there to be my mirrors to bounce images and ideas off of, to say "hey, you're going way left of centre and you need to come back a little bit", and they can keep you in the middle of where you need to be.

RICHARD: So there are times when I need help. I don't always have it within myself to take care of everything, and sometimes we're just so narrow-minded in what we're doing that it's good to have somebody on the outside with a fresh perspective to turn on the light so you can see things a little better.

These supporters can help to simplify an individual's focus that has become clouded.

CHRIS: Um, she's (significant other) pretty frank, so she'll tell me what she thinks is wrong. And she also can tell when I'm down and I need a little confidence boost or anything like that. So she's good at just telling me that I'm doing good and just to keep going, work hard in practice, and kind of get back to the basics. It's a simple game. Keep it simple, and have fun basically. If you have fun, it is a game, the actual game is fun. And if it's fun then you'll play well. And she's good at getting me back into that kind of a mode.

They can also reinforce one's intrinsic value and its independence from performance in sport.

RILEY: And (during my setback) I talked to my former coach, and my parents, and my girlfriend. And the main thing that all of them were doing was just supporting me through it, and reminding me to try to enjoy the game. "If things aren't going as well as you want right now, and if things just seem tilted against you, you are a great player, you are a great person. Don't let this game affect the type of person you are." And I think that's the main thing that can happen in this game. You get grumpy and things don't occur on the ice the way you want them to and you become a bit of a jackass off the ice also. And when that happens, then things definitely have to change in your life. And the main thing they were just telling me is that I'm a good person and just to try to keep working through it, it's just another bump. And just to try to stay motivated and enjoy things.

One's pursuit of sport at a high level can also feed into powerful relationships.

For instance, the higher level of sport that one reaches, the more opportunities to meet people.

MEAGHAN: I'm a person who loves to enjoy people. You know, I love sport because you get to meet people, but I love the things outside of sport because you meet different people.

Sport mastery also carries with it opportunities to give to others within a sport context.

MIKAELA: But it (sport) also can teach you about how to give that back or to see it from different angles for people who don't see it that way or who aren't as fortunate or haven't gotten a chance to be in an Olympic games or gotten to compete at an international level, even though they've trained just as hard and they had the same drive and the same focus, but not the same opportunity, or not the same results.

One athlete found that her search for optimal training conditions led to more 'quality' relationships with coaches.

MIKAELA: Because I have seen my character go through a whole gamete of stuff. And I've seen what I don't like and I don't want and I'm seeing what I prefer in people now. You know, before it could have been that the coaches prestige or name or something like that was what was going to help you at the time. And now it's someone who has a genuine interest in seeing you be the best that you can be or excelling. They may not have the fanciest toys, you know, or whatever. They may not have the most up-to-date knowledge, but they have the knowledge of you. They know how to work with you, and they know how to see what it is that you need to do.

But perhaps the most vivid illustration of connecting with the self-facilitating connection with others is provided by one athlete's relationship with her parents. While the role of the parents in perspective appears to be significant, a poor relationship may not preclude perspective.

MIKAELA: My relationship with my parents has been stormy. I mean, in 92, when I went to the Olympics, they were breaking up. You know, they were having their issues and stuff, and when I went to the Olympics, they were together, when I came back they were gone, they were apart. And then I went through three or four years of them back and forth, and fighting and arguing, and dating other people, and I kept getting dragged into the middle. And I remember a major games that was a really hard time for me because neither of my parents showed up. They didn't come to watch me. And that hurt. I mean, that hurt big time. And then I remember the drive for the next Olympics was all for them to go and stuff. And even for a few years after, I didn't have great relations with them. Now I do because I went back, sort of like I looked at myself, and when I changed myself and changed the negative energy that I was putting on, and just looking after myself, and believing in my integrity and the incredibleness of the person that I am, and not having to prove that to anybody. When I became happier, all of a sudden my parents became happier. And now we're getting back to a relationship where we're on good footing and good standing again. Where I found for a long time I was fighting against them and now it's like, I know they're supportive of me, but I also know that I'm my own individual. I don't have to do things for them or to them anymore. And now it's sort of like the best thing that I can do for them is for me to be me. All the time, 100%, just be who I am. And ever since I started doing that and stopped blaming them for, you know, bad feelings from way back when, or whatever, I find that I get along with them so much better now.

Involvement in sport can provide opportunities to connect with others, but may necessitate conscious efforts to nurture relationships outside of sport. The experience of others can be an enriching piece of an athlete's experience provided that one is open to these relationships. In addition, meaningful relationships with others can enhance one's ability to experience oneself and one's sport more fully.

Immersion in the Moment

Closely related to the experiential focus that was described in 'experiencing the self through sport' is the individual's ability to immerse oneself fully in the moment (see Figure 10). This allows individuals to fully experience parts of themselves through their activities. Athletes described a state of living and performing that fully engages them.

The experience itself takes a similar form for the athletes in this study.

CASSIE: There's that undying energy that you have. You can just keep running and running and running. I call it a sense of calm. I'm totally activated, but I have this inner sense of calm. But it's a fine line because one thing can set me off. But then I scream or whatever and then can come back to it by refocusing. But there's this fine little line in between.

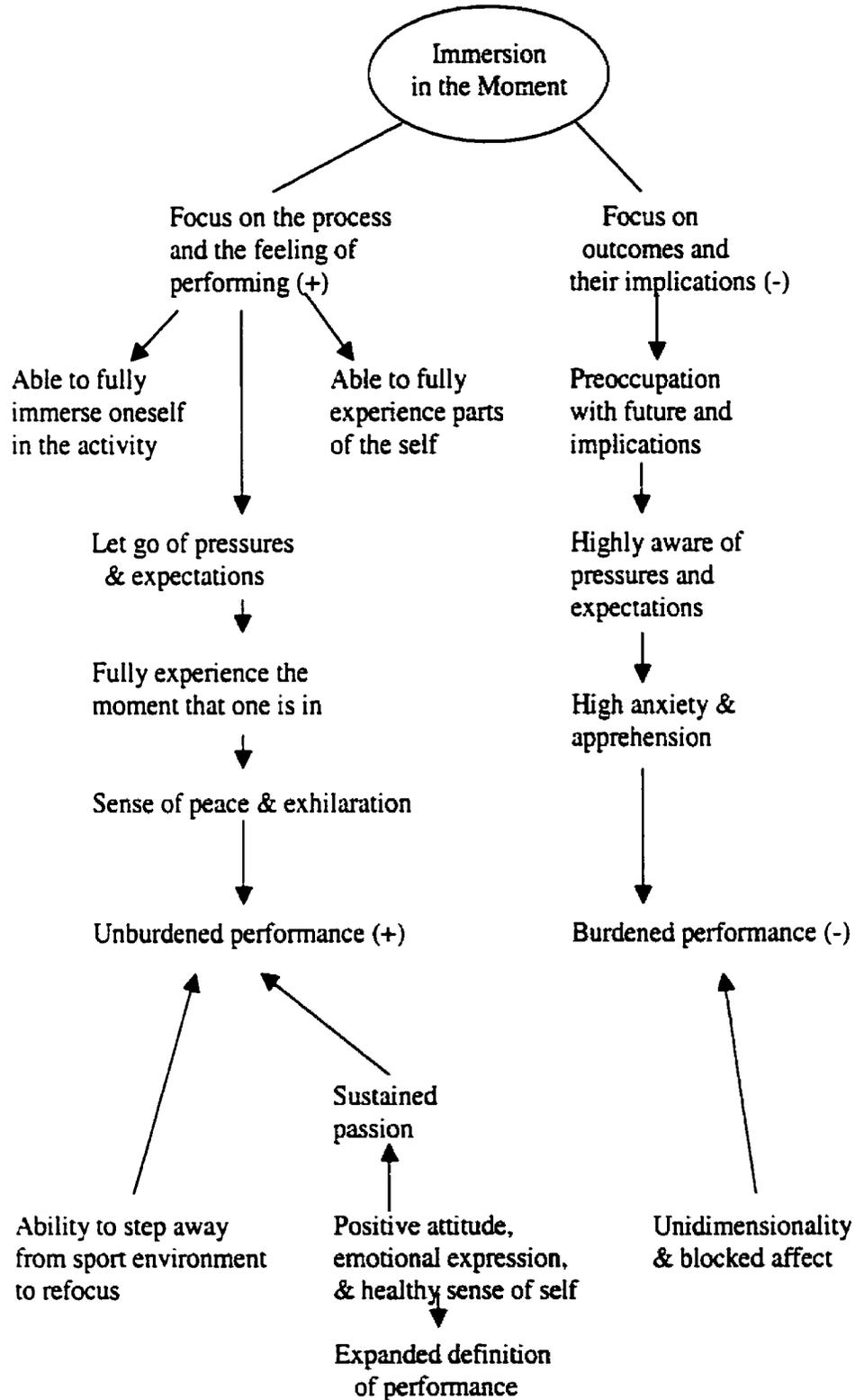
This state is reinforcing in and of itself. It feels right.

COURTNEY: (Commenting on why she continued to play despite major setbacks) It's because I love how I feel when I'm in the moment. And you can call it the zone or the adrenaline rush or whatever you want to call it, when it's just me and I'm in that state, I feel good. And that's what life's about to me is to be happy and feel good. So I decided to continue to play. So I thought "okay, a new perspective, I'm upbeat again". People could see it in my body language so it was great.

The senses are heightened and awareness is peaked. The athlete is fully connected to the self and the environment.

MEAGHAN: It's funny because, when I'm in a race, and I'm having a great race, and everything is clicking, I don't get in the zone where I don't see anything. I get in the zone where I see everything. I know who is in the warm-up lane. I see somebody cheering in the corner. I'm thinking about who that is. I really become

Figure 10. Immersion in the moment.



in a state where I'm very aware. And I used to think that was a problem and then our sport psychologist said there are two states. And I obviously get to that one. But yet if I'm in a race and I don't remember anything, it's because my mind wasn't focused, and it's because I rushed everything. And so it's like my brain almost froze and it all went by in a blur. So for me that's not a good thing if I don't remember.

Athletes experience a simultaneous peace and exhilaration, wherein peak performance can occur.

MIKAELA: It's that quiet kind of exuberance, where everything seems to slow down. It's like everything's going inside of you, and it's racing, but when you're actually doing the activity in the moment, it's like you can see it and everything's in slow motion. And it's like all time just kind of like stands still or just slows down. And even though you're super-pumped up inside, everything just seems to go nice and slow. You can see every little bit of what happens. You know, it's not a blur. I find when I'm not in the moment, when everything else around me distracts me, then everything's a blur and everything's chaotic. But when you really seem to be enjoying it for the intrinsic factors, and you're just able to focus everything and bring it all in, it's like, you can be nervous, but it's that quiet ... it's that nervousness that gets you pumped up, but it just feels different, it feels special. You know that this isn't an everyday all the time kind of a moment. You know it's something different. And you just shoot for that little opening, that window of opportunity to see what can happen.

Athletes become attuned to a feeling of performing, quite distinct from an outcome focus.

SCOTT: You look to repeat those moments in sport because it's like you train forever to do it properly, and when you do it properly and you feel what it feels like to do it properly, it's like "woah", you know. Then it's all worth it. But you can get lost in that state. I can remember my best jumps very clearly.

The primary challenge to this experience is the emphasis on outcomes and their importance. One can see the clear connection between focus on outcomes and the inability to immerse oneself fully in the moment.

CASSIE: I can say the exact moment, the exact game when I was immersed in the moment. Like (name of opponent), at (major games), we weren't supposed to beat them. So it was like no biggy, but at the same time, you're totally pumped and really nervous or whatever, but at the same time I knew exactly what needed to happen, and it was just flowing and clicking. But against (other opponent), for example, since we lost to (first opponent), we had to win that game. It was a have-to. So we all went in there pretty guarded. And it was not really in flow,

and it was forced basically. And I can see other games, like when I played in Europe, I can see the exact moment, the exact move, the exact goal or whatever, you know, so it just brings clarity to it.

COURTNEY: Preoccupation with outcomes interferes with the full experience of the moment. And that's your ego.

The fear of failure can have a powerful effect on one's mindset going into competition, taking the focus away from the opportunity to fully experience one's performance.

RICHARD: We went to the World Junior Championships. This was the first time that I'd ever been to anything of that magnitude and to that level. And basically what happened is I got scared. I knew the competition was getting a little stiffer, and I didn't have the security of being back home and knowing I was the fastest guy anymore. I had a little bit of pain in my ankle, but it really wasn't anything. And basically what happened was I got scared and I started making excuses for myself before I even ran, you know "if I don't run well, it's probably because of my foot". And I made myself believe that it was that bad and in hindsight it wasn't that bad at all. And afterwards I felt so cheated, and not by anyone else but just myself, that I succumbed to the pressure and ... you know what, the only way you can succeed is if you don't care if you lose. I just felt so bad that I let myself ... that I did that to myself. And here was this awesome opportunity, the biggest opportunity of my life, to compete at the highest level for that age, and I just let it go. The way I was making excuses, I had beaten myself before I even ran the race. I mean, I was scared. And really who cares if you win or lose? There's all this pride and ego in sports and stuff but to me I honestly believe that if you don't put yourself out there in a vulnerable position, then you'll never really see how far you can go. You never really have tested yourself. And I mean that's the best tool you have to self-improvement and personal gain.

At such times, the individual needs to reconnect with their intrinsic enjoyment of the activity.

CHRIS: When things get going almost too well, you kind of find yourself slipping over to where you're afraid to fail. Especially when it starts to go bad at the first part of it. You're very emotional. You suppress everything. You're moody when you get home and that whole thing. And you kind of go through that for a while and it kind of gets worse and worse and worse. And then all of a sudden, you just realize "what am I playing the game for? I'm playing it to have fun." And it's my livelihood, but you're not going to do any job that's not fun for very long. So you have to realize it.

Elite sport carries pressures that can make this connection to intrinsic enjoyment challenging.

RILEY: I definitely enjoy that feeling on the ice. I think sometimes when you're on the ice ... I'd say when I'm on the ice with my friends playing shinny, I'm definitely at ease. Sometimes when there's pressure, in a game situation, and you're on stage, it's not as natural and there is more on the line, because the bottom line is that pro sports is business and there is a lot of money to be made, and there are a lot of jobs on the line for every shift pretty much, whether you succeed or don't succeed. So there's a lot of pressure and sometimes, as a person, I don't think you feel as comfortable up there.

But these athletes have been able to exercise control over this experience of immersion by focusing on the process of training and competing, the feeling of their sport, thereby letting go of the outcome focus and the expectations of others.

MIKAELA: And when everything was about trying to please somebody else, or trying to please the masses, or you know, or trying to please coaches, or nay-sayers, people that tell you that you can't do it. When I took my focus away from that and said "I'm just gonna go out here and have fun, and see what I can do, and please myself" it took all the pressure away, it took all of the 'have-to's' away, and it became more of a wanting to.

Experiencing one's sport 'internally', rather than relative to external considerations appears to positively influence the quality of experience.

MIKAELA: There's a drive that I have to see what I can do. And it's not because if you throw a certain distance you get this money or you get this accolade or whatever. It's just that I look at what my body does when I'm training, and I know I can perform at that top level, and so my drive is just to see how far I can go. Whereas before it was kind of like, you know, trying to be that perfect athlete. And it's like now I don't have to prove anything. And when you stop trying to prove things to everybody else and just be, and just go out and do it and love doing it, it changes your whole energy, and it changes your whole reason for being out there, and then you get back to loving sport the same way you did, you know, when you were five years old and playing t-ball for the first time, you know, or you get in the pool for the first time and swimming, or all that stuff you did because it was fun. And you enjoyed going out because of the people that you'd see, and what you could do, and seeing if you could swim faster or throw farther or run faster or jump higher and all those things.

This shift away from the external considerations also impacts one's focus and performance state, returning the athlete to the process of performing.

RACHEL: And I think once I stopped worrying so much about what other people thought of me, and I didn't worry so much about how I had to place or who I was competing against, it just seemed like I relaxed a little bit and it was easier to focus. The way I focus is I just set new goals and I really specifically try to focus on that goal and how I went about achieving it, which is through the training, the everyday ups and downs ... the process really.

The question could be raised whether these insights are discovered by the athletes or taught by coaches or sport psychology professionals working with them.

RACHEL: And I think it was our sport psychologist who kind of opened my eyes to that, because he said that you gain perspective by focusing on the process, not the outcome. You know, in all the little things that happen along the way, you have to kind of take a step back from the situation and just see what positives you can draw out and put into the next thing.

However, whatever their origin, this approach works for these athletes, and has been taken on as their own.

RACHEL: And something I've really worked on is just kind of letting that ... I can feel myself get worked up in practice or even just school or other things, once in a while I just get worked up, but I can feel it coming, I'm just going to snap and get mad. And I just have to kind of let it go. One bad dive, one bad board. I just have to go do a little more work. Just focus on the work. Because I feel like when I'm thinking so much about what the results have to be, I can't do the work.

SCOTT: You know, there's anxiety, there's other things there, the adrenaline. You know, you're ready and you're prepared but it's almost as if you don't really care whether you're 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 12th, 20th, whatever. You just want to jump or you just want to do what you're doing. And you just want to focus in on that, and you forget about everything else, like you're just tunnel vision on what you're doing. It's like when you get lost playing a video game, and you're just sucked into the game and it's like four hours later, "oh, what's going on? Four hours!" Or you're doing a report and it's really interesting, and you're lost in it. You know, it's the same thing when you're competing. You just get lost in it.

JORDAN: Before every game, I would say "don't worry about the outcomes. Just do your job and the outcome will take care of itself". Because you can lose and have a great game. The outcome isn't necessarily an indicator of the work, it's about the process and how you responded to different situations.

And this focus can provide a sense of peace in the face of the most pressure-filled events.

RACHEL: I'm happy with the perspective or the way I look at the sport, especially going into the Olympics when the media pressure is going to build, and all those things are going on, and I'm still relaxed in kind of a weird way.

Connecting with the self involves seeing one's pursuits not as a source of self-definition, but rather as a vehicle for experiencing one's personal qualities and a breadth of experiences made possible through those pursuits. Full immersion in one's activities is enhanced when preoccupation with outcomes is overcome and one focuses on the feeling and the process of performing.

Positive growth in the categories and subcategories described to this point appears to facilitate one's full experience of sport. This process of unburdened immersion in one's activities has important implications for the athlete. Without being consumed with pressure, one can relax and perform. There seems to be a general calming effect and a clarity that athletes experience when they are not preoccupied with outcomes. They see themselves in healthy terms, and they're focused on the process of performing.

The participants had some important insights about the role of perspective in their performances. Among these is the realization that one is engaged in one's passion.

I: So you're on the court and you realize that there are more important things to you than volleyball. How does that affect the way you play?

COURTNEY: It's just for a moment, so it won't hurt me. It'll actually have that calming effect come over me because I am still doing something that I enjoy and I have passion for. It's been such a big part of my life. So that's okay for that to pop in for a second. In fact, with (my sport) we do that a lot. Sometimes we just look out and look where we are, you know, it's pretty fabulous. Does that take away from our game? No.

In addition, sharing the experience with others can further enhance one's affective state.

I: Now that you're at this point in your life, when you go to compete, are you a better competitor?

SCOTT: Ultimately I think it would be more beneficial to competition, because then the reasons why I compete wouldn't be for the money or the fame or the fortune or whatever. It's not for those reasons, it's because I enjoy competing and it's something I'm good at and I want to bring out the best in myself. And if I do it really well, not only am I happy, but I know that it makes other people happy too.

Even at times of extreme pressure, athletes can let go of the pressure in favour of focusing on the feeling of the sport, thus freeing oneself to perform optimally.

SCOTT: I've seen both, where you really want to make a team badly and the only thing that counts is that you make the team and you don't exactly get your best performance because you're worried about each round. And that preoccupies you. "Only five more jumps. Oh, only four more jumps." Or whatever. But when you're there and you're just enjoying it, and even though there may be something on the line, you get joy from what you're doing. And there's pleasure there, not because you're doing your best. I find that usually at those times when you don't have pressure that you've put on yourself, and you just enjoy your performance, I think those are the times that you actually do your best. And those are the times, you know, it's almost like a circle, where you do your best when there's no pressure and there's no pressure when you do your best.

One athlete recognized the value of perspective in helping to refocus when one is struggling.

CHRIS: I think it's healthy to try to get away from the game. It allows you to get back to perspective if you're away from it for a little while. And if you get away from it, I think you can realize, maybe if you're having a bad time at the rink and it's not going well, if you get away from it, you can kind of see that "I'm going about my business wrong there. I need to change and kind of get back to doing this if I'm going to be a better player".

One athlete suggested that perspective has its greatest value at times of adversity.

CHRIS: I think fear of failure is a strong motivator which in turn makes you work pretty hard at trying not to be a failure. For me, if you're playing well and things are going well, you can get away from perspective and it's okay. But once things turn and go bad, I think you need to get your life back in perspective. You have those one or two incidents that beat you down and you realize "I'm not where I should be; I need to get back to being who I am" kind of thing, and then refocus and get your perspective back.

The discussion took a different focus with another athlete, broadening the term 'performance', then making a distinction between the short and long term.

I: People are going to ask me whether the athletes who gain perspective perform better than others.

MEAGHAN: Well, I think you have to say what is performing better. Does that mean that they win everything, or does that mean that ... obviously only one person can be number one in the world, does that mean that the ones with the right perspective are number one in the world? Or does that mean that those athletes perform better meaning that if they're fifth, or if they're third, or if they're first, they're still okay with that. What are they going to ask?

I: They're probably going to ask, bottom line, you take two people with equal ability, give one of them this type of perspective, and the other this kind of 'skating is your life', which one will skate faster?

MEAGHAN: If you're talking in one year, I don't know. It could be either one. But if you're talking over a few years, I think it's the one with the right perspective because having the wrong perspective, obviously you're looking at winning. If you're looking at winning, then you have a fear of losing. If you have a fear of losing, you're going to be looking at all the other people who are trying to catch you, and all you're going to be thinking about is winning, winning, winning. If you do win one year, you're gonna go "okay, what now?" You know? Yeah, you can keep at it but I think that catches up to a person. Where, I mean I see it in all sports, and I see it in myself, as long as you have a healthy perspective and a healthy life outside of sport, that's going to continue because you're going to keep the drive, you're going to keep positive. People are going to want to be around you, whereas if all somebody talks about is skating or whatever sport they're involved in, they obviously, I think, have a negative perspective. You know what? I don't want to be around that person. I mean you take an example of a pro athlete. They sign a ten million dollar contract, and then you hear in the news that they have drug and alcohol problems. Why is it? Obviously the wrong perspective because they have all this and hmm, they're not satisfied. You know, there's a problem there. And so, I think ultimately, over a few years, it's the athlete with the right perspective that's gonna perform best, but I guess for me performance isn't always being number one in the world. Performance is on and off the ice. And that's my perspective, but it's hard for some people to see that.

However, if one's priorities relegate sport to a lower position behind one's relationships, then crisis in those higher priorities may take a greater toll on one's sport, since it is of secondary consideration.

RICHARD: After this, I realized that my number one priority and concerns are for my brother and sister, you know, my family. Seeing what my brother and sister

went through, it hurt me so much, and I would lay my life on the line for them before I'd go to any track meet. That is my number one priority: my family. Whereas I guess to be the best at what you do, you have to be a little bit selfish, you have to say I've got to do what's right for me. But I just wasn't able to do that this time. And maybe when things settle down a bit, I will be able to get that little bit of self-centeredness that you need to succeed. But right now, with the way things are, it's not like that, and my priorities are definitely my family.

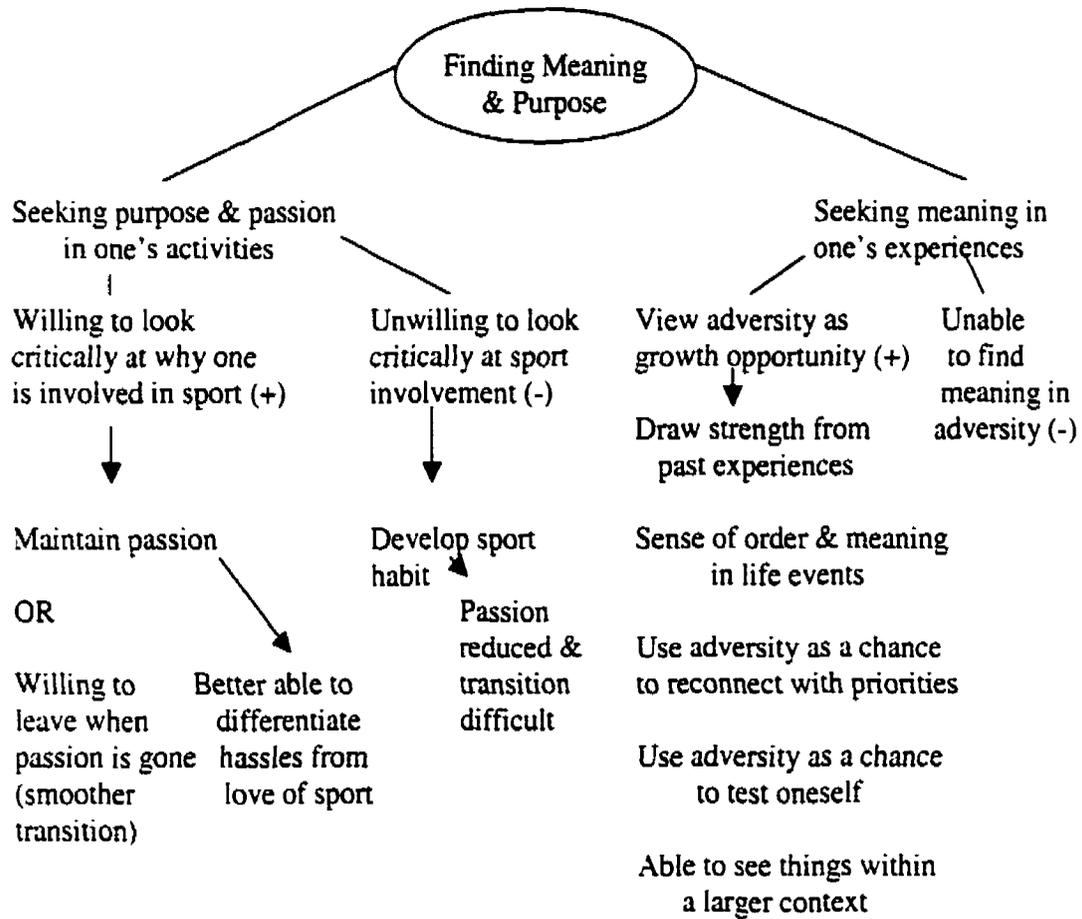
RICHARD: But there may come a point, not just in every athlete's but every person's life where maybe the hurdle is a little too high or maybe not too high but you run out of energy to constantly deal with all these obstructions in your way. And I think that's what happened to me here with my family problems. It was one thing to get over the injury. And it was one thing to get over poor performances. And as I've decided to make track and field my main focus, you make that your number one priority and you sacrifice a lot of things to accommodate it, but sometimes, like I said, this last hurdle or mountain almost, it kind of rearranged my priorities and my focus. And unfortunately it was right before Nationals and I just didn't have the energy to overcome it. And everyone kept telling me or trying to advise me just to "try to put it in the back of your head until this is over, you know, focus on track and field. Nationals is in two weeks. And just do your best." And I tried not to dwell on it too much but some things take precedence over everything else in your life, and when I went to Nationals, I really could have cared less how I did.

But on a whole, the process of immersing one fully in the moment appears to be enhanced by the perspective process described to this point, and this immersion allows the athlete to let go of an outcome focus, enjoy the feeling of the performance and, in turn (ironically) perform optimally.

Finding Meaning & Purpose

A crucial part of experiencing fully involves the meaning and purpose that individuals ascribe to the events and experiences in their lives (see Figure 11). The same experiences can be given completely different meanings by two different people. The way the participants perceive themselves and connect to themselves and others can be seen in the meanings they attach to experiences. There is a sense of order and purpose in virtually every event.

Figure 11. Finding meaning & purpose.



An important part of this pattern is the purpose with which these athletes engage in their sports. Perhaps most importantly, they are willing to ask themselves whether their sport still holds passion and fulfillment, willing to face the implications of either response. It seems that, in order to maintain passion for one's sport, one must be willing to leave it when it loses its magic or another focus holds more.

COURTNEY: Generally speaking, I'd say I'm one that copes well, but this past year has been a trying time for me. I don't know if I've coped very well, but I know that I'm still doing what I'm doing and I'm still involved in my sport, so I know that I've had to re-evaluate and gain my perspective back on what's important to me and why I'm still playing and finding the passion again.

This requires the courage to face when one is ready for transition out of sport, into new priorities.

COURTNEY: And I'm kind of an older athlete, so I've been through a lot through my indoor and beach career and hit a lot of bumps along the way and keep bouncing, but it gets to a point in your life when you ask "is it all worth it?" and being older, I've bought a house, I have a family based out of (name of city) here, and you have to ... "maybe I should get a real job".

MEAGHAN: I think, as an athlete, your basis how you view everything in sport, I think it ultimately comes from growing up. I mean, I look at my view in sport and how my mom really ... she pushed me into doing things and just trying it, give it a chance and if I didn't enjoy it don't go ahead with it. But I had to give things a fair chance, and she was the person who said "if you're not enjoying it, you don't have to continue". Even before the 92 games, she phoned me and said "Are you sure you want to do this?" Because to her, if I was just doing it because I felt like I should, that was a problem. And that's how I view sport. I mean that's in the overall picture. And I think it's hard when you get to the elite level, because of course you want to succeed and you want to win, but however sport was taught to you, that's how you perceive it. And I think in general, it's a fun thing. Even if you do it for 25 years of your life, and you know you have five years where you haven't done a certain sport, it should be enjoyable but you should be able to leave it and go on with the next step.

'Listening to one's heart', looking honestly at where one's passion lies, can provide both purpose in one's sport and a natural indicator of timing for transition.

MEAGHAN: I think the best word in there is 'passion' because that's what drives people in anything. In relationships, and sport, and work, as soon as you don't have that, then I don't think people should be doing what they're doing. You know, sometimes I think it can be blocked, and you have to rekindle it, even in sport, but once it's gone ... you know, I think that's what drives people. And I think as long as you see that that's what drives you, that that's your motivation then that's a good thing. If you lose that passion, then it's not a bad thing, it's just time to move on to something else. And I think it can sometimes even be there, but you can move on. I don't think that's a bad thing, because the passion can be channeled elsewhere. I mean, probably when I retire, the passion will still be there, but the passion for other things might be stronger.

Individuals are able to separate the hassles of their environment from their love of the sport.

CHRIS: But it is tough to go on the road and leave my family at home. The thing I guess you think about is, for our game, come summertime, however long or short it is, they've got me pretty much exclusively. Other than a couple hours in the morning when I work out, I'm at home. So we kind of tailor our lives around that. In the summertime, I'm all theirs. Whatever they want to do, I have to be around and be willing, especially with my son. In the wintertime, it's tough, but I guess it's what you get paid for. Because the game ... people ask me to come out and play shinny with them at night, and for sure I'm gonna go out and do it because you love the game and you like playing it so much that it isn't a job. I guess the job comes in when you have to get up early in the morning and take that 3-hour flight and get in and practice. Those are the hard things.

Essentially, the first and most important question is answered based on how the activity makes the person feel. This relegates the importance of actual outcomes to a secondary position.

MIKAELA: And recently, my whole thought process has been on, you know, "do what you wish you could do". It's like "well, what do I wish I could do? Or what do I want to do?" You know, I really wish I could take time to pursue my art interests and develop them. And it's like, well why don't I just do it? You know, it's the same thing as saying "I wish I could go to the Olympic Games". Just do it. Do what you need to do to get to that level. And so I think by not achieving the ultimate goals that I had set for myself at the beginning of this year, I've probably grown even more, and am able to focus even more on the fact that I am multidimensional. But it still does make me hungry for finishing off my sporting career well. It makes me hungry to make sure that I'm at my best. And it makes me really determined to make sure that I don't fall into the trap of "well, if I don't

make the team then I'm a bad person or if I don't make the team then I've wasted my time" or whatever because it's never been a waste.

Such a focus can help in overcoming 'baggage' that one might be carrying about the past.

The intent is to move towards a desired feeling or future, rather than away from negative experiences from the past.

MIKAELA: I feel now I'm being pulled forward by my future. I can see this bright light and all of this awesome potential, and everything that I want is within me, and it's all pulling me forward now. And you know, I've learned from those past mistakes, and I've learned and that's what's helped me to get where I am and now I'm being pulled forward rather than being pushed by the past. A lot of people are still driven by their past, you know. They didn't make the team so they're driving themselves to make this team, and it was because of what happened before, not what they want to happen or what they figure is going to happen. And it's a different way of looking at things, but I find it's more positive being pulled forward by what you want. Or where you envision yourself being is right there, pulling you towards it, rather than where you were and you don't want to be there anymore pushing you away.

Returning to the feeling one wishes to create can generate energy and optimism about the future.

RILEY: And it took me pretty much until the start of June (after a challenging set of obstacles in the prior season) to really want to start training and want to start getting back in the game. And things just sort of went over; I realized it was just another set-back and there are many players like myself who have been in this situation before. So then I just sort of started to remember some of the enjoyable times in university hockey and the world junior championships, and even in pro, some of the success I had, and remembering the feeling I had in pro where I finally felt that "hey, I belong at this level, and these players are great players but I can play with them". And I think that motivation came back to me, and as I started to train again, I sort of got the motivation "well hey, I have another organization to prove to here. It's a new start".

This emphasis on passion in sport can combat the 'sport habit' that one athlete recalls falling into.

HOWIE: I don't know, I think after a while that's just kind of what you know. And I think it's what you know, so you don't question it. Part of you just thinks, "well, that's just the way it is." And if that's just the way it is, then you just keep doing it.

As other pursuits and foci start to take on greater importance a natural transition can be made out of sport, where new passions emerge and demand attention. The closing days of one's career can take on additional sentiment at this time.

HOWIE: Because now there's a shift, and the focus before was on winning and competing, on that goal, on the short-term goals. Everything else seemed irrelevant. I think there comes a time when, it doesn't have to be when you're losing, it can be a time when you're doing really well, but whatever it is, maybe something inside, maybe something external, like you're in a relationship now, and those other things start kicking in.

While athletes may be torn by the choices, they are at least taking the decision head on.

CASSIE: With sports, I can see, for the next four years, I would do it, hands down, like I'd love to keep playing. I'd love it because I know, for me as a player, I just switched positions, now a forward, and I think that's kind of where I should be. It's going well and I know I can achieve so much more in that area, but at what cost? You know? Like I'm getting up there, and kids and family, and you know, that's important to me too. Stability in terms of working and jobs, and in terms of timing, it's sometimes important in career stuff.

CASSIE: When I was younger, the costs weren't as big. Like when you're 24, you think "yeah, four years, whatever." But I think of the cost when it comes to having kids and getting a relationship, because first I have to find the guy and see if I can get married, you know, and it's gonna be a good five year process. So you know, whether that's gonna fit in and that kind of thing.

One athlete contrasted his anticipation of retirement with that of other athletes lacking perspective. Key experiential lessons were seen as paramount in this process.

SCOTT: I keep seeing that there are some lectures and talks at the sport centre on athletes retiring, and how to reintegrate yourself into society and stuff like that. I think that's wild. I think if an athlete has that balance and that perspective in life, a complete life, not just athletics, they wouldn't have to be reintegrated back into society. They'd already be part of it. There are too many athletes, it seems like, that have a problem retiring, like it's a bad thing to retire, it's a bad thing to leave the sport. I'm looking forward to it. People hear me talk and they say "man, you're talking too much like you're done already". And I'm like "no, I'm just looking forward to it". I'm anticipating that part of my life because there are other things I want to get on and do. So I'm excited about going on and doing these other things. I'm not forgetting what's going on right now. I'm enjoying what I'm doing right now, and I'm working hard to make this my best year

possibly, but I see other things that are after that. So it's tough for me to understand that. I think if I had continued doing sport the way I was doing sport before, and I hadn't gotten suspended, and hadn't had the life-changing things, yeah, I could see that being a problem, because my identity was athletics. You know, that's where I got my identity from.

Ultimately, transition out of sport and into other pursuits can be faced reflectively and positively.

SCOTT: It's really cool, now that my career is winding down. This will probably be my last year. If I get carded, I might stick around for the money (laughs), because they owe me a couple of years I think. (laughs) I'm looking forward to this year. Like, I'm training really hard and everything's focused and going, but I'm looking forward to the end of it also. You know, and I'm content with that. Like I'm ready to. There are other things I'd like to start doing in life that I have put on hold because of athletics. I find myself reflecting and looking back on all the years that I've been in track and field, and some of the good things, some of the bad things, and when I'm training I'm remembering some things over the years that we did, and I find myself smiling and just enjoying it. And remembering that there have been more positive things than bad things, and just looking forward to finishing off the year and finishing off the season, and then calling it good. And not being angry or bitter or leaving the sport and saying "what if this and what if that?" or having to tell tall tales about my accomplishments in track. And I see people that say "oh, didn't he go to so and so Olympics and do really well?" or "actually, I don't think he ever made a team or anything like that", and they go back and they have these big stories, and it's bad because they still don't understand what life is really all about.

Unfortunately, it may be possible at such times for friends and family to encourage continued sport involvement when the athlete's heart is no longer in it.

COURTNEY: That's me for sure this year, because like you said, I had to take a couple of time-outs and recheck. But sometimes I think even though you have such a great positive support group like I did, sometimes maybe I drew on that and said "come on, you can do it. You've sacrificed this, that, and the other. You can keep going." And in my heart I was thinking maybe I can't. And sometimes it's hard to get that balance, because you respect those people in your world so much. Maybe you have to go back to yourself to figure out those things. And if you did continue, you'll never be as good as you could be. That's what I believe. And I've seen it. When my old partner, she needed to stop and it was like "ughh, are you kidding me?" But she couldn't go anymore. She just couldn't. And that wouldn't have been a happy road for her or for me. And in the long run, even though the ultimate goal is Sydney, that's not what it is.

But ultimately, the athletes seem to view sport as an opportunity for fulfillment, a source of *experiencing fully*. When that opportunity expires, other sources are considered.

One of the most striking patterns found in this group of athletes involves their appraisals of adversity. Lessons, growth, and some purpose are sought and attached to whatever challenges that these individuals face. While some draw on religious faith, all seem to identify a sense of order and meaning in adversity.

I: Let's say at the end of the day, you put it all on the line the result wasn't what you were shooting for, was it worth that risk?

HOWIE: Yes, because you've learned from it. If you walk away saying "I haven't learned a damn thing" then you'll keep making the same mistakes. You'll make that mistake in your relationship. You'll make that mistake when you compete. If you walk away and you learn from it and take from it what you've learned, then you can carry on. And even if the relationship doesn't work out and you tell yourself "well, I put everything into it, I have no regrets".

Individuals acknowledged having a choice about how to face turbulence in their lives

HOWIE: I think if you have that, it helps you go on. I mean there are going to be tough times, which is where I'm at right now. I'm in a tough time, a weird time for me, but I'll go on, I know that. And I take that from sport. Because if you lose, you know there's another game. You know there's another chance maybe. So the immediate goal may be lost, but the long-term goal is there. In life, maybe you lost the girl, but you know there's a big world out there and there's a lot of girls in it. So if you take the negative and turn it into a positive, and I know it's all cliché, but you really don't have any other choice. I guess you do but ...

I: It's a miserable alternative.

HOWIE: Yeah.

Important lessons and insights could be drawn from difficult experiences, enhancing one's confidence in dealing with future difficulties.

CASSIE: Through early years, I had huge problems with my knees, and been through surgeries and all those kinds of things. And in terms of total adversity, that's kind of happened through sport. Our team hasn't been super-successful in terms of qualifying for Olympics and those kinds of things, but I think you have to fail in order to appreciate success. Like I think that when you talk about humility and all of those kinds of things, I think you gain respect through those kinds of catastrophes or failures. And so I think it's really important to learn those lessons. Like the first knee, I was like "crap". The second one I was "oh, this is

crap". And then I didn't have it until after the fact, I'm like "okay, I know how to train now, I know the discipline that's necessary", you know, all these things. So I think you have to gain the lessons from it. And I see any negative, okay at the time, no, but after I always find the lesson from it. But I think the reason I've been able to do that is because of the succession of experiences. And when you look at negative experiences, I have not had anything super-bad happen, knock on wood. I said knee injuries and stuff in sport, but when you look at my life, it's been pretty good in terms of ... like when other people look at bad things in the world, nothing like that. So it's all relative when I say "yeah, I can handle it". But that's within the context of things that were devastating to me.

COURTNEY: I mean, every ... I guess you could call them negative points or obstacles that I think I've had my fair share lately, and I know that I'm a stronger person for those things. And it's not always fun to go through shitty things like that, but for sure they ... and everyone tells me they make me stronger (laughs). But I do believe that and that's why, when something's dealt my way, I just find a way. And whether that's inner strength because I had to draw on those past experiences, "it's just another thing, I can do it", you know, those are the things that go through my head. But certainly they've made me stronger, even though, when you're in the middle of them, you feel weak, like you can't go on.

Despite the rhetoric becoming cliché, these individuals recognize the power of hard times in initiating growth and reconnect with oneself.

COURTNEY: Yeah, and this year was my darkest time, so it's really been good to have the time away to get that perspective back, because at times I felt that I was losing it and I wasn't being true to myself. And you grow from it, absolutely. You're a better person for it. I always say "blah, blah, blah" when someone says "but you're stronger, you've learned, and ..." you know, "enough already", but it's all true.

These individuals expressed a faith in an order of things (some of them religious), wherein things happen for a reason, and all experiences have some functional purpose.

MEAGHAN: But also, I mean, again I come back to faith because being a Christian athlete, that's the biggest thing. And my husband grew up in a Christian home and I didn't, and so you really start to question why things happen to you. And I think that's the path it put me on, the "why would this happen to me", and you don't say that God let's things happen to you, but you know, maybe ... I think for everything that happens, there's a reason. And good things come from it. And, you know, good things came of it. And ultimately I wished it had never happened, but I think ultimately I'm a better person because that happened.

MIKAELA: I think everything that I went through in 96 happened for a reason, and it's made me who I am today. It got me where I am today, here. I honestly feel that if I had made the 96 team, I probably would have retired from my sport then, because I had that negative energy and I was drained. I don't think I'd have the people involved in my life now that I do or be as well grounded as I am. Even though it hurt, and even though it was kind of a dark time, it was very beneficial. It was a huge learning experience. And for me to be able to sit here now and look back on that and say 96 was a huge learning experience is a testimonial to that growth and what I actually did learn. Because for the longest time I always thought that somebody took that experience away from me. And then I learned that "no, there's reasons that I wasn't there", you know. And eventually they've revealed themselves to me in different ways.

Among these functions is the development of appreciation for successes through the setbacks along the way. With this comes a respect for others who have endured tough conditions.

MIKAELA: If you've always been successful and you've always been rewarded for your training, then you'll never really understand struggle or what it's like to train hard but then hit rock bottom, and kind of go "well I did everything that I was supposed to do, now what do I do?" And then do that soul searching, go inside and try to find that calm link or if you need to fire yourself up more, and then change and then pull yourself up by the bootstraps and start trying to climb again. I always find that people who have had it easy, that have all the talent but have never gone through like an injury or a coaching problem or a funding problem or any of those sorts of struggles, when they finish sports, they never really have that full experience, I don't think. Whereas those people who did really well but had an injury and were just coming back from that and something else happened and when they finally get where they were going, or they reach the end of their career, they look back and say "wow, I've learned a lot", all the things that you've learned, all the things that have made you a better person, and you acquire a confidence that whatever is thrown at you, you can deal with. Personally, I have more respect for the people that haven't had it easy. You can admire the talent, but I tend to look at what they've gone through as people.

Here is an example of how the perception of self (as multidimensional) can facilitate this assignment of meaning.

MIKAELA: I went from such a positive feeling that everything was gonna go great. I was on my way to going to Sydney and looking at having a really good year in for the European season this year. And none of anything that I planned came true. So I'm glad that I don't totally identify myself with who I am as an athlete, because if I did then I would have been just totally floored. There's a part

of you that's gonna be floored anyway, because that's what you put your heart and your soul and your time and your effort and your focus on. But I found so many other sides of me by not doing those things. By not going to Sydney, I learned a lot of other things about myself, you know, with my work and again, learning how to reconnect with people.

Among the benefits of adversity is a reordering of lost priorities, and the ultimate assurance that one can get through hard times.

MEAGHAN: And that's where I really started soul-searching (after major disappointment), and I think if I had been in a position where I had won a medal, I almost get scared of what I would have become, what kind of athlete I would have become, because I had this idea that you were more important if you had a medal.

JORDAN: There's all kinds of adversity that you run into along the way. Things that get you down and then you have to reset your course and refocus on the things that you want to be or were and you'll put a little less weight into getting all hyped up over a big win or whatever the case may be.

One athlete's 'rock bottom' experience had a profound influence on his philosophy of life, reconnecting him with the things of primary importance in his life.

SCOTT: I think the big turning point in my life had to have been my (drug) suspension. That was my big wake-up call. And working through that suspension really changed me. It really changed my outlook on life. It really brought me back down to earth and helped me realize what are the important things in life. You know, what are you doing all this stuff for? And going through that time and really being protected by God during that time because I was pretty messed up during that time, like I was suicidal. It wasn't a very good time. You know, going from being a well-respected athlete in the community and a role model, you know, whether you want to be that or not. You know, being someone that a lot of people liked and got along with to someone that people were really, really nasty to. That was tough. And then there was the embarrassment of the whole thing. And that was tough. It was really tough to deal with. And I give the credit for not only making my way through and barely scraping through it but also coming out on the other end and being who I am today, I give all that credit to the Lord. I just have to. And to him answering prayers. Because it was devastating, that time. But that changed my whole focus, my whole ... it's not really a philosophy on life, but it's the way I approach things in life. Life isn't perfect now, and it's not like I'm going to say "I had an encounter with God and my life is perfect now". I think that's a load of crap. But there's this feeling that at the end of the day you know everything's going to be okay. That's kind of the feeling I have. Even

though I have horrible days and whatever else, at the end of the day things will be cool.

SCOTT: It was like a wake-up call. It's like you go through something devastating or something really hard, and it just sort of brings you back, it settles you and brings you back to a focus.

This athlete's religious conviction carried considerable weight in responding to his drug suspension.

I: You mentioned being suicidal at one point. In that darkest hour, what saved you from taking your life?

SCOTT: I give the credit to the prayer and people praying for me and essentially the Lord basically reassuring me that I had value, that I had worth, and telling me he loved me basically. But yeah, that was really weird because I'd never been like that before so that was pretty weird, like my whole world was crashing in on me, and I didn't want to face the music. But this is another defining moment I remember; I remember when I got busted, and the first person I told was my brother. I was living with him and he called my coach (and friend) over because that was his best friend, and he was my coach also, and we just prayed. And I was very mellow after that, and I was able to deal with everything. I was able to go to the press conference, go through it, and whatever else. And it was like that whole time I had an iron coat on. Things just didn't affect me during that specific time, like that two week window or whatever. And then after that, I started feeling ... it was almost like I had some anesthetic or something and I was numb to what was going on, now that I look back at it. But that was a turning point, because up to that point I was totally freaked out.

Ultimately, he regained the confidence to face adversity directly and take ownership of his mistake.

SCOTT: We prayed that, first and foremost, I'd get through this thing. We also prayed that if God could reverse it and just fix it. But as we were praying, it became very clear to me that "okay, it's not gonna get fixed but you're going to make it through it okay." That's the message I was getting back. "It's not going to be okay, but don't worry, you're going to get through it okay". And part of that confirmation was how well I was received by the media. Like they just totally were nice to me. They were so nice to me that a couple of athletes got so pissed off with them, they started writing nasty letters to them saying "you guys are making this guy out to be a hero. He's a charlatan, he's a drug user, he's horrible for the sport, and you guys are making this guy out to be a hero. So what if he admitted it? His sample tested positive. Treat him like you've fried everybody else." And they didn't. They didn't treat me like they treated everybody else, which was really, really surprising and encouraging.

The competitiveness of one athlete was apparent in his view of adversity as yet another opportunity to test oneself.

RICHARD: It's when you fall into the little valleys or injury or, you know, something else in your life that takes away or kind of hinders your progress, that's when the true testament occurs and you have to ... it's kind of like a reality check, a gut check, and you look inside and see if you have what it takes to get over whatever hurdles are put in your way.

Adversity was also put into 'perspective' in relation to a broader context.

CASSIE: And I think awareness is very important because, for example, doing all of this volunteer stuff at the children's hospital, huge perspective! Like my week's been crappy, I go there, it's like "you're so fine". You know what I mean? But unless you have those opportunities, or unless you create that awareness ...

MIKAELA: Just because you never go to an Olympics or win a medal, doesn't mean you haven't accomplished anything. You look at all the days of training and everything that you've done, I mean, that's accomplishment. And you compare that to someone with quadriplegia or a spinal injury. They'd kill to be able to get up and go for a run or go for a walk. It helps to put it in perspective. Every day you're out there doing something that somebody else wishes that they could do.

This relative consideration of one's setbacks can be the difference between distress and affirmation.

RACHEL: And the key example I have is in 1996, I made the Olympic team and was kind of the dark horse. It was always my goal to make the Olympic team but I hadn't had a lot of experience and I just made it, and I was like "wow, I'm going to the Olympics, neat!" And I got there and I had the worst performance I've had probably my entire life, just didn't know how to deal with all that was going on around me. And when I came home, I was so devastated, I was such a failure, and I was embarrassed, and my pride was so injured. And the year after the Olympics, once I started training again full board, I had one of the best competitive years I've had. And I won the world cup the year after the Olympics. And I just kind of took a few months to sulk and feel sorry for myself and then I just kind of realized "so few people get to go to the Olympics. You know, that in itself is a huge accomplishment. You know, be proud of yourself for that and give yourself a pat on the back".

RILEY: Well, the main thing is I just talked to a lot of my friends and fortunately I have really close friends, a couple of very close buddies from back home that I

talked to quite a bit. And then I spent four years with pretty much the same people at university and my household there. And some of them have gone on to have NHL success and another one has had to retire due to concussions from the game of hockey, and I look at his situation and it really puts things into perspective, how fortunate you are to still be able to play the game.

To this athlete, perspective was seen as a consideration of events, both good and bad, as proportionately smaller than they may look in the moment.

CHRIS: For me, keeping things in perspective is to basically kind of keep an even keel, kind of know where you want to go, know that you can get there if you want to work hard, and with hockey anyway, things are never as bad as they seem, and never as good as they seem also, in the same breath.

Looking at success in relation to a broader context (including one's values) can also help in maintaining humility.

MEAGHAN: And people asked me, you know, how have you changed, and maybe little things have changed, you know, doors have opened with the sponsors, but you really hope that you yourself don't change because that's obviously putting your priorities in the wrong spot.

JORDAN: At the end of the day, it's just another tournament. You know, and I won't lie to you, as soon as you mentioned a year to the day, I get this smile on my face because it is one of the best moments of my life. I speak at schools and I talk about the (major games) and I get all welled up. It's just very, very big to me. To keep it in perspective, again, it's just another tournament. It was a great tournament. It's a part of my life that I'm extremely proud of. But I think in ten years from now, nobody's going to care about it, outside of myself and my close friends and family that were there with me.

Again the importance of process over outcome colours the way in which different events are perceived.

CASSIE: So I think, for me, what do I have? You know, because I have the career thing, I could go back to that as well. So yeah, it was devastating, but not nearly as much as in 95, because that's all I had. So having, I think, kind of the balance or the perspective of what the big picture is all about, I look at the Olympics as something that's given to so few, and it's a great opportunity, but at the same time, I don't think I can compute my worth with going or not going. The process and what I've gotten out of it has been amazing, so looking at it that way, I think

CASSIE: I'm not content, because I haven't achieved what I want to achieve, in terms of outcomes. I am content because I've achieved all these amazing experiences in the process. You know?

Shared experiences, even the painful ones are ultimately seen as valuable, and can be taken as part of a package of meaningful experiences that come with involvement in elite sport.

JORDAN: What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. It was a great disappointment, again I had my family there, they were very supportive. And there were enough people on the team sharing the pain at that time, so it made it a little bit easier because we were there together in failure, for lack of a better word. I don't know, some people just take it a little bit more difficult. So is it going to break me? No, it hasn't. I don't think it will. At the end of the day, it's just a game. It certainly didn't finish the way we had wanted to. I wanted to finish in Sydney. But the journey, from the mountain retreat through the Pan-Am Games, through the Olympic quals, the tour of Australia, you know, it's the journey that I'll remember. And standing on the podium in (major games). So that's enough to keep me going and get me by. I mean, if you rest it all on the Olympic qual then yeah, the whole two years was a tragic waste of time. But I would have never met our sport psych, I met my girlfriend at a tournament, and the same with all these people I wouldn't have met and have had the pleasure of meeting, and it's all part of that journey, meeting those people.

In short, these individuals find meaning and purpose in virtually everything that happens to them. While they may struggle with events at the time, there is faith that the lesson of value in each experience will be revealed in time. In addition, events and experiences are considered in relation to a broader picture; things are placed in 'perspective'. The meanings that are ascribed to different experiences seem to reinforce the philosophy by which these individuals try to live, especially as they pertain to the definition of the self, authentic living, and the full experience of the self and others.

Summary of Model

The process of perspective involves three primary categories: defining the self, living authentically, and experiencing fully. The process follows a simple line of logic.

The individual sees the self in a healthy light, as having enduring valuable qualities and being multifaceted. Without a performance-contingent view of the self, individuals feel free to be themselves. This authentic living is enhanced by others who fully accept and understand the participants, awareness and acceptance of emotions, an attitude of humility, and support from and shared experience with others. The healthy view of self and authentic living alleviate the pressures often associated with elite sport; performers do not have their value at stake or unrealistic infallible images to protect. Instead, all that is at stake is the performance itself. This reduction in pressure allows individuals to experience themselves, others, and their sports fully. This unburdened 'perspective' allows the athlete to immerse fully in the activity, often leading to optimal performance.

While this description appears linear, interaction between categories and subcategories is evident throughout the data. For this reason a three-way interactive representation was chosen. Two additional sections will describe the *evolution and development* evident within the process of perspective, as well as the role of *awareness* in maintaining the positive components of the process.

Evolution and Development

Ultimately, one of my primary motives for conducting this research was to establish a foundation for educating young athletes about perspective and the process of maintaining it. However, it became clear as the study unfolded that the 'exemplars' selected for this study had some contrasting experiences earlier in their careers. The discovery and maintenance of perspective seems to be linked to a process of maturing and certain key experiential lessons. So the question will remain; can perspective be taught, or must it be earned with experience.

While this is uncertain, the evidence that perspective follows a developmental course is compelling.

CASSIE: What I think will be interesting is looking at it at the stage of evolution in that person. Like, for example, I think I would answer these questions much differently at the beginning of my career. And I know you have it on a continuum in terms of perspective, but what about in terms of 'the ten years of expert'? Are there ten years of gaining perspective? Is there something like that? Because I see things way differently now because it's kind of one of those 'with experience' type of things. So that's a piece, and I don't know if it's within the model itself.

Eventually, one can start to see through the special status that elite performers are allotted to a more enduring sense of self-worth, but the power of external rewards can seduce the young athlete.

COURTNEY: That's a juggling act (self-worth independent of performance) I think. Like you touch on all of that, and it's true, and throughout your career you go through finding that, because you don't know that when you start. There's no way. So when people do put you on the pedestal, you're kind of like "woo, Jeez", you fluff your feathers. But then you soon realize there's a whole other side, and that's as you grow as an athlete and a person.

Athletes gradually see and appreciate things for what they are, rather than limiting their vision to a 'bottom line'.

MIKAELA: I find that I like the way that I am now. I find, with my personality, that I have a lot more gracefulness about me. I have a lot more gratitude about things. I appreciate things a lot more. You know, even the hour that (name of coach) comes out, if he only says one word, I appreciate that because it's one word that I didn't get before. You know, things like that, whereas before it was an all-or-nothing thing, and it's not all or nothing anymore.

It may be that perspective is best viewed as a process of emotional maturity, through which one becomes progressively self-aware.

RACHEL: I just think as I get older that I mature a little bit and you take time to reflect on everything that's going on in your life and the people around you. Somehow we mature emotionally. Emotionally I guess is what it is. It's more of an emotional maturity than it is a mental maturity. It's an emotional maturity and just understanding your needs better and your own personality, your own identity better. And I think that's something you only get with time. You know, when you

go through those experiences and you really take a hard look at everything that's happened to you, and you try to, not analyze it, but all those things happen to you for a reason, and it's your choice to look at it positively or negatively.

As one matures, the perceived importance of sport outcomes may diminish in favour of self-discovery and humility.

CHRIS: I think the longer you're in the sport ... for me anyway, you kind of realize after a while that the sport isn't as big as you thought. It's kind of more about your self and that kind of stuff. I think that has allowed me to stay more on the 'perspective side', being a little bit more humble, and knowing that it's really not that big a deal.

Individuals needed certain key experiences to move towards perspective.

MEAGHAN: (Major setback at an Olympics) is something that really tests your ability to deal with sport and why you do it, because I think before that point, I had looked at to win an Olympic medal meant that you were important, because I looked at people and thought "wow", where you realize after that and after a lot of soul-searching that ten years down the road, I mean two years down the road really, it doesn't make a person different. And that's the big problem. I think people think that if you win an Olympic medal, the second they put it around your neck, you change. And your life might change a little bit, but if the person changes, I think there's a problem.

Even successes, with the wrong focus, can trigger the need for change in the way one views one's involvement in sport.

MIKAELA: There's a whole 'prove it' energy. I mean, 92 that's how I made it was off of this prove-it energy. Everyone said "you won't be able to do it" and I said "well, yes I can". And you can drive yourself that way for so long and then you'll hit a wall. Either after a while you've proven everything and you've got nobody else saying that you can't, so then how do you motivate yourself again, or you just have this hard negative drive and focus, like the whole world is against you, the me-against-the-world type thing, and you end up burning yourself out.

Experiential learning is given considerable emphasis in the development of perspective over time.

RACHEL: I don't know, I guess you don't start off ever being really great at dealing with it all, I don't think. At least that's been my situation. You know, there's definitely a period where you have to go through lots of ups and downs and gain knowledge, especially knowledge of perspective, especially from failure.

RACHEL: And I think a year or two after the Olympics, I really kind of looked at that as a turning point for me and a big success, because if I hadn't experienced the ups and downs along the way, I don't think it would have given me the strength of character or made me the person I am today.

The experience of self seems to be dynamic in nature, allowing for individuals to grow in complexity, maturity, and self-awareness.

CASSIE: What I'm learning more about the self is it's evolving. If you think you know the self, then how come you learn more about yourself every day? Or how come someone can stimulate something in you that you didn't know?

It may also be that one's relationships need time to develop and mature before they can take a front seat in the priorities of the individual.

MEAGHAN: It's a never-ending thing, right (perspective)? Because I think sometimes your relationships change. Not necessarily the deep ones, because I don't think those should change. Bu they change as your life changes. So you change a little bit. And I think even though you know yourself and you're authentic, they change a bit. And it's with the people, it's with everything that happens in your life. You know, I'm going to be the same person today that I am in ten years, but when I have kids, I'm going to be a little bit different because a little bit more than my husband and my friends and my family will be important. You know, there'll be more people. That's where I mean that it kind of changes all the time. And yet, if you take away all these things, you're still a person. And I think that's ultimately how self is. But what's happening around you does influence you a little bit.

This includes the appreciation of significant relationships throughout the process of development, such as the parents.

RACHEL: I think, with my parents especially, as I get older, they get so much smarter (laughs). I always think that. You know, and all my life I've been pretty independent and headstrong and especially when I was 15 or 16, I really didn't appreciate the advice that my parents had for me. I just thought it was annoying, and as I get older now, I just realize how smart they are and how they've never tried to hold me back from anything I've wanted to do. They've always encouraged me and been behind me 100% and supported me in everything I've done, even if I know that they've probably had their own opinions, they'd always give me their opinions and their advice.

Before key relationships have gained full significance in the athletes' eyes, sport can easily remain central.

RACHEL: I think, when I was younger, I was very ... I don't know if selfish is the right word, but more focused on myself and what I was doing. I didn't think a heck of a lot about them (my parents) all the time. So I think the fact that I'm more aware of how proud they are, and how much they support what I do, and how much they care about what I do, you know it helps me out because I just know that, regardless of what happens, they're there for me.

RACHEL: It's just a growing thing that I've felt get stronger every year for the past few years. And I don't know if it's just a maturity as you get older and you're on your own and, like I said, you realize when you get older that your parents are very smart and wise and they only say the things because they care. But those relationships have become so important to me, and I couldn't be where I am now or go through the next few months, regardless of what they hold for me, without having them totally in the stands cheering for me or on my side. So ... it's a pretty cool feeling.

The process of maturing that seems to correspond to the process of perspective may be best described as a merging of one's values and one's lifestyle. A distinction was made between *having* values and *living* values.

SCOTT: You know, I grew up in a Christian family and stuff like that and I had that belief structure from an early age, but just sort of having those belief structures and actually living within those structures were two different things. And I would have said that I was a Christian and whatever else, but I just didn't live the lifestyle. You know, it was all really about me. I think I was a decent enough guy and a decent person for the most part, but I was making some bad choices.

The participants settled on the things of fundamental importance to them, then gained conviction with time.

COURTNEY: Five or ten years ago, I was just living life every day and just doing what I wanted to do. And responsibility, I think I've put more of that on my shoulders and my family, and because my parents are older, for a thirty year-old, my mom's 75, I'm dealing with things a 40 year-old or a 45 year-old would deal with. I'm just dealing with them a lot sooner. So 10 years ago they were doing a lot better, so I was definitely more into myself and what I was doing, where right now, I mean that's the most important thing to me right now is my family because ... not just because it's a bad time for my dad, it's more than that. Because I

don't want it to sound like it's just because he's ill, you know. But because usually you take stock on your life and you have to do that, and you do that with all sorts of circumstances in your life. But I've had to, for sure, five or ten years ago I'd say myself, having fun, travel, my sport, money, you know, those are the things I'd think about. Now I don't think like that. I'd say I've grown up. I have a home. I'm based out of (home town). Big time family values, so yeah.

This may involve the appreciation of the simple experiences of daily living and time spent with loved ones.

I: What are the most important things in your life?

COURTNEY: Oh, my family right now is a huge priority for me. Peace ... peace of mind.

I: Can you define that for me?

COURTNEY: Time is flying by and so much is happening ... it involves my personal life and my volleyball career, and it just seems like we're always fast forward and time is slipping away, and when I say peace, I just mean to be quiet, to ... to smell the flowers, it seems like such a silly thing to say, but when you have a moment, to just appreciate the small things in life and, like I said, for me, spending two hours at the hospital, and Dad's not with it very well, and I was struggling to go to California for example, and he just wrote "Sydney" on a piece of paper. To me, that's like time just stood still. And that doesn't happen a lot for me right now, so I like it when it does. So peace is just being content with what's coming my way and I'm feeling better about that.

Individuals may also gain a deeper spirituality over the course of their development that lends primary meaning to their lives.

MEAGHAN: Ultimately, I'm a Christian, so obviously my belief and perspective is outside of sport in the way that I believe that there's something bigger than sport.

MEAGHAN: First we'd have to put our faith. And we base how we live on what the bible says. And then we put each other. And then I guess we would put skating after that, because first it's our faith, then it's each other, and then it's skating, and I guess the biggest thing is that's the first activity. I mean faith is the strongest point, and then each other and our marriage, and then skating. If you were to give up something, like if somebody said "you know, you have to give up skating", just some scenario, for some reason. Well you know what? I could do that and still survive. You know, I couldn't ... you know, obviously if something tragic happened to (significant other) or myself, we could survive. But I think the biggest thing in our life is our faith. And without that, to me I don't really have a purpose in life.

SCOTT: I think the thing that I think of most when I think of anything in my life that keeps me grounded is my relationship with God. That's got to be first and foremost. Being a Christian and having a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ, I think that's where everything starts.

With time, individuals may also become more closely connected to the attributes that they have, or to which they aspire.

JORDAN: And when I came here, it was a fresh beginning, and I wanted to be recognized as a good person. And I think that, at the end of the day, regardless of whether you're financially secure or not or whatever, as long as people view you as a good person, I think you can hang your hat on that. And I truly believe that. I: What makes a good person?

JORDAN: Um, considerate. You know, opening the door for someone. Like, if somebody drops something, helping them pick it up, just, I don't know, it's like common sense things. Being there for somebody, being able to listen to them, being able to speak with somebody about something they're passionate about, anything, like, ... it's hard to say what makes a good person, you just know people.

RACHEL: It's important to me to set goals and to work hard to the best of your abilities to achieve that goal and to finish what you started. That's huge. And I think that's the thing that carries over to every aspect of life, how I feel about everything. In relationships, you go hard or go home, you know. Like with your family, you give them all your love. You don't just give them a little bit. You give them all your love, and you let yourself be vulnerable sometimes because you get it back tenfold, you know. Relationships with a husband or wife, you can't just be part-time in that. You've got to be full into it. And I think that that's very important to me, achieving goals in whatever aspect of your life and working as hard as you can. Because when you get there and you achieve whatever it is you set out to do, you can look back and not have regrets that "maybe if I'd done this it would have been better". You have to constantly challenge yourself and push yourself to do better things or to be more open-minded, etc., etc.

SCOTT: My brother almost became like a father figure to me. For five years I lived with him and he took care of me. And I remember growing up, I always wanted to be like my brother. I started running track and field because my brother ran track. I started running distance in grade 7 because my brother was running distance. It wasn't until high school when I actually went out and tried triple-jump and was good at it that I sort of went away from that. But on top of that: humility, kindness, love, that's my brother. Everyone that knows him ... no one has anything bad to say about the guy. He's just a great person. And a lot of the characteristics that he has I'd like to emulate. So that's why he's my hero.

But ultimately, as the word 'perspective' implies, there is an ordering of the values of one's life and their relative importance.

CHRIS: Probably family first and then hockey would probably come second. Between my wife and the little guy, they're the ones that you're doing the hockey for basically, so that you can make an alright living at it and provide for them. But obviously if I had to choose between the two, it would be my family before hockey.

Then those values are eventually transformed into actions that make up one's lifestyle.

MIKAELA: I mean, there are a lot of Olympians out there who have made Olympic teams and competed, and you never hear from them again, you never would have known that they were Olympians. You know, because it was just something that they did. And then you have people that were Olympians and then have gone off and lived the Olympic moment every day of their life. You know, in their job or their vocation and all the different things that they're doing, they still do it at that Olympic level. And there are people that haven't been Olympians but live their lives like they have been. You know, they do everything at that Olympic level. And I think that's what's special. Not so much whether you have been or haven't been, or what you've done, but what you're doing with it, and where you're going, and where you want to go.

JORDAN: My step-father has been working 12-hour days as long as I can remember. And it's his hard work that has made me want to do the work.

And this process of aligning one's lifestyle with one's values, like any other, must be worked at on a daily basis.

JORDAN: Well, your values and morals are something you have to work at. When you read a book like 'The Monk That Sold His Ferrari', you can read it and it all sounds so familiar. It's only when you try to apply it that you realize that you weren't doing it but I want to do it because it's going to make me a better person. So I think your values are something that you work towards and you continue working towards. Something simple like making a conscious effort to smile at people, it's great to read about but unless you're actually doing it, it's not worth the paper it's written on. When I was younger, I probably would have given similar answers to these questions. Was I living it though? Probably not.

SCOTT: You know, I think you go through phases. And on a day to day level, I may not always put the most important things first. You know, at Nationals for example, the day before the actual competition, I was really just edgy about everything. I didn't want to think about this and that and whatever else. I just wanted to relax, focus, clear my mind and just get jumps going in my mind, and

focus. But it's not normally like that. So on a day to day basis, I think those things shift. They almost have to, but I think in the overall scheme of things, those things take precedence in that order (relationships first).

It is again appropriate to note that, while the process of perspective seems to strengthen along developmental lines for the participants in this study, they were chosen as exemplars. Many athletes may complete their careers without making steps towards perspective. Indeed the literature regarding the counselling needs of athletes confirms this.

It may then be suggested that certain key elements of the process must occur (as per the process described throughout the results), and these elements take root as an athlete gains experiential knowledge. So how can one increase the likelihood that young athletes will move towards perspective as they develop? The answer may lie in their awareness. If individuals understand the process and are cognizant of it from day to day, the elements of perspective may take shape in the perceptions and behaviours of the individual. The importance of awareness in the perspective process is reinforced by the participants in this study.

Awareness

The individuals in this study emphasized the importance of awareness and reminders in the process of perspective.

COURTNEY: I don't know many people that have walked the path and stayed on the path without veering off occasionally. And that makes you better, I like to think. But if you're conscious and aware of it, I think that's what helps you get back. Those are the people with perspective in my world.

Again, this awareness can be enhanced by reminders, either habitually made to oneself, or from others.

MEAGHAN: I think even if you're at the right end of the spectrum and you know that the result doesn't make your self, I think that you often have to be reminded of that, whether it's from yourself or from others. And I think that's just our nature. I think it's our nature of being insecure in a society where they want results. Even though I know that it doesn't make me, whether I do well or not, part of me wants the results, whether that's a pride thing or not. But if I actually sit and think about it, then I know that it doesn't make who I am. You know? So if you look at it from the perspective of self-valuing, that's completely right. And I think people are one end or the other, but I think that you definitely need reminders. That's where I guess I go for the connection with others.

JORDAN: It's important to be aware be willing to critically analyze yourself. And it helps when someone else points it out in a nice way.

The inevitability of transition out of sport may provide a powerful reminder to this end.

JORDAN: And I didn't want to be one of those statistics where, you know, "he had a good playing career and then after that he had troubles, whatever, pushing a broom or whatever". I've always wanted to be successful and I've always wanted to prepare because knowing that sport isn't going to be there.

RACHEL: Sometimes it's a chore. I just really, as far as diving is concerned, more and more as I get older and closer to the end of what I'm doing, I just really try to reflect on it as something that is a part of my life, and it's been a huge part of my life and a huge priority up until this point, but it's not my entire life. I do have a lot outside of it, a lot to look forward to. And I try to think about that, especially on days that I have a crappy day, because it's not the end of the world.

Athletes who understand the value of perspective are well-motivated to take these

reminders with them in order to be perspective-aware at critical times.

RACHEL: And I know in amateur sports, the Olympics is the pinnacle. But really, the Olympics is just another venue, another environment and arena, it's a media circus, in which we do the dives we do in practice. So I hope I can take that with me, that perspective, and not be shaking to death while I'm standing at the end of the board.

But a well-made point from one of the participants about the role of the support group merits repeating.

JORDAN: I think you can make athletes aware of these things, but ultimately, I think it has to come from home. They have to have parents that love them whether they win or lose. You can't have a 'hockey parent'. Whether they do

good or bad, they have to feel accepted. So I think it should be taught first to the parent, then to the athlete.

In summary, the perspective process strengthens over the course of one's experiential learning and development with the right focus and emphasis of values. In addition, awareness is key in the practical application of the principles making up the process.

The next chapter discusses the model of perspective in relation to the relevant literature and discusses the implications and limitations of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

In tying the perspective process into the relevant literature, I find it difficult to separate sections of the model. The ideas all seem too interrelated to fit into sequential discussion of component parts. I feel that there is a simplicity to the process that would be lost with a discussion of each piece. There is a rhythm to the process that will unfortunately be lost for a time while I tie parts of the model to relevant literature. I will begin the discussion with an account of the perspective process as a whole.

The process seems to be about the willingness to *see the self for what it really is*, in its many facets, the good and bad, and the weak and strong. Simultaneously, individuals must be willing to *see value* in the traits that they have, the process of their lives, and their experiences in and of themselves. Individuals are then in a position to *experience the self for all that it can be*, and to *present themselves authentically*, that is, for what they truly are. This includes taking ownership of their *emotions*, accepting them, and using them to stay in touch with the things that are of greatest value to them.

Relationships play a large role in completing a fulfilling lifestyle. For this reason, engaging in the commitment and risk-taking required to establish open, authentic relationships further enhances the experiences and growth of each individual. In particular, close intimate relationships provide a feeling of being understood and accepted, and afford individuals both sanctuary and strength. Adopting and maintaining a sense of belonging, closeness, and community involves an openness to sharing one's experiences with others and sharing in the experiences of others. It also requires humility

when successful, and dignity in failure, that lessens the tendency to push away from people at those times.

Through the *acceptance and experience of the self and others* comes a strength to face whatever events occur in one's life, and a courage to let this objective guide and direct the manner in which one lives and responds. In other words, individuals are then able to find meaning and purpose in virtually every experience, good and bad, and to use those experiences to continually reconnect with themselves and others.

To me, that is the three-paragraph 'skinny' on perspective. It's not a linear sequence. It doesn't divide nicely into separate categories. But it does reflect, in fairly simple terms, the process that these athletes attempt to follow in their lives. Having said this, there is a body of literature that is highly relevant to the process of perspective. So relevant, in fact, that the perspective model at a glance may appear to offer nothing new at all.

The Relevant Literature

It is a requirement for doctoral candidates to further their fields through original research. While this study has not been done before, particularly in an elite athletic context, the results echo ideas that are not new. Indeed the principles of 'perspective' simply reinforce ideas that have been around for decades in psychology, and millennia in philosophy. What the model may provide is a synchronicity that ties together relevant ideas from the past, providing a structure for athletes and the people working with them. However, overstating this would run counter to the wisdom that has been shared with me by a remarkable group of people who also happen to be elite athletes. It would

demonstrate neither authenticity nor humility, ideas that must first be applied to my own life if I am to communicate them meaningfully to others.

'Perspective' combines ideas popularized by psychology's founding fathers, such as Rogers, Maslow, and Bandura. It overlaps with the subsequent exploration of psychological well-being. It touches on the contemporary ideas of resonance (Newburg) and flow (Csikszentmihalyi). It reinforces the importance of social support and intimacy, already well researched in psychology. It merges with ideas of existential psychology and philosophy. And it is coloured with the types of lessons common in theology, both in western and eastern cultures.

So what do I offer to my field? In addition to the holistic nature of the model, it is my hope that my 'perspective' dialogue will rekindle the discussion of what it means to live well. Like the process of perspective, knowledge of healthy purposeful living is not a destination that can be reached and sustained without effort. The ideas that have emerged from this data are not rocket science. They are simple principles of living. However, they can be lost when they slip from our consciousness. In my eyes, the elite sport environment is a metaphor for the everyday distractions and pressures that disconnect us from the things of most fundamental importance to us. But with the right attitude and focus, that same environment can be a forum for connecting with those things fully.

This discussion is intended to bring the life lessons of these athletes to the consciousness of you, the reader. Those lessons will be elaborated further, using the ideas of others whose efforts help to illuminate the essence of 'healthy living'.

Perspective and Psychological Well-being

Perspective, at a glance, addresses an optimal form of living within a performance environment. For this reason, obvious comparisons can be drawn between perspective and virtually any conception of higher functioning or psychological health. While comparisons to every such description would require many volumes to complete, there are certain comparisons that merit discussion by virtue of their similarity to the perspective model. For instance, comparisons have been made between Rogers' *fully functioning person* (1961) and Maslow's concept of *self-actualization* (1970). The perspective model fits into this discussion seamlessly.

Perspective, the Fully Functioning Person, and Self-Actualization.

Both Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1970) saw self-acceptance as fundamentally important. Tied closely to this is the ability to see oneself and others for what they truly are, without distortion. These ideas are central to the perspective model, in which individuals can readily present self authentically if they have accepted the self as both valuable and fallible.

Closely related to this notion, in the model, is the ability to experience oneself through one's activities, without being defined by them. In his interpretation of Rogers' fully functioning person, Monte (1995) makes an eerily similar observation:

In essence, the person's self emerges spontaneously from his or her experiences rather than being shaped by them. He or she transcends the boundaries of life by experiencing it fully rather than anxiously anticipating its pitfalls (p. 680).

The ability to immerse oneself fully in the moment is also relevant to Rogers' and Maslow's concepts. Rogers (1961) speaks of being more fully open to experience, while

Maslow (1970) refers to a freshness of appreciation and an ability to marvel at and enjoy the good things in life (interestingly, he includes sports among these). Both theorists describe individuals who are resistant to conformity and external influence, making them less distracted by pressures and expectations outside of themselves which were said to potentially interfere with full experience of the moment in the perspective model.

The importance of relationships with others is also apparent in these classic descriptions. Maslow claimed that the self-actualizing person is more accepting of others, has more intimate personal relations, and has a pronounced social interest. He used the term 'gemeinschaftsgefühl' (fellow feeling) to refer to this strong interest in the welfare of others and small number of intense and intimate friendships (Maslow, 1970). Rogers wrote about the importance of feeling accepted unconditionally as a precondition to becoming fully functioning (1961), although in the perspective model, it is acceptance by the self rather than by others that is central. Rogers also claimed that fully functioning people are better able to harmonize themselves with the needs of others and find themselves more trusting in human nature.

It is worth noting that, while Rogers' conception grew out of observations in psychotherapy and Maslow's came out of observations, interviews, and partial test results, the perspective model is drawn from exemplars within sport. They were recruited and interviewed based on the perceptions of sport psychology professionals, coaches, and other athletes. They were said to have (in a manner of speaking) 'their shit together' by those living and working within the sporting realm. The strong overlap with these theoretical conceptions helps to validate them as descriptors of higher functioning. It supports them empirically decades after their genesis.

In addition, constructions of perspective based on the subjective experiences and perceptions of elite athletes gain support from two of the most influential humanistic psychologists of all time. Rather than being let down by the lack of original ideas within the model, I take comfort in the consensus that exists between these two theories and the basics of healthy living as identified by the participants in this study. In essence, psychology's ongoing study of what constitutes psychological well-being gained additional data supporting some original tenets.

Perspective and Self-Efficacy.

While Rogers and Maslow are perhaps the best known of the humanistic psychology camp, Bandura's social learning theory and his concept of self-efficacy make his name among the most recognizable in the behavioural school of thought. When one considers the main tenets of Bandura's work, similarities are immediately evident between it and the process of perspective.

For instance, in contrast to the original behaviourist thinkers, Bandura emphasized the importance of cognitive appraisal in how individuals experience their environments.

Memory representation of the past involves constructive rather than reproductive processes in which events are filtered through personal meanings and biases and are cognitively transformed. People thus serve as partial authors not only of their past experiences but of their memory of them as well (Bandura, 1982, p.167).

This idea highlights the active role that an individual has in assigning meaning to one's experiences. Participants in this study were able to find meaning and purpose in virtually every experience, rather than being shaped passively by them. This 'role of author' also helps to explain the exemplary way in which some athletes attempt to live, despite the

harsh realities of their environment that might otherwise direct their attitudes and behaviours.

Bandura asserted that a feeling of competence or mastery, which he termed *self-efficacy*, underlies many indicators of healthy psychological functioning (Bandura, 1982). When individuals are confident that they will be able to respond competently to the challenges that they face, they demonstrate more persistence in the face of obstacles (Bandura & Schunk, 1981), have a more accurate self-concept (Lazarus & Launier, 1978), and experience fewer feelings of depression and futility (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Bandura claimed that the strongest source of self-efficacy is performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1986), consisting of past successes or failures in responding to challenges. The influence of this source exceeds that of vicarious experience (watching others perform) and verbal persuasion.

The concept of self-efficacy provides insight to an important question: can we teach the positive aspects of the perspective process or must it be acquired through experiential learning. If we accept Bandura's ideas, then we must acknowledge that the most powerful lessons about perspective will be learned experientially. This assumption is consistent with the experiences of the athletes in this study, whose grasp on perspective strengthened with experience. However, while past experiences may have the most powerful impact on the maintenance of perspective, highlighting role models from whom young athletes can learn vicariously, and teaching the basic principles of perspective (verbal persuasion) may very well provide a starting point of self-efficacy from which individuals can draw as their life events unfold.

A final point about self-efficacy relates to performance and emotional arousal.

When individuals are in situations that will test their competence, they often experience a degree of apprehension and anxiety (Bandura, 1986). If individuals focus on feelings of fear or anxiety, they may bring about the very failure that they were dreading.

Individuals at the positive end of perspective experienced a simultaneous 'peace and exhilaration', suggesting that they experienced physiological arousal, but at a moderate level. They then found themselves able to perform optimally. The absence of apprehension appears to be linked to what is at stake for the athlete. When individuals define themselves independent of outcomes, then the prospect of failure does not carry with it a loss of personal value, and the level of anxiety associated with situations that test competence may remain manageable and, in many cases, optimal. This distinction in how individuals define themselves may help to clarify the mechanism by which physiological arousal becomes excessive during a performance.

A more recent summation of psychological well-being also overlaps with the perspective model.

Perspective and a Six-Factor Model of Psychological Health.

The measurement of psychological well-being was long equated with measures of positive and negative affect, whereby a psychologically healthy individual would have more of the former. However, the 'pursuit of happiness' may be a misinterpretation of Greek philosophy. Upon closer inspection, the Greek word eudamonia, long equated with happiness, was more precisely defined as "the feelings accompanying behaviour in the direction of, and consistent with, one's true potential" (Waterman, 1984, p.16).

Daimon was an ideal of excellence, providing direction and meaning in one's life. This

notion ties together the concepts of health, happiness, and high performance. In short, it is suggested that the pursuit of positive affect may be analogous to seeking Olympic gold to have the medal. In other words, positive affect may be the product of a meaningful process, but ought not to be taken as the bottom line.

Ryff (1989) constructed and operationalized a model of psychological health that is based on the many theoretical constructions of optimal functioning (including the two discussed earlier). The factors of the model provide qualitative descriptors of healthy living. Since the perspective model speaks to the same process, that of living in a healthy manner, a comparison of the two models seems appropriate. Let us consider the six factors of the Ryff model and how the perspective model may overlap.

Self-acceptance consists of a positive attitude towards the self, acknowledgement of both good and bad aspects of the self, and positive feelings about past life events.

Perspective is closely linked to perceiving the self in positive ways, and finding an enduring sense of self and personal value, independent of performance outcomes. The athletes valued the freedom to be themselves, both the good and the bad. The tendency towards authenticity ties into this acknowledgement of the 'whole self'. Finally, positive feelings about past life events seem to be the focus of finding meaning and purpose in one's experiences. The athletes in this study have made a habit of finding the lesson or 'silver lining' in virtually every experience, allowing them to look back positively at life events.

Positive relations with others consist of warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others, a concern for the welfare of others, understanding the give and take nature of relationships, and the ability to empathize and show affection and intimacy. Living

authentically involves the development of mature intimate relationships that satisfy the needs of both parties. These relationships foster a warm, open forum of expression and support, from which individuals can draw strength and satisfaction. The value of sharing one's experiences with family, friends, and community was also prominent, highlighting a concern for others. The importance of humility to these athletes also underscores their commitment to staying connected with the people around them, further strengthening their connections.

Autonomy refers to self-determination and independence, ability to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, regulation of behaviour from within, and evaluation of oneself by personal standards. In order to fully experience the moments in which they were living, these athletes had to resist strong external pressures and distractions. Further, efforts to project oneself authentically came in the face of social pressures to project an image of infallibility and invulnerability. A lifestyle of humility runs counter to the special status that is reserved for the elite athlete. In short, being humble and authentic requires an act of will coming from within. The confidence to do this comes from living up to internal standards of what it means to have value, regardless of one's achievements. Ironically, this then allows athletes to fully experience their sports and perform at their best.

Environmental mastery speaks to a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment, the control of a complex array of external activities, making use of surrounding opportunities, and creating contexts suitable to personal needs and values. The participants in this study were elite performers. As was clear in their comments, they took their commitment to excellence into virtually every aspect of their lives. They

sought to fully experience themselves and to live out their true potential. They turned tragedies into learning opportunities, looked frankly at themselves to discover where they needed to grow, and over the course of their lives, have sought congruence between their values and their habits of daily living. To me, these individuals personify the process of mastery. They also illustrate vividly the degree of focus and preparation that perspective can foster.

Purpose in life indicates that the individual has goals in life and a sense of directedness, feels there is meaning to present and past events, holds beliefs that give life purpose, and has aims and objectives for living. Again, the perspective model overlaps considerably with these ideas. Finding meaning and purpose involves two main patterns that address this factor. First, the athletes in this study habitually ask themselves whether they still have passion for their sports. They use this question to fuel their training and competition, and to give purpose to their continued participation but are willing to leave their sports if their purpose is lost. Secondly, these individuals find meaning in past events, both good and bad, from which they learn more about themselves, others, sport, and life. While this process is not necessarily a comfortable one, they embrace it as essential to living life fully and meaningfully. In addition, each athlete seemed to have a personal philosophy about healthy living that sport could be a part of, but could never define.

Personal growth is a feeling of continued development, seeing oneself as growing and expanding, openness to new experiences, having a sense of realizing true potential, seeing improvement in oneself and one's behaviour over time, and changing in ways reflecting more self-knowledge and effectiveness. Once again, the dialogue about

perspective is highly relevant. The athletes continually referred to a process by which they were evolving, growing, and moving in the directing of personal potential and self-discovery. Case in point, transition out of sport appeared to be anticipated with excitement by most of the athletes, in contrast to the notion of retirement as a symbolic 'death' (Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, & Samdahl, 1987). The participants saw retirement as a natural transition into a new phase of self-discovery and experience. They also saw their movement towards greater perspective as a 'work in progress', in which they were constantly learning, changing, and maturing.

With the considerable overlap between the perspective model and this six-factor model of psychological health, one may ask whether a new model is appropriate at all. The answer lies in the nature of grounded theory research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The model is appropriate because it was drawn directly from their experiences. Their experiences were organized into a smaller set of ideas that they had a chance to refute or validate. It's how they have gone about maintaining perspective in their lives. Other similar constructions may provide consensus of experience, but the process of perspective as it has been constructed here belongs to these athletes.

Perspective, Resilience, and Hardiness

The participants in this study found opportunities for growth and learning under conditions of adversity. Researchers in psychology have long been interested in responses to adverse conditions. Some individuals are able to endure hardship without significant declines in psychological health, while others are not. The distinction between these two groups has resulted in numerous studies about the concepts of *resilience* and *hardiness*.

Herman-Stahl and Peterson (1996) defined resilient adolescents as being high in indicators of stress but low in indices of depression. Vulnerable individuals were high in both. Their study found that resilient individuals scored higher than vulnerable individuals in measures of optimism, active coping, and positive relations with parents and peers. The use of active coping (coping focused on facing the problem rather than just avoiding it) is also more prevalent in adolescents with higher self-esteem (Thoits, 1995).

There are distinct similarities between the resilience literature and the perspective model. The practice of living authentically is enhanced by the support of key friends, family members, and significant others. These supporters reinforce healthy definition of the self, thus reducing the impact of stressful life stimuli that might otherwise be perceived as threats to personal value. Authentic living enhances the clarity of perception of the self, others, and one's environment. It follows logically that this undistorted perception would enhance the coping ability of an individual, allowing direct consideration of the stressful stimulus, and the assignment of meaning and purpose to these stressful events.

The perspective model also emphasizes the acceptance and expression of the emotions, rather than attempting to avoid and conceal them. This treatment of the emotions is in direct opposition to the avoidance mode of coping that resilience researchers consider to be dysfunctional (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995). Thus, the emotional subcategory of the perspective model is reinforced by the resilience literature as a source of adaptive functioning.

Related to the resilience concept is the idea of *hardiness*. Hardiness is a general quality that is said to emerge from rich, varied, and rewarding childhood experiences (Funk, 1992; Maddi & Kobasa, 1984). This quality manifests itself in feelings and behaviours associated with commitment, control, and challenge. A hardy person views potentially stressful situations as meaningful and interesting (commitment), sees stressors as changeable (control), and sees change as a normal aspect of life rather than as a threat, and regards changes as opportunities for growth (challenge).

This concept resonates with the perspective model on a few important points. First, the participants in this study generally had rich and rewarding childhood experiences fostered by parents that allowed them to explore and discover themselves and their environments. They would certainly meet the theoretical preconditions for the development of hardiness.

Second, the experience of setbacks triggered the assignment of meaning and purpose to these events (as individuals evolved towards the perspective end of the continuum), rather than being weakened and permanently discouraged by them. This illustrates the 'commitment' quality associated with hardiness.

Third, the absence of apprehension that these athletes had about the prospect of transition implies the view that change is not threatening, but rather represents an opportunity for growth and new experience. Again, the participants in this study exhibit a central characteristic of hardiness.

Finally, the concept of hardiness was developed to explain why some individuals are able to stay healthy under conditions of stress. This study of perspective asked a similar question about living in the stressful world of elite sport. The parallel findings

appear to underscore the importance of childhood experiences and parenting philosophy in the process of perspective.

The concepts of resilience and hardiness provide points of comparison in the psychology literature with respect to how these individuals are able to live healthy and rewarding lives under conditions of high stress. The findings in this study offer qualitative support to the assertions made by theorists in this area, with clear conceptual links between the perspective process and these concepts.

Perspective and Resonance

The perspective dialogue is also highly relevant to the work of Newburg (1999). Newburg's performance model is based on interviews with over 300 elite performers from a variety of fields. As such, it too is grounded in the experience of the interviewees. Newburg refers to a 'dream' as the way that one wants to feel everyday. Typically, the performers in his study refer to a feeling of engagement, through which they can be lost in their activities and feel most themselves. They are said to experience *resonance* (Newburg, 1999). This notion is very similar to the immersion in the moment that the participants in this study described. They also referred to their sports as a means of experiencing the self. For both resonance and perspective, the feeling of a performance represents the ultimate experience of the self.

Newburg also found that when elite performers came across obstacles, they reconnected with their 'dream' in order to summon the energy and commitment to work past those obstacles. Similarly, an important part of perspective is a willingness, during difficult times, to ask whether one's sport is still a source of passion or fulfillment. If it is, this allows the athlete to reconnect with the self through it, and continue purposefully

and passionately. If it is not, then individuals must be willing to explore other potential sources of passion and experience of the self.

I would contend that *perspective* allows people to pursue their activities unburdened with pressures to perform, and a necessity to define themselves or establish their worth. They are then able to fully immerse themselves in the moment, and experience resonance. Thus, the healthy definition of self, connections with others, emotional expression, authenticity, and ability to find meaning and purpose in one's experience, all enhance the ability to connect with the self, to live one's 'dream', to *resonate*.

The resonance model is one that Newburg has brought to an ongoing dialogue about the nature of performance and meaningful living. Sport psychology professionals, psychologists, athletes, musicians, physicians, business people, health experts, teachers and parents have been involved in this dialogue. I anticipate that *perspective* will become a part of this ongoing exchange and debate of ideas.

Perspective and Flow

Those who are familiar with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow will have recognized the similarity between the athletes' 'perspective end' experiences of their sports and descriptions of flow. Flow is defined as "a state of optimal experiencing involving total absorption in the task, and creating a state of consciousness where optimal levels of functioning often occur" (Jackson, 1995, p.138). Some characteristics of the construct that bear remarkable resemblance to the accounts in this study include a sense of spontaneity, total concentration on the skill being performed, becoming one with the activity, and loss of time awareness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience of flow is

said to be reinforcing in and of itself, a notion that is consistent with the descriptions of the athletes in this study.

Jackson lists a positive mental attitude as one of the facilitators of the flow state (1992). It now appears that perspective, as a state, may provide depth to the description of what constitutes such a positive attitude. Intuitively, when one is closer to the perspective end of the continuum, the experience of one's sport is less about proving oneself to the self or to others, less about external recognition and rewards, and more about the experience in and of itself. It's about 'wanting to' versus 'having to'. In this way, athletes may be unburdened enough to lose themselves in the activity, allowing for full vivid experience of the sport. However, further research would be needed to clarify the relationship between perspective and flow.

Perspective and Balance

Orlick (1998) advocated the maintenance of a sense of balance and perspective in sport and life. His definition of balance, distinct from balance in a time management sense, clearly shares common ground with the perspective model:

(F)inding 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).

Amirault and Orlick's (1998) exploration of the term balance in the lives of elite athletes revealed that athletes refuted the notion that different aspects of one's life could be "balanced" with equal amounts of time. Athletes respected the enormous amount of

one's time that is required to excel in sport. Temporal balance was not seen as a viable option.

Careful consideration of Amirault and Orlick's (1998) study leads me to believe that we were investigating the same basic phenomenon. An athlete in their study spoke of an "inner harmony" meaning "listening to yourself, not everyone else and focusing on one thing at a time" (p.38). Certain common elements are evident. Making a conscious decision to have balance is similar to the importance of awareness of the perspective process. Enjoying what you're doing mirrors the passion and purpose that the perspective participants sought in their sports. Being in the moment (balance) matches the idea of immersion on the moment (perspective). Having a support network (balance) mirrors the emphasis that the perspective athletes placed on intimacy, support, and shared experience.

However, I feel that the perspective model provides an elaboration of fundamental importance. Perspective speaks to the manner in which one views the self and the role that this plays in the ability to live authentically and experience fully. This mode of seeing the self is perhaps best expressed through a metaphor. Van Deurzen (1998) described the self as a vessel (container). We fill the vessel with contents such as roles, activities, and relationships. But while these 'contents' appear to give the vessel substance, they are unstable, and so when we lose a part of these contents, we feel empty and hollow. But van Deurzen argues that we have not lost the essence of the self. The container itself, with its dimensions and properties defines the self.

Likewise, when we recognize the qualities that we have that cut across any role, activity, or relationship, we are no longer bound by the nature of our contents. Instead,

we are able to experience ourselves *through the contents*, rather than being defined by them. This thought process may have been best illustrated by the lack of apprehension that the participants had about the prospects of transition.

Perspective involves making peace with the authentic self, then setting out to experience it fully through one's activities and key relationships. The role of humility in staying connected to others is an additional contribution of the model, as is the central importance of authenticity, and emotional awareness/expression. I feel that the process of meaning-making is also clearer through this perspective study, in its consideration of responses to adversity.

I will continue to use the term perspective rather than balance. To me, the word balance conjures a notion of role management, rather than the more basic consideration of self and how one perceives and responds to the events and experiences of one's life.

Perspective and Identity

The literature regarding athletic identity refers primarily to the potential pitfalls in defining oneself unidimensionally. Following years of internal reinforcers and external evaluation associated with sport participation, a strong and sometimes exclusive athletic identity can develop in many elite athletes (Gati, 1986). When individuals receive positive reinforcement in sport that exceeds all other sources of encouragement, athletic ability may come to be the only attribute that they value in themselves. (Heyman, 1986).

This limited view of personal worth and identity has been found to be problematic in relationships outside of sport (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995; Heyman, 1986), in managing stress (Lopiano & Zotos, 1992), in overcoming burnout (Raedeke, 1997), in career development outside of sport (Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Heyman, 1986;

Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996), and in response to injury (Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, & Samdahl, 1987; Blinde & Strata, 1992).

It should then follow from the perspective model that individuals who are closer to perspective will have identities that are resistant to many of these problems. To begin with, most of the athletes in this study defined themselves in terms of particular attributes that transcend any given activity in which they engage. Their sports were subsequently viewed as a forum in which to experience those parts of themselves, rather than a stage on which they are defined. They saw these qualities as transferable to whatever endeavours they chose to pursue.

Further, their support base provided acceptance that was not conditional upon athletic outcomes. This allowed the individuals to establish a sense of value that was tied to the attributes mentioned above and to the value, support, and quality that they, in turn, contributed to the lives of others. Some of the athletes were explicit about the importance of having friends outside of the sport environment.

Finally, most of the participants saw themselves in multifaceted terms that could not be encapsulated with the label of 'athlete'. They saw themselves as active in a variety of relationships and activities that, while not taking the same time as their sports, were still seen as highly significant and bound to receive attention in the off-season and/or retirement.

As a researcher who was aware of these identity pitfalls prior to this study, I was struck by the conspicuous absence of these concerns from the accounts of the athletes. For instance, the prospect of retirement from sport, even when potentially due to physical limitations (injury), was viewed as a natural, accepted part of their lives, that would be

simultaneously melancholy and exciting. It would appear then that encouraging athletes to see themselves in these expanded terms may be instrumental in heading off a myriad of psychological difficulties.

Perspective and Social Support

The research on social support for athletes has established its link to numerous aspects of health and coping (Rees & Hardy, 2000). Links have been identified between social support and coping with competitive stress (Crocker, 1992), vulnerability to injury (Smith, Smoll, & Ptacek, 1990), and recovery from injury (Hardy, Richman, & Rosenfeld, 1991; Udry, 1996). One study has also linked social support to sport performance (Rees, Ingledeu, & Hardy, 1999). But a pattern emerges as one reviews the literature on social support and athletes; the support is discussed relative to sport-related issues and outcomes. In other words, merit is assigned to these relationships based on what they do for athletes and their performance.

A closer look at one study helps to clarify this issue. Rees and Hardy (2000) sought to describe the social support experiences of high-level sport performers. They categorized the types of support into four categories: emotional, esteem, informational, and tangible. Two patterns are of particular relevance to this discussion.

First, the categories were each divided into the subcategories of sport and non-sport support except for one, esteem. The esteem support of these athletes came in the form of encouragement and reassurance about one's athletic abilities and potential. Esteem support outside of sport seems like a significant omission, considering the multidimensionality that is embraced by the athletes in the current study.

Secondly, the relationships are discussed in terms of what they can *do* for the *athlete*. For example, relationships with others gain particular value if they can be shown to enhance the performance of athletes. In contrast, the relationships in the lives of the athletes in the current study were assigned primary significance *in and of themselves*. While it was acknowledged that they helped in coping with disappointment, and re-energizing, one participant was quick to emphasize that “that’s not why you’re in them, of course” (Courtney). These individuals saw their relationships as absolutely fundamental to their fulfillment as people, not just as athletes. I’m certain that it is not the intent of the sport psychology researchers in this area to suggest that this is not the case. But the focus of the discipline may speak to the manner in which the sport environment generally regards supporting and intimate relationships.

A search of the literature regarding athletes and intimate relationships revealed nothing except for the barriers to such relationships discussed in the background literature in Chapter Two (e.g., Heyman, 1986).

Perspective and Emotion

Although emotional expression was discussed as a separate subcategory of the perspective model, the significance of the emotions in the process is evident throughout the results. When one is able to find enduring value in oneself, this carries with it certain affective repercussions. The ability to immerse oneself in the moment and fully experience one’s sport for its own sake also creates an affective state. In fact, Kimiecik and Stein (1992) described flow as a combination of *emotional* ecstasy and personal peak performance.

Authentic being gives license for emotional awareness and expression. The relationship between authenticity and emotion is described by van Deurzen (1998):

Emotions seen this way, as indicators of meaning and direction, cease to be enemies or passive experience and become important existential realities instead. Each emotion or mood can now be savored in its full intensity and appreciated for its dual positive and negative aspects. The aspiration or concern which is indicated by the emotion leads the way towards an exploration of the person's relationship to the world (van Deurzen, 1998, p. 148).

In this way, authenticity fed into the experience of the emotions.

This 'exploration of the one's relationship to the world' could be considered a vital component of the process of finding meaning and purpose in one's life and the events that shape it. The subsequent assignment of meaning also has an emotional effect. As was evident in the quotes, finding meaning and purpose in experiences equipped the athletes with renewed interest, passion, appreciation, and hope, all affective dimensions of profound value. They were able to wield their emotions 'intelligently', bringing them closer to themselves and their aspirations, an idea repopularized of late by Goleman (1995).

In summary, the emotions are woven throughout the process of perspective. They allow one to experience vividly and fully while providing powerful indicators of the things of greatest importance to each of us. They become highly functional in a culture where the emotions are often seen as a liability. Indeed, we see enough examples in sport of the mismanagement of emotions.

Perspective and Authenticity

If there is an overriding category that gives direction to the process as a whole, living authentically may be the one. Bugental (1965) offers a valuable definition of the term: "A person is *authentic* in that degree to which his being in the world is unqualifiedly in accord with the givenness of his own nature and of the world" (pp. 31-32). The desire of the participants just to be themselves, with all of their emotions and imperfections, was paramount. Seeing one's inherent value and being unconditionally accepted by others facilitated the process, but ultimately there was a reverence for the ability to see oneself fully and completely, then project that outward and share it with others.

The freedom associated with authenticity is associated with psychological health and a realization of one's potential (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1970; Yalom, 1980). How this occurs might be better understood through a conceptual distinction. Authenticity, as the term has been used thus far in this document, refers to an honesty with which one views the self and expresses it outwardly. This 'authenticity of the self' can be seen as a precondition to 'experiencing fully'. Once one abandons distortions of one's perceived world that are designed to protect an inauthentic view of the self, one can then experience that world in its entirety, living fully in the moment. As a point of interest, this ability to abandon distortions and fully experience the moment in which one lives is a central tenet in Buddhist philosophy (Hagan, 1997).

The authentic experience has been described as including certain characteristics that overlap with the perspective model. These include being fully present and aware of one's experience, intensity of the senses, ego dissolution and elimination of judgments,

eliciting expressive behaviour, heightened awareness of interpersonal relationships, timelessness, peak experiences, and being precipitated by honest/candid communication (Rahilly, 1993). The authentic experience may be best expressed by a poem written by Craig Buhler, son of Charlotte Buhler, appearing in her book, *Introduction to Humanistic Psychology* (Buhler & Allen, 1972, p.105). It is interesting to note the appearance of the perspective process in the poem:

He too is vulnerable.

He too is exposed.

He too is threatened.

He is bombarded by visions both beautiful and chaotic.

He is deafened by sounds both melodic and discordant.

He has trembled with anxiety.

He has been alienated to the point of turning off.

He has withdrawn from life, hiding himself away.

He has emerged again.

He has thrown his head back to laugh at himself.

He has been shot through with joy.

He has learned to touch and be touched and to be born and reborn in love.

He has brandished his fist in the face of elements both natural and man made which would suck away his life and the life of all who live.

He has dared to hope in the face of a sometimes overwhelming absurdity.

He has lost, and then gained and lost again; yet each time he sensed his own resilience, the positive force of his own existence rising up in him.

The idea of authentic experience ties the authenticity of the self to the quality of lived experience that perspective seems to protect. Buhler's poem also raises many points about the human condition that highlight the relevance of existential literature to the perspective discussion.

Perspective and Existentialism

As a researcher who believes that knowledge is constructed, I should not be surprised that I saw existential themes emerge repeatedly as I analyzed the data in my study. Presumably my background and interest in existential thinking coloured what I saw as I drew categories from the transcripts. However, when talking about perspective, we're talking about the essence of meaningful living. Since existentialism deals with the construction of meaning and the givens of human existence, it warrants mention when discussing perspective.

The central tenet of existentialism is our freedom. While we cannot always control the events that occur in our lives, we can control the manner in which we respond to them (Sartre, 1967). The athletes in this study spoke of perspective as something that required their attention and energy to preserve. Perspective was not something that *happened to them*, but rather it was protected intentionally and purposefully. When the effort was made, *they made it happen*.

The conditions that could at times lure individuals away from perspective consisted of external rewards and aversions that participants admitted being distracted by at times in their lives. However, they took responsibility for the loss of perspective, respecting the power of these external conditions but not conceding control to them. This idea was expressed by May (1977), who claimed that if people are not governed by

causative forces, but instead are oriented towards a future, they are empowered to exercise their will. In short, perspective is a choice that these participants exercise regularly, in the face of external pressures.

The active assignment of meaning and purpose to the activities and events of an individual's life is an idea that is central to perspective. Existential counsellors place great emphasis on this theme as well. Our individual worlds consist of past events and conditioning influences, but their meaning derives from how we relate to them and what we select from them to build our futures (Kemp, 1971). In existential counselling, the central task of exploring the meanings of a client's experiences, environment, and relationships is to validate and give purpose to the client's life. The client can then begin to determine how current patterns of meaning can be altered to enrich experience and reach potentialities (DuPlock, 1997).

The participants in this study provided a window into this process. The quotes illustrated how each individual's assignment of meaning has evolved to the point where optimal purpose and fulfillment are enhanced, and connections with the self and others are strengthened. However, the 'therapist' in each athlete's case was a combination of experiential learning and unconditional, non-judgmental support from family, significant others, and close friends.

This highlights an additional parallel to the existential counselling literature, the emphasis of the trusting and accepting relationship with the counsellor. Much of the perspective process is about taking an honest look at oneself and one's life, a process that can at times be painful and embarrassing. Existential counsellors speak of clients' desire to have a "trustworthy companion" who will attend to them and really care about them

(Ticktin, 1997). The development of camaraderie is viewed as essential in searching for identity, autonomy, and good relationships. The counsellor is seen as a fellow traveler on a journey, with whom the client shares a genuine connection.

If you were to look back to the section on intimacy, you would find that this is the type of close relationship that was most highly valued. There are references to individuals who allowed them to be completely open and honest, to “just be me”, and who listened and accepted them non-judgmentally (the standards to which good counsellors aspire). But there was also an acknowledgment of their significant others as companions who need their support. While it is not the place of the counsellor to be needed, the point is that these supporters were indeed ‘fellow travelers’ and not just resources for athletic success. There is a genuine connection that allows for authentic consideration of the self and the healthy assignment of meaning. But these relationships are also seen as central to the fulfillment of individuals, in and of themselves.

This insight challenges the common notion among athletes that excellence in sport requires a selfishness that precludes ‘serious relationships’. The lifestyle of elite sport brings with it demands, pressures, and setbacks that can be crippling. The participants in this study saw their significant others as integral partners in this process, allowing them not only to survive it, but to master it.

One last existential idea worth mentioning involves the treatment of anxiety by this school of thought. By virtue of being human, we are faced with certain universal anxieties. We all must engage in our own struggle with death, search for meaning, fear of isolation and alienation, and our inherent freedom (Yalom, 1980). Kemp (1971) claims that many escape this anxiety through detachment and conformity; they detach

themselves from meaningful relationships with themselves and others and avoid any deep search of meaning within themselves through conformity.

This pattern of detachment and conformity seems to be in polar opposition to the way these athletes attempt to live their lives. They seek out and maintain meaningful relationships with others. They use their activities to fully connect with themselves, and embrace their growth and evolution as people. They habitually seek meaning and purpose in their lives and the events that shape them, and they accept the executive function that they play in this process.

Existential counselling literature highlights the importance of accepting our existential anxiety in order to live this way. Although the participants made no direct reference to existential anxiety, the manner in which they approach all emotion may be telling in the question of how it is addressed. As these athletes matured and moved more consistently toward perspective, they took more ownership of their emotions. They were less prone to denying or suppressing them, and found outlets for expressing them. Allowing them to play out was seen as healthy and essential to feeling authentic and whole. When one considers how these athletes responded to their 'darkest hours' of experience, it seems clear that the intense emotions that were present were a catalyst for considerable growth and soul-searching, rather than denial and stagnation. This pattern follows the treatment of anxiety as a growth opportunity and essential part of life (Kemp, 1971).

Recommendations for Performers

Prior to conducting this research, I stated that the development of a perspective model might provide a framework for other athletes to pursue perspective in their own

lives. Now that the model is complete, I feel that it offers considerable insight to this end. Some recommendations to elite performers are listed below. You will notice that the recommendations are laid out prescriptively. I acknowledge that these results are based on the ideas and experiences of a small group of individuals and that I should be cautious in taking a prescriptive tone. However, the word 'recommendations' carries the implication of suggested action, rather than imperative tone.

Defining the Self

- Separate your value as a person from your success and failure as an athlete.
- Identify the qualities that make you unique and whole.
- Think of your sport as a way of experiencing your body and your qualities, not as something that defines you. This will help you to enjoy the experience more fully. It will also allow you to make a smoother transition out of sport.
- Recognize and celebrate your multifaceted nature. Find ways to experience all the parts of *you*. Accept that some of your parts may seem to be in direct conflict. Find different contexts in which to experience those opposite parts.
- Protect times when you can be a 'non-athlete'. This will help to replenish your energy and keep you from getting too caught up in your sport-life. This way the highs and lows are less apt to become unmanageable.
- Remember that you are constantly evolving as a person and as an athlete. Pay attention to the ways that you're changing so that you can keep those changes consistent with your values and who you want to become.
- Accept yourself for all the good and the bad, the weak and the strong. By seeing yourself for who and what you really are, this will make it possible to share this 'real

self' with others. This will help to reduce the tension that is created when there is a discrepancy between who you are and who you're trying to convince yourself and others that you are.

Living Authentically

- Cultivate your relationships with close friends and significant others. These relationships can provide you with a different kind of fulfillment that the world of elite sport probably will not.
- Letting your guard down and being completely open and honest with those people closest to you can be a liberating experience. You may be surprised at how understanding and accepting they can be. They can be great sounding boards, allowing you to express emotions fully and to come to terms with the events in your life.
- Remember that the support, acceptance, and understanding that you receive from those around you are just as valuable to each of them. Try not to receive more than you give. Find ways to add value to the experiences of those around you.
- Embrace the rich relationships that can grow through shared experiences in sport. Beware the influence of envy and comparisons with teammates and competitors, for these can diminish the positive relationships that might otherwise develop.
- Try to avoid comparisons between your relationships in sport and those outside of it. They're different. Both contribute to a richness of your experience. Both can help you to cope at different times.
- *Share* your experiences *with* those closest to you, rather than trying to attain achievements and accolades *for* them.

- Be humble in success and keep your chin up in failure. If you believe that outcomes don't determine your worth as a person, then neither success nor failure can alter who you are.
- Humility will help to keep you connected to the people around you. When you're humble, you can interact with others on a more intimate and meaningful level.
- Be gracious in success. Acknowledge the collective efforts that were necessary for you to have a chance at success. This again will help you to stay connected to the people around you and will enhance their motivation and enthusiasm for your sport.
- Your emotions can be your best window into who you are and what you value most. Pay attention to them. Accept them as your own. Find adaptive ways of expressing them. This will help you to feel less burdened and allow you to live in the moment.
- Use your emotions to help you identify and construct the kind of lifestyle that will give you the greatest sense of passion and purpose.

Experiencing Fully

- Allow yourself to be lost in the experience of your sport. When you become focused on outcomes and their significance, always return to the feeling that you wish to create when you train and compete. This will help you to create that feeling more consistently, rather than accidentally.
- Take time to appreciate the breadth of experiences and relationships that your sport life has allowed you to enjoy: the people, the travel, the stories that you'll look back on and smile, laugh, and cry (sometimes all at once).
- Schedule in time away from your sport. This will help to avoid burnout and can rekindle your passion for your sport when it loses its 'luster'.

- Be willing to ask yourself whether your sport still holds the passion and meaning that you want it to. This will help you to reconnect with the aspects of your sport that are most fulfilling, and will allow you to identify the right time to move on to something else.
- Ask yourself whether you are actually 'living your values'. Do they shape the way you behave every day? Are you consistently connected to the activities and relationships of greatest importance to you?
- Accept that you will invariably face setbacks at times in your life and sport career. Allow the emotions to play out. Use these times to be introspective and learn lessons from your experiences. These times can also help you to reconnect with your priorities and the people of greatest significance to you.
- Take a moment to step away from your environment and see the events, both good and bad, in relation to a broader context. This will help you to keep setbacks in perspective and keep you humble in success.
- Respect the effect that perspective can have on your performance. It can leave you unburdened and focused, even at the times of greatest pressure. If all that is at stake is the performance itself, then all you're left with is your love of the sport and your competitive fire.
- Consider that we are not just performers in our sports. We perform in school, at work, in relationships, etc. Ask yourself what mindset will be most helpful in achieving top performances in and out of sport.

- Accept your successes and failures in sport for what they are. Enjoy the feeling of achievement. Allow yourself to be disappointed in defeat. But never fail to learn the lesson from each experience.
- Perspective is a process that we become better at as we mature. Pay attention to it. Recognize when you're losing it and why that happens. Pay attention to the process so that you can be empowered to move towards perspective more consistently.
- Respect the ongoing nature of perspective. It is not a destination that you reach and then no longer have to work at. It is an ongoing struggle. Acknowledge the powerful forces that sometimes take your perspective away, and stay connected or reconnect with those things that help you to restore it.

A Note to Counsellors

The perspective model identifies a process of living that offers a positive focus to the athlete. Counsellors who are familiar with it will be attuned to the insights and foci of greatest significance to this small group of athletes. Considering the agreement by these athletes on these primary categories, it is probable that these same ideas will resonate with other elite athletes and performers. Awareness of this process can help the counsellor to explore with clients the relevance and centrality of these categories in their lives. This may allow clients to move towards healthy definition of self, more authentic living, and experiencing fully. It can also help to identify why and how individuals may have lost sight of these things.

Knowing the importance of awareness in the perspective process, it follows that education about perspective and its categories may allow individuals to evolve more intentionally towards the perspective end of the continuum. But the counsellor should

also respect the importance of experiential learning in this process. The role of the counsellor or sport psychologist may be to alert individuals to the significance of different categories and insights as they navigate through the experiences, both good and bad, that make up their careers.

It may also be of some consolation to performers to know that even the exemplars of 'perspective' struggle through the process at different times in their lives. One can expect fluctuation back and forth on the perspective continuum. But the process is never complete, and may never be mastered, but aspiring to the perspective end of the continuum will likely maximize the quality of experiences and one's connections with self and others. The model represents a tool to be used towards that ongoing pursuit.

Debunking a Myth

As I read through the recommendations above, I am struck with the common sense nature of the contents. These ideas are not particularly new. But where these insights come from is important to note. I would argue that there is an unwritten rule that many people in elite sport (and 'non-elite' sport for that matter) subscribe to: "Nice guys finish last". There is a notion that many of the rules that apply to ordinary life do not apply to those who are serious about success in sport.

But the participants in this study live by the principles of perspective and swear by their congruence with optimal performance. But take note that I use the term 'optimal performance', not winning. I believe it is fair to suggest that perspective can influence the people around you. People with perspective are responded to differently than those without it. They make people feel more comfortable with themselves and feel better about being involved in their sport. They inspire the people around them. Obviously

some of those people around them will be in direct competition with them. So the performances on a whole will be enhanced. So the bad news ... you may inspire someone to outperform you.

But this raises the bar even further. Botterill, talks about the power of positive rivalry: "If you're at your best, then I'll have to be that much better to beat you, and that makes both of us better!" (Personal communication, 1998). In this way, perspective is about high performance, not outcomes, a distinction rarely made in popular culture. Put succinctly by Newburg, "If winning is all you care about, just make sure you always play against people that aren't as good as you" (Personal communication, 2000).

But the age-old notion is challenged by some of Canada's top performers in their respective sports. Perspective works for anyone, not just in a kindergarten classroom. This discovery (although many have known this for years) could help shape the way we coach and teach aspiring young athletes. It's not necessary for athletes to forfeit themselves or their values in order to perform well. These pieces can compliment each other.

Limitations

As is true of many grounded theory studies, the number of participants used in this study precludes generalization of findings to a larger population. Efforts to expand the depth of the model and its categories generated more patterns than could be tested with a sufficiently large sample for generalizable findings. However, I will say that this study is a work in progress. The process of perspective, its intricacies, and its significance will be my focus for many years of professional practice and research. Some possible directions for this future research will be discussed in the next section.

The quotations in the results reveal an influence of sport psychology consultants in the process of perspective described by these athletes. It might be suggested that these consultants might have had as much to do with these athletes' perceptions of perspective as the experiences and maturing of the athletes. But it is also worth noting that the insights of those athletes who have not worked closely with sport psychologists follow a remarkably similar pattern to those of the athletes who have.

Another possible limitation of this study involves the pressure that the participants may have felt to come across as 'masters of perspective'. They were told in the introductory letter (see Appendix A) that they were chosen as exemplars. This may have influenced their willingness, conscious or otherwise, to speak freely about the struggles that they may have had (or be having) with their own maintenance of perspective. But the richness of the data with candid descriptions of such struggles gives me some confidence that this was not a significant issue.

The next section discusses some possible future directions in the study of perspective and its implications.

Future Directions

As I implied in the previous section, generalization of these findings to a larger population should be avoided until such time that further empirical validation of the model has been established. This could be done in a few different ways. The current study could be expanded, conducting interviews with a larger group of athletes. This approach is advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as it allows the research to obtain further complexity and elaboration of the model. Using this approach, in theory, one never really completes the model, as all formulations are considered to be provisional.

Another approach might be to develop a questionnaire measuring the components of the perspective process, then testing them against the experiences of a large group of athletes. I would be less enthused about embarking on this journey since I don't believe that processes are captured very well by static measures. However, such means would be useful in establishing causation between components.

Considering the nature of the phenomenon under study, a phenomenological or narrative study might be appropriate in order to capture the complexity of the process. I felt that even the volume of data presented in the results provided little more than a cursory consideration of the categories and subcategories. I opted not to expand the group of participants due to the limitless directions that could have been pursued to 'fill in the gaps', opting instead to attempt to complete the description of a model capturing the experiences of these eleven.

Further studies could be directed at the experience of perspective in the lives of other performers. Considering the broad use of the word 'performer' in current literature, including physicians, teachers, business people, musicians, parents, patients, students, trades people, etc., the possibilities are almost limitless. But the questions would certainly be worthwhile. Do other performers experience perspective the same way? What are the intricacies of different performance environments that make perspective challenging or easier? What are the health benefits of maintaining perspective? How can people be best educated about the process and its significance?

This last question raises yet another research option. If it is accepted that the pursuit of perspective offers the best of performance, fulfillment, and health, and it can be established that many performance environments have significant barriers to the

perspective process, then is *action research* (aimed at affecting change through the research process) an appropriate tool? This of course raises ethical issues about prescriptive interventions. Is perspective consistent with the belief systems of all those that might be affected in such a study? Since part of perspective is about establishing congruence between people's lifestyles and their beliefs, I would speculate that the ground would be pretty solid, but others might dispute that.

Because of the relative newness of this area, the possibilities for future research are expansive. So I draw my recommendation from the model itself. Researchers in this area ought to start by connecting with those things of most profound importance to them. What are the environments of greatest interest and significance to them? This initial probe would illuminate innumerable possibilities and would enlist the passions within them required to see a quality research project through to completion.

But I believe that the core of the issue will remain constant: how can people live authentically with themselves and others in order to experience life fully, purposefully, and passionately? What are the barriers to these connections? How can we reconnect to these things of most profound importance? The future is daunting, but it is well worth our while.

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Appendix A: INFORMATION LETTER:

Maintaining Perspective in Elite Sport

Through an ongoing dialogue with sport psychology professionals and elite athletes, I have become sensitized to the importance of a concept that has been termed *perspective*. Many of the issues faced by our sport psychology team relate not to specific performance challenges, but rather to difficulties of a more basic nature. In counselling athletes, much effort has been focused on helping individuals relate better to coaches and teammates as people, not just as athletes. Others have been helped to stay connected and intimate with significant others, friends, and family who are not immersed in the same performance environment. Many teams and individual athletes have been engaged in a dialogue about the personal meanings that they draw from their experiences in sport, helping them to stay motivated, deal with fears, and process the powerful emotions associated with success and failure. Still others are asked to place sport within the broader context of their whole lives, in an effort to avoid reliance upon their identities as athletes. It is through attention to this basic human foundation (that we've termed perspective) that athletes seem best able to survive and thrive in the demanding and often brutal environment of elite sport.

However, to date, perspective in this sense has not been clearly defined. This study will seek to paint a clearer picture of perspective, its components, and its implications. I hope also to document the conditions which 'make or break' perspective, as well as the strategies and philosophies that allow athletes to develop, regain, and enhance it. It is hoped that the current study will provide insights for athletes, coaches, friends, family, and professionals working in this environment.

You have been identified by a team of sport psychology professionals as an athlete who is a top performer and who likely has had experiences of direct relevance to this topic. As such, you are considered to be a suitable candidate to interview for this study. Each participant will be interviewed 1 to 4 times. Interviews will range in length from approximately 30 to 120 minutes and will be **recorded on audio-tape**.

*If you would be interested in participating in this study, please contact **Matt Brown** by telephone, fax or email, in order to set up a first interview or to clarify any questions you might have about the study.*

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Best Wishes,

Matt Brown

Appendix B: CONSENT FORM
Maintaining Perspective in Elite Sport

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This is to certify that I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Matt Brown of the Educational Psychology Department, University of Calgary, dealing with perspective in elite athletes. I am aware that I was identified, by a team of sport psychology professionals, as an excellent candidate for research in this area.

The research involves a series of interviews designed to explore the demands and challenges that elite athletes face and how they manage to cope and thrive while involved in elite sport. By virtue of the positive focus of the inquiry, no risks are perceived from participating in this study. The potential benefits of this study are increased self-awareness and an opportunity to pass important lessons and insights on to others involved in elite sport. Each participant will be interviewed 1 to 4 times. Interviews will range in length from approximately 30 to 120 minutes and will be **recorded on audio-tape**.

The opening question will be the following: *"As a researcher in this area, I'm aware of the incredible demands and challenges that the elite athlete faces. I'd like you to tell me how you have managed to cope and thrive while you've been involved in high level sport. Please feel free to discuss anything that you view as relevant to you and your life as an athlete."* Although questions will be generated from the responses to the initial general question, the interviews may cover the following areas:

- *coping with success and failure,*
- *maintaining relationships with family, friends, and significant others,*
- *maintaining relationships with coaches and teammates*
- *drawing personal meaning from sport,*
- *fitting sport in with other important aspects of life,*
- *maintaining priorities and personal values, and*
- *describing personal philosophies about sport and life.*

I understand that the researcher will ensure the following conditions of my participation:

- 1) I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study **at any time, for any reason, without consequences**. This includes after the interviews have taken place. I understand that the researcher may also terminate my participation at any time.

- 2) My identity **will not** be disclosed during my participation in the study or in the written results. I will be identified by number only and all potentially identifying information will be excluded from the written results.
- 3) All records, including transcripts and audio-tapes, will be stored in a secure, locked location and will only be accessed by the researcher and his supervisor, Dr. Kathy Cairns of the Educational Psychology Department. All records will be destroyed three years following data collection.
- 4) I may refuse to answer **any** of the interview questions.
- 5) The researcher will fully and clearly answer any questions that I have about the study.
- 6) At my request, results of the study will be provided to me and explained.
- 7) There will be no remuneration for my participation in this study.
- 8) I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.
- 9) I understand that the results of this study may be published in professional journals. However, no information will be presented that would allow individual participants to be identified.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Matt Brown
(403) 220-7849

or

Dr. Kathy Cairns
(403) 220-5980

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact Mrs. Patricia Evans, Research Services Office, Room 602 Earth Sciences, telephone: 220-3782.

Participant:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher:

Signature: _____

Date: _____