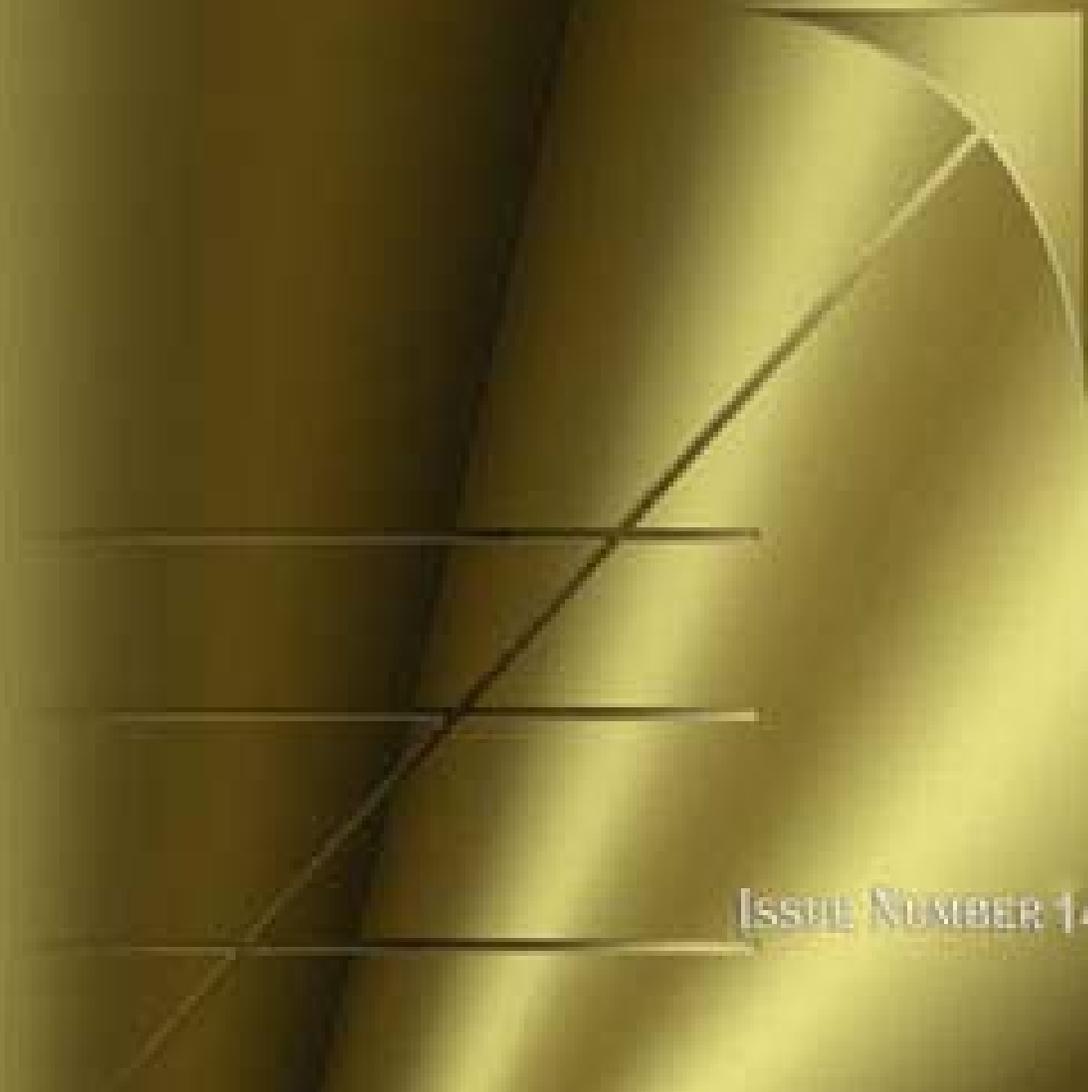


THE JOURNAL OF EXCELLENCE



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Mission of the Journal of Excellence

Terry Orlick, PhD – Founder and Editor in Chief, the Journal of Excellence.

My mission with the Journal of Excellence is to fill some important gaps in our knowledge, actions and our lives, that are essential to the successful pursuit of personal and professional excellence. The Journal of Excellence is devoted to nurturing excellence in all human endeavors and all worthy pursuits. Our focus is centered on the pursuit of excellence in the working and performing parts of our lives, as well as our lives outside the workplace or performance domain. Our goal is to inspire excellence, provide a forum to discuss the positive pursuit of excellence, and share practical strategies and perspectives for pursuing meaningful high-level goals.

The Journal of Excellence is committed to nurturing a positive vision of education and training for better people, better performers and a better world.

There is much value in pursuing excellence, in education, sport, health, the performing arts, parenting, teaching, coaching, health care, political, government and business leadership, and every workplace. There is also much value in the pursuing excellence in quality living, quality relationships and the development of a higher level of humanity. This is the first and only journal, which has **EXCELLENCE** in multiple domains as its sole focus. The ultimate mission of the Journal of Excellence is to provide insights and strategies that will help us to collectively become more successful in the pursuit of performance excellence and more fulfilled through excellence in living.

My vision is a journal that is applied in orientation, relevant in content and wide ranging in application. We are committed to:

- 1) Learning from and sharing the experiences of exceptional performers and inspiring people.
- 2) Developing a more thorough understanding of the mental links to excellence.
- 3) Promoting excellence in performance and excellence in living.
- 4) Initiating positive real world change.

If you have experiences, applied research or meaningful insights that are relevant to the pursuit of excellence in any worthy human endeavor, for any age group, we encourage you to submit your material to the Journal of Excellence to be considered for publication.

Affluent, Angry & Alone: An Anecdote About Aiden

Leanne Nazer-Bloom, Canada

Leanne Nazer-Bloom, B.A., B.Ed., M.Sc., Ph. D., holds an interdisciplinary doctoral degree from the University of Manitoba. During her career, she has worked with elite athletes, chess players, expectant moms, teachers, administrators, daycare workers, toddlers, and over one thousand children and youth in the area of mental skills development. Following a twelve year career as a professor in the Faculty of Education and the Department of Kinesiology and Applied Health at the University of Winnipeg, Leanne has recently begun the rewarding challenge of investing in her own children in a new way, as she lives out her teaching philosophies daily, working in a multi-aged classroom setting, teaching her four children at home. University of Ottawa.

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Abstract

The purpose of this participatory action research study was to develop a better understanding of stress in the lives of adolescents, to understand how they cope, and to assess their response to a program developed to help them cope positively with the stress they are facing. The following piece focuses solely on the relationship the researcher established with a bullied student named Aiden. His story is told in a variety of voices including his own, as well as through the use of ethnographic fiction.

He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

Author Unknown

Let me introduce you to Aiden. He and I met when I worked in his class one spring. As a researcher, my goal was to learn about those things that caused stress for him and his peers, and to offer positive strategies for mitigating that stress. As I taught in their classroom, interviewed students, and observed behaviours and relationships, I quickly recognized that the stress facing this adolescent was a great burden to bear.

The students pushed and shoved their way into classroom on Wednesday morning. The girls settled in the same way as they do any

other morning. Tess and company whispered among themselves, and Sarah sat alone at one table. Today, the boys acted a bit differently though. They were making comments to one another under their breath. Rather than their noisy chatter, they shrugged their shoulders at one another, or shook their heads. Something seems amiss today.

Mrs. Smith walked in with energy and focused intensity. She began to speak. “I heard what happened at lunch yesterday with Aiden,” she started.

“It wasn’t us. We didn’t do it,” protested Robby.

“That’s not the point,” she went on. “You guys either drop him as your friend or include him. You make a decision. Drop him, or include him. You can’t treat people like that.”

“But we weren’t the ones who did it,” Charlie insisted.

“Silence is consent. Do you understand that? Silence is consent, and so if you are standing around and watching something like that happen to someone, and you say nothing, your silence shows that it’s okay. Do you get that? Your silence is consent,” Mrs. Smith re-emphasized. She was furious, and anger could be heard in the tone of her voice. She wanted to be sure that these students understood that being a bystander when somebody is being bullied, and choosing to do nothing demonstrates approval. “You are going to have to make decisions that aren’t going to be popular. Eventually, you will have to make the decision, ‘Am I a leader or a follower?’ You decide.” She made her point. I think they got it. The boys slumped into their chairs, deciding not to defend their lack of action any further.

The incident that Mrs. Smith was referring to was something that occurred the previous day. While on the school grounds during the noon hour, three boys jumped on top of Aiden. Two boys pinned him to the ground while a third boy stood over top of him. The boy who stood over top of Aiden pulled down his own pants, squatted low into Aiden’s face and passed gas right in Aiden’s face.

“We didn’t think he was going to do it,” Robby said in their defence. “He said he was

going to, but we didn’t think he would actually do it. I thought he was joking.”

But he did do it, and the humiliation and embarrassment that Aiden endured as a result of that incident has caused him to feel incredible fury. When Aiden finally broke loose of the two boys, he ran into the school sobbing, cussing, and screaming. A teacher who was in her classroom during the lunch hour heard yelling and the sound of lockers being kicked in, and emerged to find Aiden pacing back and forth between the boys’ bathroom and the hallway, punching in lockers and screaming. She managed to corner Aiden into her classroom, and immediately called for help. The two senior administrators rushed in to first restrain Aiden, and then to calm him down in order to find out what happened. That was during the last week of the intervention. I never saw Aiden again.

Ethnographic Fiction

As you read further about Aiden, you will notice that several approaches have been taken to tell his story, including:

- a) sharing actual accounts of things that occurred during classtime, as cited above,
- b) highlighting conversations between me and Aiden during interviews,
- c) paraphrasing quotes from Aiden, and
- d) presenting data in the form of ethnographic fiction.

“Ethnographic fiction has been defined as an evocative product of the imagination that incorporates such literary techniques as flashbacks, flashforward, unfolding action, dialogue, interior monologue, alternative points of view, and the omniscient narrator” (Halas, 2001, p. 79). To follow are a series of vignettes aimed at introducing you to Aiden. Some of them are presented as fictional reconstructions based on:

- a) field notes,
- b) my reflective journal writings,
- c) interviews with Aiden,
- d) interviews with Aiden’s peers, and
- e) informal and formal dialogue with Mrs. Smith.

The vignettes read much like fiction, and have been created out of the information given by those involved in the study. In places where a vignette is presented as a fictional reconstruction, the reader will be alerted.

The reason that this writing style was adopted for telling Aiden’s story is because so much of what I learned from Aiden was through observation, noting the things he didn’t say, in addition to what he did say. He offered such rich insight into his life, and what it must feel like to be him, but at times these pieces, taken from his interviews, observations, and interviews with others, had to be pieced together. Often during interviews, he nodded, shook his head, or responded with only his eyes or a grin. His body language told so much of his story that seemed to be told more effectively using a combination of writing styles. Themes of loneliness, anger, rejection, and hopelessness were shared in Aiden’s actions and posture. Narratives and fictional narratives helped me to present Aiden to you, to give you a sense of what life is like for him, helping to point out how he copes with stress and how his coping strategies could potentially put him at risk.

Aiden’s Life

I don’t think I can describe in words how my heart broke for Aiden. He is a big boy who is lonely and angry. Aiden is white, and an only child who lives with both of his parents in Yorkdale Heights. Aiden recently moved to Yorkdale Heights from a small city at the beginning of the school year. His

parents are both professionals, and have started their own business in this mid-sized Canadian city, while maintaining a business they left behind in their former city. Work keeps these parents out of the house from seven o’clock in the morning until eight o’clock at night. Sometimes they are home earlier, and sometimes later. When they do arrive home early, the family goes out to dinner together. “Does anyone make supper at your house?” I asked Aiden.

“Not really anymore,” he said. Most nights Aiden is home alone, and if he doesn’t make himself a plate of pasta, he spends the money his parents leave him on take out pizza or pitas.

Endomorphic

After meeting Aiden, it was apparent that he had a poor body image and low self-esteem. In a conversation with Mrs. Smith, she noted, “He’s a larger set boy and, people are quick to point it out.” Mrs. Smith teaches this same group a Foods and Nutrition course. In that class, they discuss Canada’s Food Guide and energy input and output. “When we do that...you can see, like, he puts his head down and, you know, he singles himself out...I think he already knows it, he doesn’t need it reinforced by his peers when they make fun of him and stuff.” Aiden does have an endomorphic shape. He is rather soft looking, but not obese. He carries a large frame and he would likely be a good enforcer in hockey or football. Since the males in this class jump immediately to insult each other based on physical appearance, he is often called “fat.”

Home Alone

Home alone...again. What should I do? Watch TV? Play X-Box? Hack into someone’s computer? Look at raunchy websites? Whatever...who cares. Being an only child has its perks. I get all my own stuff. I like

my stuff. I have lots of it, and I don't have to share one bit of it. A television, a computer and an X-Box all in my own bedroom. It's sweet. I never have to leave my room. But man, I spend a lot of time alone. When my friends let me down, it's really lonely. Living in this big house and being by myself can really suck. I think I'm hungry. I guess I'll order a pizza for supper again tonight.

The above fictional account was based on an interview with Aiden when he proudly shared the positive aspects of being an only child who has the opportunity to spend a great deal of time unsupervised. He enjoys hosting his friends, and allowing his friends to do things in his home that they would not be permitted to do elsewhere. However, the freedom that accompanies this unsupervised time can also lead to isolation and extreme loneliness, which Aiden experiences when his friends exclude him.

After School Retreat

"Where are you rushing off to Aiden?" I asked one day as the 3:30 school bell rang.

"Can't talk now, Mrs. Nazer-Bloom. Robby and Charlie are coming over after school so I gotta get going" he said, fumbling to close his locker as he rushed to leave the school.

"Sounds fun. Have a great time," I called out to him, as he ran past me and out the door.

At Aiden's house, he and his friends decide what to do. "So, what do you guys want to do?" Aiden asks.

"I wanna go back onto that website that we were on last time. You know the one," Robby says, mischievously.

"What do you got to eat?" Charlie asks, as he rummages through the fridge. He pulls out some leftover pizza and walks to the

computer where Aiden and Robby are sitting.

"Yeah, I know what website you wanna see. Move over. I'll type in the address," says Aiden.

"Yeah. That's the one," Robby says, as the images begin to appear. "Man, Aiden, you're so lucky that you're here alone and can do this stuff. I can't even invite friends over to my house after school. You can have anyone over you want, and do this stuff. This rules."

"Like, if my parents ever caught me looking at this stuff on the internet, they'd like kill me," Charlie says, as he fixates his eyes on the images. "You're so lucky man."

"Yeah, I know," Aiden boasts, leaning back in his chair. "This is the life."

This fictional narrative is based on encounters Mrs. Smith has had with Aiden after dismissing him from class, and information Aiden shared with me during our final interview. The activities that Aiden and his friends engage in, in his home after school again points to what Aiden sees as the positive aspects of his life, and the freedom that accompanies his lack of supervision.

Aiden on Stress

During our interviews together, Aiden shared his thoughts on stress. To follow is a paraphrase of Aiden's words on what stress is to him.

Stress sometimes takes over your life and messes you up. Making friends and getting along at school is stress to me. Stress makes me feel heavier, and I start feeling smothered. Sometimes it gives me a headache and other stuff. I can't explain it. I feel it mostly in my body. Fitting in at a new school is

hard. It's weird because you have to make all new friends. Relationships can be hard too. Sometimes communicating is hard. It depends on the two people.

Fitting In

Aiden tries so hard to fit in at Yorkdale School. He wants it so badly. But it isn't easy. How hard would it be to move to a new city at the age of thirteen, trying to break in to a new crowd? Mrs. Smith sympathized, "What I've noticed is if you don't start here in kindergarten and go to grade eight with the same group of kids, it is so hard to get in." Aiden arrived at this kindergarten to grade eight school as a grade eight student. Many of the others have been together since kindergarten. If he was more skilled socially, maybe Aiden would have a chance at fitting in, but his interpersonal skills are not well developed.

"If you've got the social skills you can fit in. But Aiden is a prime example. If you don't have the social skills, forget it. And if his family does get up and move, you know, he's just going to struggle over and over and over again," Mrs. Smith pointed out. Although I would suggest that the present does not necessarily dictate the future for Aiden, I agree that he does need to be taught effective communication skills in order to cope better interpersonally. With his parent's business, it is likely that another move is forthcoming in a year to two for Aiden and his family. Without some sort of social skills intervention, attempting to fit in at age fifteen or sixteen might not be any easier than fitting in now for Aiden.

Buying Friends

Aiden does not know how to interact with others well. When he speaks to adults, he mumbles and keeps his head down. He is successful at winning friends, however, by 'buying' them. "I'll buy you a chocolate bar

at the deli today," he'd tell Bob. "I got you covered for lunch today," as he pulled out his wallet to treat Charlie to lunch at the school deli. "Wanna' come over after school, Bob? I'll buy you a bag of chips," he bribed. His confidence seemed low and his wallet appeared full. Although Aiden did not share with me that he purchased food for his friends, both Mrs. Smith and other students during interviews mentioned this pattern. And for Aiden, buying friends seemed to work. Inviting others over after school to raid his fridge and look at "unmentionables" on the computer screen also attracted others to hang around with him. Were they really his friends? That's difficult to say. Did they defend him when he was in trouble? No, not even close. Of all the students in the class, Aiden was the only one who said that he did not have a significant adult in his life whom he could trust, if he had a problem – there was not a parent, relative or teacher that he trusted enough to confide in, when the chips were down. Did he at least have one person that he could count on as a friend then? I'm not certain that he did.

Mrs. Smith shared that she has tried several times to establish a connection with Aiden, by chatting with him after class or while walking down the hall. "He shuts me out," she shared. The amount of time and number of students that Mrs. Smith teaches also constrains her ability to establish a relationship with Aiden. In this school of five hundred students, Mrs. Smith sees Aiden for three classes and one food lab over a six-day school cycle.

Dejected

Aiden is a very sad person. His body communicates sadness by a slumping posture, and hanging his head low with his hair in his eyes. At times, there is no intonation in his voice at all. It was often difficult to elicit a response from Aiden during class discus-

sions. There was a lot going on in this young man's mind, but nothing that he would make himself vulnerable to discuss during class-time. Interviews helped me to understand him much more. "Aiden, sometimes you seem really sad. Are you sad?" I asked.

"Sometimes," Aiden replied.

"What makes you feel sad?" I asked.

"I can't really say," he answered.

"Is it home or school?" I probed further.

"Both," he replied.

Insult to Injury

Being called names, and being bullied by one student in particular were a constant source of stress for Aiden. "This kid kicks me every once in awhile, but it doesn't really hurt." Aiden went on to share about a time when a bully got physical with him. "I was standing where that window is, right. Then he drop-kicked me across the room and my shoulder went back and snapped."

"What happened next?" I asked.

"That kid got suspended for two days!" he said.

"What did your parents think about this kid hurting you like that? Were they upset?"

"Oh, no, not really," he said.

"How did that make you feel?" I asked.

"It pissed me off!" he exclaimed. "They thought I was faking."

Aiden saw his parents as unsympathetic, which added insult to injury for him. He had been broken by another human being, and as

he saw it, his primary source of support did not jump up in his defence. Aiden felt as though he had nowhere to turn when he needed help. He could not count on his parents. They were never around, and when they were, they failed to show him the type of support that he craved. He couldn't count on his friends. They just used him for food and cheap thrills on his computer. When he was bullied, Aiden felt that he had no one there to back him up. Feelings of hopelessness shone though during our final interview.

Everyone's Out to Get Me

"I always get into trouble – I don't care anymore! Like seriously, school has tried everything to suspend me." Aiden clearly feels that everyone is out to get him. When he gets into trouble for what can be looked on as self-defence and has to deal with the consequences of his actions, he feels like nobody hears him, nobody is listening, and nobody cares.

These experiences are not new for Aiden, who encountered similar situations at his former school. He explains, "Like, my old school, they tried everything to suspend me. They tried planting evidence in my locker."

"What do you mean evidence?" I asked.

"Weed!!" he exclaimed.

Aiden went on to share that the school principal had a personal vendetta against him since, during a hockey game, Aiden checked the principal's son into the boards, knocking him out and giving him a concussion. Following that incident, Aiden says that the principal put another student up to planting marijuana in Aiden's locker, in an attempt to get Aiden thrown out of school. Whether this story is accurate or not, it is still Aiden's perception that this authority

figure was out to get him, which is very significant. These perceptions likely contribute to his feelings of frustration, alienation, and hopelessness.

When Aiden shared about giving the principal's son a concussion, he chuckled and wore a wide grin. I think Aiden enjoys being an enforcer in games with physical contact. I think it makes him feel empowered, strong and in control – feelings he doesn't often experience.

Aiden on Coping

Aiden and I talked about coping during our three interviews together. To follow is a paraphrase of Aiden's thoughts on coping.

Kids my age get into fights to cope with stress. Punching a punching bag isn't as good as hitting a person. Fighting is a good stress buster. At least you're doing something about it, not like when you hit a punching bag. You might get suspended but that will give you a few days to, like, cool down. I got suspended for two days, but it helped me to cool down. Playing X-Box also helps me to cope. Sometimes I just settle my breathing and calm down. It helps. But I'd really rather fight.

Anger Brewing: A Conversation

"You know, Aiden, I feel worried about you with all of the stress you experience and not feeling any support. What do you do with all that anger inside of you?" I asked.

"Bottle it up," he said.

"Have you ever done anything...with the energy produced by your anger that's bottled up inside?"

"Yeah. I got in a few fights at my old school and got suspended for a month for two fights

in one day. I won them both!" he announced proudly.

"What did your parents think about that?" I queried.

"They were pretty pissed off," he said.

I am troubled by the anger festering inside of young people, like Aiden. Isolation, loneliness and anger are real issues facing many young people. It may only take one small incident, on top of years of other incidents, to put a young person "over the edge." Going 'over the edge' could result in an angry young person unleashing all his fury by launching an attack on those he feels have wronged him, as exemplified in the tragedies of Columbine, USA, and Taber, Alberta. These issues are in desperate need of attention.

Tensions Mounting

During classtime Aiden demonstrated that he is a very angry young man. A verbal poke from Tim here. Another jab from Robby there. Aiden would mutter something back to them under his breath. Needling, jabs and digs fly back and forth, back and forth, class after class. Some of the boys are able to murmur their insults to one another, and still manage to fly under the radar, not being heard by the teacher. But when Aiden has had enough, he is unable to hold back. "Shut up you fucking faggot!" he'd scream back at the one insulting him.

"I am getting so fed up with the language in my class. There is no need to speak like that - ever!" Mrs. Smith exclaimed. In her sensitive yet no nonsense approach in these situations, Mrs. Smith removes Aiden and any other offenders from the classroom,

taking them into the hall to get to the bottom of the situation privately.

After one class in early April I asked Mrs. Smith, “Where’s Aiden these days?” after noting his repeated absence.

Mrs. Smith had reached her limit. After countless episodes of poor impulse control and shouting matches between Aiden and others, Mrs. Smith escorted Aiden to the principal’s office, and told her administrator, “He’s not saying ‘fucking faggot’ in my class again! It’s not acceptable!” and left Aiden there to deal with the principal. Aiden did not return to class for nearly two weeks. I do not know what he was doing instead of coming to class, but when he did return in mid-April, his attitude had softened, and he seemed less agitated. Perhaps he had softened because he hadn’t been bullied?

I Don’t Care Anymore

“I don’t care about school and I don’t care about homework. I don’t do homework and I don’t worry when the teacher comes around to collect it. I just don’t do it and I don’t care.” In the twelve weeks that I was in his class, Aiden did not submit one piece of homework. He did not make excuses for it. He just didn’t do it, and shrugged it off when asked about it. His parents are well educated, and expressed a desire for Aiden to do well in school. Aiden wrote entrance exams for admission into a prestigious private school. His results did not measure up, and he was not accepted. “My dad was pissed with me, but I don’t care anymore. I don’t care that I don’t fit in here. None of it really matters anymore.” I could hear the hopelessness in his voice. He meant it. I could tell that nothing really mattered to him anymore.

Where are Your Parents?

“So what are you and your buddies up to, after school?” I asked Aiden.

“My friends come over and they just go on my computer and log onto their accounts,” he said.

“What are they doing on your computer?” I asked.

“Trashy things,” he confessed.

“In your house?” I clarified.

“Under my supervision,” Aiden said proudly.

“It sounds like you feel pretty proud of yourself, Aiden,” I observed.

“Yes, I am,” he said confidently.

My parents are always away. And when my parents are away, I look after myself. I like to play X-Box, video games, and killing video games. I have friends over a lot, and I like to do that. I guess my dog is really the only one who keeps me company. He and I wrestle. My friends come over to use the computer and to do things that they can’t do on their own computers.

The preceding fictional narrative was based on information Aiden shared. It would seem that with superficial friendships like the ones Aiden experiences, life can be lonely.

Aiden One on One

The first interview I conducted with Aiden was a group interview. During this interview he shared very little, only mumbling under his breath, in an attempt to make his peers laugh. Thus I chose to conduct the next two

interviews with Aiden in a one on one setting. The decision to interview Aiden alone was a good one. One on one, Aiden made eye contact and sheepishly grinned as he shared the mischievous things that he and his friends do after school.

“You know, it’s really different meeting you here one on one. You are different from the way you are in the classroom,” I said to Aiden.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“You’re soft-spoken and funny and it is nice to visit with you here. When I speak to you in class, it sounds like you are annoyed and just not happy to be there,” I said. Aiden went on to share that when his friends are being obnoxious in class, he does it too, in order to fit in.

“I have to do it too because, you have to,” he explained.

I bluntly asked, “What would happen if you didn’t act like that?”

“They’d call me a woosy,” he said.

It appears that there is tremendous pressure to follow the crowd in order to fit in, as with most adolescent situations. Two other boys who I would consider athletic, bright and hard working agreed that they felt pressure to act inappropriately in class in order to avoid being teased by male peers.

Sharing His Music

About mid-April, the typical reserved, non-commenting Aiden came to life for the first time during class, when I announced their final project. “For our final classes together, we are going to do presentations. I’d like everyone to present something related to attitude. You can share a poem, or a skit.

You can write a story, a rap or share lyrics of a favorite song. Whatever you like, that has something to do with attitude.” Aiden’s hand shot up. “Mrs. Smith, can I go to the library? Can you write me a note so that I can go?”

“Sure Aiden,” she said, jotting a note to the librarian, seeking permission for Aiden to use the library computers. Before the end of class was up, Aiden was back with lyrics of a favorite song printed out. They were lyrics written by a rap group, and Aiden couldn’t wait to share them. The following class, Aiden was among the first to get up in front of the group, and without hesitating, recited and then interpreted the lyrics of the song. This was remarkable for a student who had contributed virtually nothing all term. Asking students to choose something personal to share appeared to make an impact. For those who chose music to share, it seemed to make the greatest impact. Aiden’s voice seemed to be heard for the first time since the beginning of February. Maybe he was not comfortable sharing his own voice, but felt much more at ease sharing his thoughts and feelings through the lyrics of a song.

Music was an effective component of the intervention that helped me to connect at a deeper level with many of the students. Many song lyrics revealed the “heart” of the students, pointing out what students valued and where their passions lie. Their music gave me a platform to ask more questions in follow up interviews, and allowed me to enter their world.

Asking students to share song lyrics was particularly effective with Aiden. After class, Aiden stayed back to share more with me about the meaning of the song he presented called “Changes.” He wanted me to know that the song artist was Black, and died in a racially motivated killing a couple

of years ago. Aiden knew so much about music, and seemed to feel very proud to share something with me that I knew nothing about. It was interesting that the song Aiden shared with the class discussed how people have to start pulling together to make changes, and that we can go nowhere unless we help one another. The essence of the song can be summed up in these lyrics: “We gotta’ make a change. It’s time for us as a people to start makin’ some changes. Let’s change the way we eat, let’s change the way we live and let’s change the way we treat each other. You see the old way wasn’t working so it’s on us to do what we gotta do, to survive” (Shakur, 1998).

“Finally, something that resonates with Aiden,” I thought. I was ecstatic at this breakthrough. Then a thought occurred to me, “I wonder if the message in this song is his heart’s cry?” If only I could have worked with these students longer, I think that I could have made an even richer connection with each of them. Processing the content of their music was definitely an enlightening moment for me.

Wrapping Up

I am not sure how effective some of the techniques taught through the intervention were for Aiden because he missed so many classes. Visits to his former city and trips to the principal’s office took him away from nearly half of our classes together. The intervention would likely have been more meaningful for Aiden if he had not been absent so often. When Aiden was in class, he did not participate much and seemed really annoyed at having to participate in group work. Group work was not a good teaching strategy to use with Aiden, since his friends were fickle, at times rather mean, and were not always open to including him in their groups. Other times the verbal needling between Aiden and others contributed

to a tense classroom environment. Looking back, it might have been effective to work one on one with Aiden, where possible, to catch him up on the work that he had missed, and to alleviate the stress he may have felt working with others when exploring personal issues.

Music was a rich avenue to explore with these students, and when given the opportunity to voice his thoughts through the words of a favorite song, Aiden shone. I am grateful to all of the students for opening up to me, and sharing their lives. I am grateful to Aiden for opening my eyes to the countless variables that put him and others living in this upper middle class neighborhood at risk. Before working with this group, I had not considered that these students would be at risk. It was startling to discover that some students were experiencing neglect, feelings of hopelessness, feelings of isolation, and bullying. I was also surprised that many students were feeling so angry. The grass is always greener on the other side, isn’t it? But things aren’t always as they appear.

A “Fictional Flash Forward”

I got nothin’ better to do.

I may as well get blasted.

During our interview together, Aiden shared how on one occasion, he became drunk on the alcohol in his parent’s liquor cabinet. He also mentioned that he had been to a party and drank beer. Although this preliminary evidence of experimenting with alcohol does not point to addiction, in my experience with working with youth at risk, a significant factor which is often a precursor to drug and alcohol addiction is a lack of leisure skills. This lack of leisure skills often leads youth into looking for things to do to fill their time. Because Aiden does not appear to be involved in any activities outside of school,

or any activities offered within the school, he does not appear to be honing leisure skills aside from exploring on the computer and playing video games. I might suggest that substances could become attractive for Aiden, as a means to fill his leisure time.

Youth From Yorkdale Heights at Risk?

“Affluenza,” Neglect & Disconnect

I believe that the affluence of some of the youth living in this community could actually put some of these students at risk. Easy access to money for many of these young people could lead them into trying substances, which could translate into future issues related to substance use and abuse.

My experience working with youth before teaching at Yorkdale School had been limited to working with incarcerated youth who, by our judicial system were labeled ‘at risk.’ When I came to Yorkdale School I did not expect to find so many similarities between those at risk youth and the youth living in Yorkdale Heights. I followed up with Mrs. Smith about the similarities that I had observed between these two populations, and she agreed that although there are many differences between the two populations, there are many similarities. Since Mrs. Smith herself grew up as a child of poor immigrant parents, and considers herself to have been ‘at risk,’ she easily relates to students who grow up with less. “Like, some kids [in poor communities] were going to school hungry because there was no food and there was neglect....When I come here to teach, you know, a lot of these kids have food and choose not to take the food and come to school hungry.”

This must be frustrating for a teacher who, having grown up with no food in the cupboard, deals with inattentive students who cannot focus due to their empty bellies,

when there are positive alternatives and healthy choices available.

From what they shared of their lives, I feel concerned at the apparent neglect of some of the students with whom I worked. In today’s society, many parents are working really hard to provide for their families, and children are suffering as a result. Mrs. Smith raised this as a concern as well. “A lot of these kids are neglected in the same way here [as in poorer communities]. Here Mom and Dad are working, like, to eleven o’clock at night or traveling by plane and emailing [asking], ‘Are you doing your homework?’” Although the neglect that these young people experience is not physical, as they appear to have an abundance of what they need, their neglect is experienced in the form of emotional care and contact time with significant adults in their lives. Aiden, for example, has no siblings, and mentioned that he does not have any significant adults in his life to whom he could go if he needed help.

One final similarity between the at risk youth I worked with in the past and the youth from Yorkdale Heights was a lack of connectedness to the community. In poorer communities where children and youth may be at risk, often times there are people who move in and out the community on a regular basis, making it difficult for these young people to lay down roots. Because the adults who live in Yorkdale Heights are often professionals, it is not unusual for families to move when the breadwinner’s job takes the family out of province or out of the country. Mrs. Smith shared, “There were transient people in my area growing up but there’s a lot of transient families in this area too, who stay for two or three years and then leave because of transfers, right. So being rooted in the community isn’t really there either.” Feeling a sense of belonging in a

community, and knowing where you are from can lead to feelings of security. As an adolescent, feeling secure can go a long way in helping to move through this tumultuous period of life. Moving and starting over is difficult at any stage of life, but during adolescence, it can be extremely difficult. Attempting to find an existing social group to fit into, especially when you are still figuring out who you are, can be very stressful.

The most obvious difference between the youth with whom I worked in the past, and these youth, is accessibility to money. This access to money may put the youth from Yorkdale Heights at great risk. Access to money means access to a lot of things, all of which may not be positive or healthy. Drugs and alcohol cost money, and many of these youth have easy access to money, which could lead to experimenting with substances that could potentially lead to addiction. When leisure skills are lacking, boredom results. Getting high could be an effective means of alleviating boredom, or even dulling the pain of isolation and rejection.

My Final Visit to Yorkdale School

I did not meet with the students again after we finished the presentations. Our three months were over, and ending off with the music was a strong way to finish our time together. I did go back one last time in June, hoping to see them again, but they were busy writing exams. I brought in a handwritten note for each student which Mrs. Smith was going to pass on to them. In the note I thanked students for their hard work, wished them well, and included a copy of my favourite poem, written below. Although not written by a rap artist, it resonates the same message of needing to work together, as the song shared by Aiden.

The Goose Story

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter...flying along in V formation...you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way:

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation the whole flock adds a 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get to where they are going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone...and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are.

When the Head Goose gets tired, it rotates back in the Wing and another goose flies point.

It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs with people or with geese flying south.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

What do we say when we honk from behind?

Finally...and this is important...when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with the goose and follow it down to

lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies, and only then do they launch out, on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.

Milton Olson

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Holistic Sport Psychology: Investigating the Roles, Operating Standards, and Intervention Goals and Strategies of Holistic Consultants

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Abstract

The holistic development of the athlete has only been briefly addressed in the literature as an element of certain sport psychology interventions (e.g., Bond, 2002; Henschen, 2001). Using the framework of professional philosophy from Poczwadowski, Sherman, and Ravizza (2004), Friesen and Orlick (2010) presented the beliefs, values, theoretical paradigms, and models of practice of holistic sport psychology consultants' professional philosophies. The purpose of this study was to examine the roles, operating standards, intervention goals and techniques of holistic sport psychology consultants' professional philosophies. By interviewing holistic sport psychology consultants a number of themes emerged which characterize a sport psychology service delivery that incorporates the holistic development of the athlete.

Holistic Sport Psychology: Investigation the External Components of Holistic Consultants' Professional Philosophies

Holistic Sport Psychology

As reflective reports of applied sport psychology consulting experiences become more prominent in the literature, a trend has emerged highlighting the need to develop the athlete holistically (e.g., Bond 2002; Henschen, 2001). Supporting this trend are a select number of sport psychology consultants who have incorporated the

holistic growth of the athlete as an intervention goal to ensure not only continued athletic excellence of their athletes, but also to address the psychosocial issues related to their non-performance identity domains. Miller and Kerr (2002) summarized the belief in this position by stating that "performance excellence is attained only through optimal personal development" (p. 141).

Targeting such non-performance domains however, has been suggested to be outside not only the roles and responsibilities of the sport psychology consultant, but beyond their professional abilities as well (Ferraro,

2004). This is due to the fact that many who practice sport psychology do not hold licensure in clinical psychology (Gardner & Moore, 2006). This study will not be a forum for such debate; regardless of the perceived professional boundaries in applied sport psychology, there are in fact sport psychology consultants who have incorporated the holistic growth of the athlete into their intervention services.

Bond (2001) stated that his “experience in the field clearly points to a need for holistic psychological development programs for elite athletes that include lifestyle management, personal development, group and relationship dynamics, clinical interventions, and performance-enhancement training” (p. 218). Bond presented his case in a later article (2002) where he asserted that mental training could be performed by the coach, parent, teacher, or even the athletes themselves. As for the sport psychology consultant, Bond proposed that:

The essence of an effective applied sport psychology program must be an understanding and recognition that the elite athlete or coach is a functioning ‘person’ as well as a sportsperson. In fact it could be argued that the person may be more important than the sportsperson. The person existed before the athlete/coach and will be there long after. Surely the role of the applied sport psychologist is to understand, assist, and support the development of the whole person, not just the athlete? How superficial is it to develop and implement a sport psychology program based around simple performance enhancement strategies? (p. 23).

More recently, a study by Friesen and Orlick (2010) proposed that the holistic approach to sport psychology could be interpreted according to three perspectives. The first was labelled *Environment Effects* whereby the holistic sport psychology consultant aims to manage possible psychological effects to the athlete’s sport performance originating from the athlete’s non-sport domains. For example, an athlete may be in the midst of writing exams in school which could leave the athlete tense or distracted while playing tennis. The second perspective was labelled *Developing the Core Individual* which was used to explain how the holistic psychology consultant directed his or her services to the growth of the athlete’s personal core being. The result is the individuals’ improved functioning across all endeavours including sport. For example, helping the athlete understand that their athletic persona is just one of many which make up who they are as a human being helps relieve some of the stresses while performing because their self-worth is no longer in jeopardy. Finally, Friesen and Orlick proposed that holistic sport psychology could be interpreted as recognizing the athlete’s *Whole Being* whereby sport is a multidimensional phenomenon composed of an athlete’s thoughts, emotions, physiology, and behaviour. Therefore, the consultant strives to deliver a sport psychology intervention which is in collaboration with other sport science practitioners.

Addressing the internal components of professional philosophy introduced by Poczwardowski, Sherman, and Ravizza (2004), Friesen and Orlick (2010) presented some of the beliefs, values, theoretical paradigms regarding behaviour change, and models of practice from five experienced holistic sport psychology consultants. Their beliefs included: seeing athletes as regular

people, recognizing the multiples selves within each athlete, and recognizing that an athlete's core self can be better known by observing them in stressful circumstances. Values that were important to how holistic sport psychology consultants practiced were those of caring, authenticity and professionalism. Their theoretical paradigms were an eclectic composition borrowing mostly from existential and humanistic psychology. Finally their models tended to gravitate around counselling and interdisciplinary sport psychology models.

In order for sport psychology consultants to incorporate the essence of holistic sport psychology into their services, the components of service delivery that characterize the holistic approach must first be identified, examined, and understood. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine external components of holistic consultants' professional philosophies to sport psychology service delivery. This expands upon the previous work by Friesen and Orlick (2010) who studied inner components of holistic consultants' professional philosophies. This study provided an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of holistic sport psychology service delivery. The focus was on how and what holistic sport psychology consultants actually *do* when they integrate the holistic development of the athlete into their service delivery.

Methodology

Participants

The sport psychology consultant participants in this study were purposely sampled based on the following criteria:

(a) Acknowledgement of their holistic approach to sport psychology service delivery in the academic literature;

(b) a minimum of 10 years applied consulting experience to ensure adequate experience working with athletes and reflection on their services; and

(c) are, or had been, employed at an academic institution (i.e., university) and had taught sport psychology-based courses.

This, along with snowball sampling (Patton, 2002), resulted in the recruitment of five consultant participants: Dr. Cal Botterill, (CAN), 30 years experience; Roger Friesen (CAN), 22 years experience; Dr. Keith Henschen, (USA), 37 years experience; Dr. Tom Patrick (CAN), 15 years experience, Dr. Ken Ravizza, (USA), 29 years experience.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews intended to engage the consultant in discussion about their professional philosophies were conducted with each of the consultant participants. The guide consisted of standard questions asked to all consultants as well as individualized questions based on topics found in literature authored by the selected consultant participants. Pilot interviews were conducted to help verify the effectiveness of the interview guide for drawing out the kind of responses needed to answer the research questions. Probes and requests for elaboration were utilized by the researcher throughout the interviews to provide more in depth responses on certain topics.

Potential consultant participants were contacted via telephone. They were informed of the general premise of the research and asked if they were interested in participating. If they expressed an interest in participating, they were sent a detailed letter of information specifically outlining the purpose of the research and their role as a

participant within it. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest the quality of an interview is dependent on the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Fortunately, those consultant participants selected were well known by either the researcher or the researcher's supervisor. This resulted in an accommodating relationship between researcher and participant which facilitated the interview process. Interviews took place in person within the homes or offices of the consultants or via telephone. Interview guides were sent to all participants prior to interviews to allow participants an opportunity to reflect in advance about their philosophies.

Data Analysis

Transcripts were read and reread by the researcher and were analyzed using NVivo 7 software. The researcher coded phrases, quotes, and sayings into meaning units (Tesch, 1990). These coded meaning units were then classified into themes, each representing an aspect of the consultant's professional philosophy (roles, operating standards, intervention goals, and intervention strategies). Those units that were thought to be associated with the concept of holistic sport psychology were selected to form the database of this study. Data was predominantly analyzed inductively to allow emergent and unexpected meaning units to develop. There was also a component of deductive analysis as the researcher was particularly attentive to the aforementioned subject matter originating from concepts presented in the literature and prior knowledge of the consultant's professional philosophies.

Trustworthiness

Patton (2002) suggested that triangulation provides credibility to qualitative research analysis. For the purposes of this study, two forms of triangulation were used:

triangulation of sources, and analyst triangulation. This study used triangulation of sources by combining interviews from both consultants and athletes. Additionally, this study used analyst triangulation as the emergent themes and classifications were monitored and reviewed by a supervisory researcher. Establishing credibility can also be achieved through member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, interpretations and conclusions that were made by the researcher throughout the study were continually sent back to the participants to ensure the correctness of the interpretations and conclusions.

Results

The results section is divided into the four targeted components of professional philosophy: (a) roles, (b) operating standards, (c) intervention goals, and (d) intervention techniques and methods.

Roles

The consultants in this study reported that they were willing to fulfill virtually any role needed by their athletes. More specific to the goal of holistic development, there were four roles in particular that these consultants felt helped them achieve their goal:

- (a) friend,
- (b) Jack-of-all-trades,
- (c) educator, and
- (d) observer.

Friend.

Becoming friends with the athlete allowed the consultants to connect to the whole person behind the athlete persona. The most dominant role that emerged from the interviews was that of friend as that role was believed to facilitate the support, caring, and

authenticity that was so valued by the consultants (Friesen & Orlick, 2010). As Ken Ravizza explained:

I always want those people to leave feeling that they've made a friend in the whole situation. Someone they can trust... I think all people need that. They need unbiased types of situations where people will give them straight answers, who are not emotionally involved in their personal life on a daily basis, and also be candid with them.

Being a friend to the athlete placed the consultants in a position where athletes felt they could trust the genuineness of the consultant. Keith Henschen commented:

I offer that I'm there if they need me. That's been very successful for me. And I've been able to balance the friendships with the coaches and the players. I'll go play golf with them if they want to play golf. I bet with them just like everybody else does. I spar with them, you know verbally; they like that. I like that... I treat them just like I would somebody that's a friend. At first, they look and they say, "Ah, I dunno," and then eventually they say, "Hey, he's real." That's the trust. You don't have anything at this level if you don't have their trust.

Jack-of-all-trades

Working with the whole person beyond the athlete acknowledges that there are potential psychological effects to performance coming from all types of different sources (e.g., relationships or school). Holistic consultants never know what types of psychological effects they will be called on to address. Therefore, they must be willing

and somewhat able to fulfill a variety of odd job roles. Roger Friesen explained how playing a variety of odd-job roles helped managed the cohesion within a team he once worked with:

So when I was with my athlete and that whole staff in Athens, then I assumed the role of butler, cook, and housekeeper for them. Simply because if I hadn't then the whole thing would have spiralled out of control. And so it was an intervention tool to keep people from killing each other...You understand that kitchens can be a volatile place when it comes to roommates right? So how that kitchen is managed can determine to a large extent whether a relationship functions or not. And so if you come into a context that is already dysfunctional and then introduce kitchen which seems strange when you just talk about it; but simple things can lead to major catastrophe very quickly. And so it was evident that's where things were going so I stepped in and said, "That's it, I'm cooking, I'm doing the grocery shopping, I'm taking care of the kitchen. You can give me your meal requests and I'll be happy to comply, but I'm managing that space." And that was simply an intervention method to avoid catastrophe. So I'll play any role.

Educator

Another prominent role was that of educator. However, the term is not used in the traditional sense of teaching mental skills. Rather, in order to understand the athlete's core being, holistic consultants act as facilitators who guide the athlete's process of self-knowledge. By doing so, they exhibit their existential influences as

they emphasize the necessity for the athlete to learn from their past experiences. Tom Patrick explained:

My job is to facilitate the learning from experience.... My job really is not so much prior to the event; my job is in the debriefing of what occurred. So that they learn everything they can from it, identify things that they may be able to do a little bit differently, or things that we may need to train a little differently.... So that accentuates my idea that existential for me is having athletes learn from the experience or ensuring that they've optimized the learning from the experience.... So going back to the question you asked, I think that's what it is: it's assisting the athlete learn from their experience. Okay it's not a black and white thing... when I start working with a group, I might do some education just to bring people up to speed a bit and see where they're at but eventually it's getting each athlete on their own journey of discovery.

Observer

One of the roles reported by the consultants was that of observer. At the core of each of the three perspectives of holistic consulting introduced by Friesen and Orlick (2010) was awareness: awareness of how non-sport domains affect the sport performance, awareness of how one is growing as an individual, and awareness of how our cognitive, emotional, and physiological states affect our actions. Therefore the role of observer is important in helping to facilitate awareness. Roger Friesen commented:

So observation for me, I don't know if it was innate or if it developed because I was curious about things but that's a part of me that has gone into everything. So part of my skill, part of my gift that I bring to my role as a consultant is that I'm very intuitive, I'm very perceptive, I'm very observant. There are very few things that I will miss.

Operating Standards

Poczwadowski et al. (2004) suggested that a consultant's operating standards help clarify numerous aspects of the consultant's role within an intervention. Often, these standards or *professional values* (A. Poczwadowski, personal communication, May 1, 2007) define a consultant's practice as they address not so much what the consultant does within his or her practice, but rather *how* they practice. Seven operating standards are believed to be significant to the holistic approach to sport psychology:

- (a) the consultants' relationship to the sport science team,
- (b) the consultant's relationship to the coaching staff,
- (c) the consultant's scope of practice,
- (d) the readiness of the athlete,
- (e) personalizing their services,
- (f) being culturally aware, and
- (g) managing the consultation setting.

Sport psychology consultant – sport science team relationship

Addressing the athlete as a whole being, the holistic consultant considers their mind, emotions, physiology and behaviour. Cal Botterill explained that there must be an understanding and appreciation for the other sport science practitioners (e.g., nutritionists, physiologists) because their work affects the whole athlete.

Every element is important. And so when you get into elite sport, the support team is huge. And the nutritionist is as important as the physiologist, who is as important as the sport psychologist and as the coach etc. And so there are all sorts of situations where the team didn't work as a real team as much as they should. I really believe we've continued to suggest that we provide interdisciplinary support for our athletes, but in reality we often don't. We end up being uni-disciplinary—I give you my best opinion in my area and she gives her best in hers. And you gotta think about how the holistic athlete is trying to interpret this, “Oh my God, I gotta do this, and that.” Whereas if the three people got together and said, “What should we talk about today with this athlete?” and have a collective directive, it would be a lot better than these separate pieces of information. And in fact, your particular advice may be spurious; it may be problematic if you don't understand what's happening in nutrition or physiology or whatever...So the holistic thing is there in that regard as well.

Often the sport science team can provide input into whether the athlete is under-

recovered or injured and therefore how they will function emotionally and mentally. Keith Henschen commented on how it is necessary to be in good standing with the training staff:

I get most of my information from the physiotherapists or the trainers. I spend a lot of time in the locker room and training room, because those are the guys that are with [the athletes] all the time. They can tell who is struggling and who is not struggling and so forth. And I make sure that I'm friends with them.

Sport psychology consultant – coach relationship

Because holistic development is usually beyond the expected service of most sport psychology consultants, often coaches do not expect them to address more encompassing issues. Therefore, it helps when coaches recognize how useful sport psychology can be for the person behind the athlete. As Keith Henschen commented, “Coaches many times are narrow in their perspective of what sport psychology can do and then once they understand what it can do, they open up more and more.” One way this occurs is when the holistic consultant tries to develop the coach holistically themselves. For example, Keith Henschen related a story of how he supported a coach who underwent a surgical operation similar to one that Keith himself once had. “Now to me, that's part of the services because if you do that, you ingrain yourself in them, not only in the performance area, but in the personal area as well.”

Scope of practice

The most controversial aspect of holistic sport psychology may be that because of its wide-ranging perspectives, it could initially be viewed as outside the scope of typical

practice for sport psychology practitioners. This is particularly true when sport psychology consultants are recruited solely to help an athlete with performance enhancement. However, the consultants in this study have learned that because the performer and the holistic self cannot be separated, as soon as the consultant is dealing with the athlete, they are dealing with of the entire person. Nevertheless, this does not imply that holistic consultants are without professional boundaries. Consider a story from Roger Friesen which exemplifies the awareness holistic sport psychology consultants must have for their scope of practice:

If it gets into issues that I'm not equipped to deal with, that's where referrals come in because I'm not qualified or experienced, nor do I want to deal with everything that comes along. For example, in the early days of my consulting, I had an athlete who came to me initially because she was lacking motivation which is pretty typical, pretty common, and in some ways, a simple issue to deal with from a sport psychology perspective. And so she came in to see me once a week; and the fourth week she came in and sat down and started sobbing uncontrollably. And I was completely taken aback because as far as I knew we were talking about motivation and how to rekindle the enthusiasm and inspiration that this person has had in their life as an athlete. It turned out that what was really the issue was that this person had had an abortion a year previous and no single person on earth knew about this; not the partner that she had, not her parents, not her friends, not a single person, nobody but her and

the physician. And it was destroying her. And so the issue wasn't motivation, the issue was something entirely different and so we needed to establish trust, and it took four weeks for her to feel that she could trust me and that's when she talked to me about the abortion. And so, we spent the hour dealing with that whole process. And the end of it was that I referred her to counselling services which was equipped to deal with those kinds of issues. So professional boundaries, you have to be very respectful of that.... Ethical is one thing, but just in terms of maintaining a professional decorum, I mean there are things that I will just not go there with clients but I will make myself vulnerable enough so that they will develop a sense of trust and rapport. And yeah, so I think in my life, I think I have been very good and I have been very aware and very thoughtful of what those parameters look like.

The quote above also addresses the notion of making referrals to clinical psychologists when holistic consultants feel the athlete has issues beyond their competence. Ken Ravizza described:

An athlete I had worked with, I had done everything I could do to help him through what he was going through. And generally if I provide everything I can do and we're not getting anywhere, it's time for a referral.... We took the opportunity to get a clinical person involved just to make sure everything was in check with what was going on there and the [two] of us worked together with this athlete. I wanted to give him every resource.... So a network

support system has been huge for me.

Therefore, even though holistic consultants extend their services to meet the athlete's holistic needs beyond sport, they are not however without professional boundaries. Both Ken Ravizza and Keith Henschen in their interviews discussed their boundaries as being those issues which extend beyond their training and competence. Mostly these issues are viewed as those best suited for clinical psychologists to help resolve such as eating disorders, substance abuse or spousal abuse. To summarize, Tom Patrick explained how a practitioner's scope of practice essentially must reside within a practitioner's competence and their lived experiences:

Scope of practice, I tend to lean towards the existential counselling approach which means I'm not into the behavioural components and I'm not into discriminative stimulus' and reinforcement schedules and those types of things. Again, it's not to suggest that that's a wrong way to practice, it's just not what I've done a lot of. Because it's one thing to study behavioural psychology and it's one thing to know how it's applied to sports and then to practice it. I just wouldn't have a very good experience with it. I also bring my performing artist self to what I do. And a lot of it is lived experience but we gotta be careful with that—that I can still anchor the things I'm trying to help athletes learn about. Between the lived experiences of elite performers, a lot of the theory and research that I continue to read and stay current on, and then my own lived experience as practitioner, and

also as a person myself—I think it's trying to find a blend to those three.

Readiness

Not all athletes that holistic consultants work with are ready or expecting to work on themselves holistically. Keith Henschen suggested athletes may be unaware of how sport psychology can help in other life domains. Ken Ravizza proposed that athletes stereotypically are not the most introspective group of people to begin with; while Roger Friesen offered that some might be uncomfortable with being confronted by their inner core self. As Cal Botterill mentioned, "That's the biggest challenge initially is learning to be comfortable with the fact that not everybody's going to be in love with what you do." Keith Henschen additionally believed it may be a sign of maturity within the athlete:

I've had athletes that feel that way initially but then as I say, as they learn to trust you, as they learn to understand what it's all about instead of just a small picture, then many times they move in another direction or are a little more broad in what they're seeking to learn. [For example,] professional athletes sometimes will come and say, "I want this" but eventually they understand that when they're done, when they retire, they're going to be people in society as well, they need to mould some of these skills into other aspects.

The readiness of the athlete to engage in holistic introspection acts as a prerequisite to the quality of working relationship and subsequent success of the intervention. Roger Friesen explained:

Getting to know their philosophy, their world view, the paradigms from which they function; so it's learning how to uncover all of that. And that for me is non-negotiable. And that also inevitably will be part of the criterion for how I choose to work with someone because not everybody is interested in that. And so if somebody's not interested in that, it doesn't mean I'm not going to work with them, but my work with that somebody will look very different and will likely be short-term. Because if what they want is just tools and skills to do whatever they can to get on the podium then that's fine, but my work with that kind of person will probably be quite limited. But if people are willing to engage and invest, then that's ultimately who my clients end up being. Because that's what's important to me and that's how I understand performance.

Personalization

Earlier, it was highlighted that helping the athlete learn from his or her own experiences is an important role for the holistic sport psychology consultant. This approach to sport psychology implies that the service holistic consultants deliver is personalized because the athlete's own experience is leading each intervention. Ken Ravizza explained:

I value the other person's experience, and the individual is important. And it's going to come from them. It's not necessarily going to come from me giving them the magic answer. I can throw some things out there, but it's gotta resonate and come from their experience and where they're coming from, I think that's important.

Letting the athlete's experience guide the intervention places the responsibility on the consultant to be aware of his or her own biases and beliefs such that they do not interfere with helping the athlete articulate their own experiences. Tom Patrick commented:

I'm helping them reflect about themselves. So again, I think that's a more holistic approach because it allows them to do things on their own terms based on who they are as opposed to me imposing my own beliefs about things because I think we all do that. Like just as an athlete brings themselves to what they do, I think we do as well as practitioners. So I have to monitor that and make sure that it's not on my terms but it's on their terms so just me knowing myself a bit on those things and making sure that it's not what I think, it's what they think.

An implication is that the consultant must be very reflective in their discussions with athletes as to not offer generic advice that fails to recognize the individual needs of the athlete. In that way, as Tom Patrick continued, the holistic consultant's approach is always deliberate and purposeful:

I find a lot of practitioners get into...these kinds of rhythms of similarity.... In other words, they read about something; I'll give an example, let's say they read about biofeedback. They read this great article on biofeedback, and then they start thinking, "You know what, this may have some relevance to this athlete or sport perhaps." The funny thing is that if they don't provide enough distance between stimulus and response, everything becomes

about biofeedback. Everything becomes about the most recent topical thing. You know, it's like everything became about recovery, everything became about biofeedback, and I think we have to be very careful that we're not being very generic about what we're doing. Do I give the same advice to a multiple world champion as I would with a 16 year old up and coming developmental athlete? Even though it's the same sport, they're two very different people with two very different views of themselves and the world they're in at the current time that you're working with them. And I would think that my approach has to be very different.

Cultural awareness

Recognizing the culture within which the athlete is a part of is another operating standard for developing the whole athlete. There are two cultures in which the holistic consultant is aware of: the sport culture, and the ethnic culture. Ken Ravizza addressed the importance of knowing the sport culture of the athlete as the cultural demands from the sport can shape the person's experience with it:

I think one thing that's really helped me is...understanding the team as a sub-culture, understanding what's of value to that team. Golf is a different culture than baseball. It's a different world. Football's a different culture than baseball. I remember my first presentation to [a baseball team], the guys said it was great but I gotta cuss more. I said, "Well I can work on that, that's not an issue." But once again, that's the culture. You cuss with a group of golfers or another group, it may be a problem.

Understanding the culture and what the demands of the culture are and what goes on in individual sports, team sports, team sports like baseball which is an individual sport within a team sport.... All of those cultural differences...dealing with hockey players is different than dealing with figure skaters. Different demands, different situations and you gotta adjust so you're coming from the sport experience instead of applying sport psychology to sport.

Cal Botterill recommended that novice practitioners have a wide range of internship experiences spanning a number of different sports such that they become sensitized to the variety of sport cultures:

As a professional it's important to be aware of the cultural group you're going into; sport, business, whatever. And the more you can learn about that the better it'll go. So the only difference is that you do more prep when you don't know the culture because you need to have the little cues, the little ideas that suggest that you've done your homework and you know something about what they're into. One opinion is when you start your career, you're better to go into fields where you don't know the culture and you have to learn it. Because I think when you go to ones where you know it, you're often sloppy and sometimes you can get drawn into a semi-coaching kind of style rather than being a true performance enhancement consultant. So I think I was lucky; even though my primary sport was hockey I had extensive experience in basketball which initially I knew nothing about and had to learn to appreciate

and sit on the bench and learn all the jargon and cheerlead and support and all the rest.... And the performers love it when you do and they accept that you don't know a lot when you start but if you start to show an interest in them and in those factors, things go well. So yeah, I think it's important to respect the culture, but also to learn it, because sometimes within the culture there are issues.

Understanding the ethnic culture of the athlete also plays a part in understanding the athlete holistically. As Keith Henschen described, in some contexts it could be more important to understand the athlete's ethnic culture than their sport culture:

You gotta understand the culture. But not so much the culture within a team; it's more than less the culture of the individual. Point: I'm big, I'm white; our United States track team in some events is black. Is there a culture within that culture? Absolutely. Do I have to understand that culture? Yes. Is it easy to get accepted by that culture? No, because of the years of discrimination. So yeah, you just can't walk in and do things that you normally would do. NBA: 80% of the players are black. Is that an issue? It could be, but it doesn't have to be if you do it the right way. But you have to be aware of the culture as well.... Adding to that, we have five different international players. Is that a challenge? Yeah, it is. Because in some countries, sport psychology is purely research based. In other countries it is clinical psychology based; very few of them come from an applied base. Does it take a while to get them

to understand what you do and what you don't do? Yeah. But you have to recognize it first, and understand the culture before you can make any inroads.

Consultation setting

The setting of consultation sessions is also an important consideration for the holistic consultant. One of the defining characteristics of the setting is that contrary to a more clinical approach, the holistic consultant prefers to consult outside the office.

Tom Patrick explained:

I never meet with athletes in my office. There's something that's kinda cold about the office environment for me. Plus for me as a practitioner, not having my laptop in front of me, the phone ringing. I like to get away too cause it helps me be present when I'm sitting with the athlete. Whereas if I'm at the office, there are a lot of distractions.

As with most sport psychology consultants, the consultants in this study will hang around the training and competition environments as many teachable moments occur within this context. But sometimes, as Tom Patrick continued, it is good to converse with athletes outside the performance arena as this may help give perspective to their presenting issues:

I really try to keep it relaxed; I try to change the environment.... And just being out in nature is another thing I try to do a lot. I always try to have sessions outside, fresh air, fresh environment. Again, maybe a different self comes forward, maybe more of the person comes forward

and less of the athlete. Maybe they're more open and not as guarded.

An additional feature to the consultation setting is that holistic consultants typically stay away from presentations or lead group meetings. They admit to being more effective in one-on-one situations where they are able to bring out the personal experiences of the each individual athlete. It is difficult to address any other self than the athlete in a group meeting setting. As Roger Friesen described, the consultant is unable to take into account the effects from the athlete's other selves in a group meeting:

Where I'm most effective is one-on-one. I can do presentations and I do them all the time, but I fully understand that I will have limited value. And I'm not interested in limited value. Life is too short. Furthermore there will be people in that room that don't care. But for whatever reason, and there could be a hundred different reasons, there's a barrier and that barrier hasn't come down. And so I also know that when I'm doing presentations or even when in the classroom, there are some students that are just tuned out. Maybe because of some barrier or maybe because of fatigue, or maybe something going on in their personal lives that I have no idea about. But for whatever reason, they're tuned out. And so if people are tuned out then there's no point in expending energy on them. So once we get one on one, we can either remove barriers or we can understand the barriers and that opens things a little bit and maybe at one point, someone else can open the door for them completely.

A final feature of the consultation setting involves the frequency of contact once the athlete has transitioned out of sport. As Tom Patrick described, the role of the holistic consultant is to remain in touch with the athlete to ensure a successful transition:

When the athlete retires from sport, I usually keep working with athletes for at least twelve months. Maybe it's another way of being holistic. I don't view career transition as a separate thing to what I do. So they retire from sport, I keep working with them as close as possible to the frequency of contact. It'll be different usually, although we try to get them involved in the sporting environment anyway. But the idea is let's keep working together for another year....I value working with the person beyond their career.

Intervention Goals

Poczwadowski et al. (2004) suggested that intervention goals may run the gamut from performance enhancement to healthy lifestyles to personal growth and beyond. An underlying presumption of holistic sport psychology may be that personal growth is the primary intervention goal. However, the consultants interviewed were quick to mention that their primary mission is to help the athlete reach their physical potential. The intervention goal of personal growth which characterizes the holistic approach is relegated to being the means by which the athlete reaches their physical potential.

Reaching one's physical potential

In discussing the scope of practice with the consultants, it is interesting that the primary objective mentioned by these holistic consultants was to help the athlete reach their athletic dreams—that they are still in fact *sport* psychology consultants. Tom

Patrick described his purpose in working with the athlete:

I'm here to help people achieve or reach their physical limit.... I wanna help people realize their physical potential. That's it. The reason I think that relates is that in sport, it's all about the physical. And at the end of the day, certainly with the performance enhancement teams that I work with, well we probably have a pretty good idea of where that person's physical limit could be but my job is to not really care about that. My job is just to help that individual get there. Because if you reach your physical potential, you are in a very very small group of people. And it doesn't matter if it's fifth or eighth or fifteenth in the world, that's special stuff. It's beyond anything I've ever been able to do in sport. Ha-ha. So again... why do you work with athletes Tom? Cause I want to help them live their dream. That's it.

Personal Growth.

In their quest to help the athlete reach their physical potential, the holistic consultant works through the whole athlete—the part of them that is not defined by their sport experience. Tom Patrick explained:

But I'm really a member of the coaching team with my job being to help athletes with the psychological aspects of their sport and themselves but that the self work is personal learning based. I'm helping personal growth.

“Does that personal growth reside within the realm of sport psychology?” (R)

I think so.... I think a great athlete is a great person. It's that holistic notion again that you can't separate the personal and the sport self. You can't take the sport out of the athlete. So I think because of that belief, I often find myself having to, and willingly of course, working with the person.

Techniques and Methods

Finally, what may be the most impactful aspects of a consultant's professional philosophy are their preferred techniques and methods. With over 130 years of collective applied experience, the consultant participants reported an abundance of techniques and methods when describing their service delivery. Some of these applied sport psychology strategies were related specifically to developing the athlete holistically. These techniques and methods represent the holistic sport psychology consultant's “tools of the trade.”

Emotional preparation and recovery awareness

The interaction between emotions, cognitions, physiology, and behaviour is a perspective of holistic sport psychology. Traditionally, sport psychology has focused on the relationship between cognitions and performance behaviour. Holistic consultants however, also work with emotions and physiology (such as emotional preparation and recovery awareness) to help develop the whole athlete.

Imagery has long been associated with mental preparation in sport psychology and for good reason, as plenty of research demonstrates its potential value. However, what often gets overlooked in the imagery is the emotion component. Cal Botterill argued that emotions need to be a part of the imagery process as well. He believes that

when an athlete mentally rehearses a response to their expected emotions, the athlete is better prepared for their performance:

I think it's important to periodically review emotions....When you're working with a high performing athlete, part of it is about emotional preparation. "You're going to go to the Olympics. Do you know what to do if you feel afraid, angry, guilty, sad, too happy?" They can all (potentially) hurt you. So you better have rehearsed a response ...so the teams that I work with, I try to ensure that they're emotionally ready for all those feelings because I've seen every one of those feelings cost somebody what they wanted to do at the Olympics.

Recovery awareness represents another mode of monitoring the interaction between an athlete's mental, emotional, and physiological states, and their behaviour. The holistic consultants in this study help monitor their athletes' recovery state. Cal Botterill explained:

One of the most prevalent issues these days is the principle of psychophysiology. After years of watching people pushing athletes to train and work harder, now we have 70% of them that are under-recovered. It's almost always one of my questions - Are you rested? Is there something psychological that will help? Is there a physiology that's required here for you to rebound and do what you want to do?"... I might go in with all these ambitions for them but if I sense they're physically drained, it's a totally new agenda. We've got to get you understanding your state,

accomplishing some recovery, and getting your health back, because the next thing you know you're going to end up with the flu and viruses because your immune system is beaten down and so on. So, another objective is now for me is to try and help performers assess their [physical] state.

Being aware of one's physiological state is holistic not only in the sense that it comes from looking at the athlete as a whole being, but it is also holistic because accomplishing quality recovery comes from synchronizing the athlete's mental, physical and emotional state to achieve recovery. As Cal Botterill stated, once you begin talking about recovery, "you're instantly into personal life." The holistic consultant tries to ensure that the athlete is recovering as a person, and not just physiologically as an athlete.

Foundational questioning

Often, the types of issues with which athletes approach consultants are foundational in nature in that they are rooted more deeply than solely within the athlete's athletic persona. These issues are connected to the identities of the athlete apart from their athletic self. As Ken Ravizza commented:

You're going to get a lot of "I'm not sure why I'm doing this anymore." You're going to get a lot of that at the higher levels and a lot of perfectionism issues. "I'm so hard on myself, I'm so critical, I'm so judgemental." You get a lot of, "Why am I doing this? I've lost my passion." Those would be the big ones. I mean, right off the top of my head, those are the big themes that keep coming up over and over and over again. They're not coming to you

with questions like is it more effective to do internal or external imagery. I've never been asked that, I mean it's not relevant.

Therefore, leading the athlete to reflect upon their foundational being is a key strategy used by the holistic sport psychology consultant. This reflection helps keep the athletic performance in perspective thereby reducing the stress of competition.

Holistic consultants ask athletes specific questions to help them reconnect with their foundational self—the essence of who they are beyond the athlete. Cal Botterill described how this type of questioning came up in his practice:

I don't know how many times in my career I've had an athlete come in burdened or frustrated or stressed or exhausted or whatever, and I just go to those three questions: I mean, one: who are you? We haven't talked about that for a while. Are you just a speed skater? ... So like ten or fifteen minutes later, [the athlete remarks,] "Oh, there's a bit more to me than I thought, there's more to me than my next race." Now, where's your support? Hopefully it's someone's family, but if it isn't, there must be people that you can call anytime and they'll give you the straight goods, you know you can count on. Another deep breath [by the athlete], "Phew, yeah you're right I can always count on them." Well then I said look after those relationships, make sure they're there for you. And then finally, how do you want to live and compete? I mean are you going to have your tail in a knot over every rivalry or are you going to be okay with competition like Tiger Woods

and say, "Bring it on, I'm loving this, this is the joy of life." So that same athlete might walk out half an hour later with a totally different posture and body language because they've unburdened a whole bunch of irrational perceptions and got back to the foundation. And the foundation is: who the heck am I? What do I love doing? Where's my support? And how am I going to approach life?

A similar process of foundational questioning was utilized by Tom Patrick:

I believe in ensuring the athletes are working from a foundation. So the questions I like to ask athletes are: what do you value? What are you all about? What motivates you?' They may answer like, "I like to know that I've laid it on the line," or "I like to know that I was the hardest working athlete." So you start to understand a little bit about what makes them tick and you can use a foundation effectively, especially when we're trying to get athletes to start detaching themselves from outcomes and goals all the time. And you start to bring back their behaviour to a more foundational approach. Getting them excited to give effort, give optimal effort today, and getting them excited just to express themselves in practice today. So I try to ask those questions as a way of getting to know the athlete. So... I'll often ask them things like, 'Why do you do what you do? Like why do you do this? What's this all about for you?' I ask them things like, "What are you prepared to work for?" I'm trying to get a sense of the underlying

ing processes that describes why they do what they do.

Reflection

A prominent component of holistic consulting is reflection. The holistic consultant helps the athlete engage in meaningful reflection to discover things about themselves and their environment. Roger Friesen explained:

People need the ability to be reflective about what they're doing and why. So that means questions have to revolve around that so it get people to start thinking about how they make decisions, why they make decisions, and why they find themselves in certain places—are they there by intention or by default, so what did that look like? It's asking questions to uncover those kinds of things. And if reflection has not been part of their way of operating, then that in itself is a skill and it takes a process to even get the person to a place where they can start becoming aware of how they function.

Helping the athlete engage in reflection for some people is not an easy task. Roger Friesen explains that the consultant must be able to establish an atmosphere of trust within the athlete and also be knowledgeable as to how to lead the reflection process.

The person I'm sitting with, they have to trust me that I in fact have the best for them in mind. They have to trust themselves; they have to be willing to take a look at some things that most people don't want to take a look at. People have a bit of hesitance to really look inside them because they are often afraid of what they might find there. So that's part

of it, but the other part of it is simply learning how to ask those kinds of questions. So that like I mentioned earlier, in our culture, people aren't necessarily taught to be reflective; that's not how our culture is set up. And so it's a skill that is actually being lost. So to be observant of the world around us and to be observant of our own self, that's a skill that is slowly being evolved out of us, and we kinda have to put that skill back into people and so that's how you uncover that stuff.

Acting authentically

Once the consultant helps the athlete gain an understanding of who they are at their core, the consultant's job then is to help the athlete live and perform more authentically with who they are. Tom Patrick explained:

I get a sense of their beliefs and then I look to see when they're acting consistently with their beliefs. And then I look to see when they're not. Then I try to figure out in conversation with them what gets in the way. What is interfering with their ability to just simply act consistent with what they believe and the things they value? So that whole kind of circular ongoing process is kind of something that I really try to work with the athlete on because I think if we get clear about those things then we can start to address their personal side of sport.

Roger Friesen added:

So the things we do are merely an expression of what's inside of use to live. And so if people are living authentically and with integrity, then what they do is an expression of

themselves, and if they truly understand what that looks like, and if somebody really captures the true essence of who they are and how they function then inevitably it's that person who will excel in whatever context they find themselves in. So what we do can only be an expression of what's inside of us.

As holistic consultants help athletes to perform more consistently with who they are, so too must the consultant be authentic themselves within the working relationship. Cal Botterill remarked:

People who have some authenticity within themselves will be incredibly well received. There's a body language difference and your teammates appreciate that you're comfortable with yourself, that you don't have any baggage or manipulative angle on them that they suddenly start to relax and be a bit more okay as well. It's the number one thing that more people could be better at is authenticity. And in our field, if we're not good examples, then that's not a very good indictment for the field. And I think a lot of people haven't been very good at it. They've tried to be Tom Petko or they've tried to be Tom Peters or they're trying to be aggressive or "I got all the answers" or whatever. I think those approaches have a very limited shelf life; they may get some initial surge or energy or focus. But just like motivational speakers, three weeks later, it's long gone.

Social support

Holistic consultants described in their interviews that developing the athlete holistically is an important element in

creating a quality team environment. Cal Botterill commented:

I think along the way we got to help people feel good enough about themselves that they can become good team people. I mean, in a relationship, who wants to go across the ocean with someone whose boat leaks? I mean it's just a matter of time until the relationship breaks down cause you have too many hang ups or too many problems or you have too many dependencies.

As the holistically developed athlete helps improve teamwork, so too does the team environment help develop the athlete holistically. From his interview, Cal Botterill added that connecting with those people “helps you feel whole and then you can be a complete person when you go out.” Practically, Botterill described a number of ways that the sport psychology consultant can help the athlete reflect on their support sources. The first of which is simply showing an interest in the athlete’s support network.

I just start it all the time by showing interest and asking, "What's your girlfriend's name, What's she doing? How many kids you got?" Whatever and you know what, it's the easiest thing in the world, you just have to be genuine. I just talked to very prominent Canadian athlete and asked about his daughter who just started kindergarten, I mean, he wouldn't care whether we talked about anything else in the world, he just lit up.

Sometimes athletes have lost perspective and have drifted away from those that give them that needed unconditional support. In

such cases, Botterill helps the athlete by reflecting on who it is that they need to reconnect with:

And the key question in perspective is, who is it that supports you unconditionally? Sometimes it isn't family, sometimes family is conditional. So it's a teacher you had or a friend you had. And then I say "Have you got in touch with them?" "No I haven't in a long time" I said, "Email them, give them a phone call." I mean we don't need a hundred friends but we need three or four that we can call anytime.... And what that person will do is remind them of the essence of who they are and they're back on track.

Finally, involving the athlete's support team in team functions can help enhance performance. Cal Botterill related the story of how involving the wives and girlfriends of hockey players helped the team throughout the playoffs:

What paved the way for us to have a final four run, was the coach at the time had said at the beginning [to the wives and girlfriends], "It's a long run. When we start and when we get going in playoffs... we need your support. It's huge. You're critical to the guys in terms of their recovery and mindset and everything and Cal's going to talk about some of the strategies that we're using for both preparation and recovery and so you understand what we're doing and teamwork." It was one of the most effective sessions in my whole career. And we had a good run; we went well in the playoffs. And there's no doubt in my mind that the support

from families was a big part of it on occasion.

Balance

Helping athletes organize their lives in order to balance their time and energy between sport and other aspects of their lives is also a goal for holistic consultants. This help athletes to respect and nurture various parts or themselves.

Tom Patrick remarked:

If we're trying to get endurance athletes to recover well and they're in the middle of exams it's just pretty difficult. And I think again going back to understanding the relationship between the person, and this is another great example of why I'm a holistic person, sometimes the answer is just get the training periodized differently so that they're not in high stress sport and high stress life at the same time. Verses again why I tended to stay away from using the word 'skill.' To me, in that situation, there's no skill that can help that athlete train at that high level and have academic demands on them at that high level. It's just too much demand.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the external components of holistic sport psychology consultants' professional philosophies. Interviews with holistic sport psychology consultants about their professional philosophies led to a number of themes which helped characterize a sport psychology service delivery that incorporates the holistic development of the athlete. Friesen and Orlick (2010) presented the internal components of holistic sport psychology consultants' professional

philosophy. The current study presents the corresponding consultant roles, operating standards, intervention goals, and interventional techniques and methods which help to expand the knowledge of holistic sport psychology.

Range of Services

Bond (2002) stated that the range of services that a consultant aims to fulfill in an intervention context should be clarified at the beginning of the consultation. The data from the consultant interviews in this study indicate that holistic sport psychology consultants play a variety of roles in order to cater to a wide range of services (i.e., friend, observer, Jack-of-all-trades, and educator). The role of friend for holistic consultants may be analogous to the role of counsellor (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994) or being socially involved (Dunn & Holt, 2003). As reported in Friesen and Orlick (2010), many of holistic consultants follow a counselling model of practice. It is interesting to note that many of the qualities that characterized the friendship between consultant and athlete are also prominent in a counselling relationship. For example, the consultant qualities of trusting, supporting, and authentic as reported in the friend role are indicative of a good counsellor.

The holistic consultants also discussed the role of educator. Educating athletes on how to choose and use appropriate psychological skills is a common role of the sport psychology consultant and where appropriate, holistic consultants included teaching of such skills in their services (e.g., Danish & Nellen, 1997). However, as shown in the results of this study, holistic consultants are equally concerned with facilitating the athlete's quest to know themselves. This includes helping the athlete to learn and grow from their past experiences. As Ravizza (2002) stated, "I

value the athlete's experience as part of my job is to facilitate that knowledge of that athlete" (p. 5). This is representative of the holistic consultants' influence from existential psychology as reported in Friesen and Orlick (2010). Facilitating the athlete's self-knowledge further emphasizes the important role of observer since the consultant must be perceptive in what experiences may be particularly critical for the athlete.

Finally, the Jack-of-all-trades role was mentioned as an important role for holistic sport psychology consultants. Similar to the role of 'odd-job' person as presented by Hardy and Parfitt (1994), the Jack-of-all-trades role is an important position. "The psychologist (or consultant) must be prepared to be engaged in a range of non psychological activities as part of the overall commitment to the team" (Bond, 2001, p. 227). By embracing such a role, the consultant is able to strengthen the relationship with the athlete because athletes appreciate many of the tasks performed from this role.

Tools of the Trade

Corlett (1996) contrasted the difference between Sophist (technique-driven) consulting and Socratic (personal examination) consulting in sport psychology. He likened Sophist consulting to mental skills training whereby specific techniques are employed in order to produce successful performance results. He likened Socratic consulting to methods of self awareness and personal reflection. Mental skills, Corlett suggests, will always have a place in sport psychology as relaxation or goal setting may often be what the athlete simply needs to take the next step in reaching their goals. However there are often times when sport psychology consultants need to help athletes reflect on

their personal philosophy to take the next step. Corlett stated:

Often, though, problems are presented to sport psychologists that cannot be solved meaningfully by mental training techniques. There are clearly times when a fundamental change in an athlete's relationship to sport is a viable solution. Sometimes, the problem at its fundamental level is not the athlete alone, but interactions of the athlete with coaches, parents, and the sport itself. When such problems arise, all the sophist has to offer is a bandage, a superficial solution that slows the bleeding without determining why the bleeding occurred in the first place or stopping it permanently. It is here where technique alone fails the athlete and the sport itself. It is here where reference to higher philosophical ground is needed. It is here where sport psychology is most difficult in terms of what it is trying to do and how it should do it. (p. 90)

From the results of this study, holistic consulting is in line with Corlett's conception of Socratic consulting as holistic consulting is that which occurs when higher philosophical ground is needed in an intervention. Many of the techniques of holistic consulting (i.e., foundational questioning, reflection, acting authentically) are a means of developing self-knowledge. This includes an awareness of the athlete's own belief system and philosophy, an awareness of the psychological effects from non-sport domains, and an awareness of how their emotional, mental, physiological states are interacting. They are a means of discovering what meaning the athlete attaches to their performance and abilities. This type of practice is in line with the

holistic consultants' existential paradigm as presented in Friesen and Orlick (2010).

Botterill and Patrick (2003) in their discussion on *perspective* highlighted three opportunities in which an individual may become more aware of their core being. They proposed that when an individual has a solid awareness of their own identity, sources of support, and values, they enhance their perspective on life and sport and thus free themselves to perform to potential. Additionally, Botterill (2004) stated the often the first priority of the sport psychology consultant when working with a team is to become aware of the psychological effects which may be affecting the athletes. For example, he suggests observing the interactions between the athlete and his or her sport science staff, coaching staff, teammates, and especially family. Furthermore, Ravizza (2001) also advocated for the importance of awareness in monitoring the whole being. "This awareness is an integral part of the holistic approach. The athlete is not just a body, but also a total functioning human being" (p. 206). As such, Ravizza (2006) encourages athletes to 'check in' as a means of monitoring the effect of their emotional states, thought processes, and physiological states on their performance. Therefore, using awareness and self-knowledge is a critical strategy in holistic consulting in all its variations. It characterizes holistic consulting as part of what Corlett (1996) described as a Socratic method of sport psychology.

Leaving the Setting

Ending an intervention with an athlete or team is usually the last process between consultant and athlete. The circumstances under which the working relationship ends are different for each athlete and team. Ravizza (2001) explains that the most

difficult closures are those that are terminated by third parties such as sport governing bodies or coaches. In such cases, Ravizza explains that leaving the setting is a difficult process as the decision is outside of the consultant's and athlete's control. Termination in this way can be difficult for the holistic consultant not only because the consultant is no longer a part of this athlete's journey to excellence, but also because a genuine friendship may be lost. This emphasizes the importance of a positive consultant – coach relationship as having the coach's support may prevent termination under certain circumstances.

Referrals also represent a manner in which the intervention comes to a close. Holistic consultants are very mindful of their scope of practice—the professional boundaries which they establish. Even though holistic consultants may have a broader range of services, there are still some areas in which they do not feel competent to be professionally involved (e.g., spousal abuse or eating disorders). However, as Andersen and Tod (2006) noted, “referring athletes to mental health practitioners does not mean sport psychologists need to stop working with their clients” (p. 484). This notion was exemplified in Ken Ravizza's story about referring an athlete to a clinical psychologist. Many of the holistic consultants stated in their interviews that they maintain a network of clinical counsellors who in some instances are in a better position to meet the athlete's needs.

Finally, at some point all athletes leave high performance sport simply because they are unable to continue to compete at that level. Tom Patrick mentioned that in such circumstances, he preferred continuing to work with the athlete a year after their transition out of sport. Poczwardowski, Sherman, and Henschen (1998) noted that

appropriate strategies are needed when an athlete leaves sport. This may include “additional sessions, homework assignments, reminder cards, and phone calls” (p. 202). Similarly, Taylor, Ogilvie, and Lavalley (2006) mentioned that coping strategies, social support, and preretirement planning are valuable resources for the transitioning athlete. Meeting the athlete's needs through personalized services which are centered on positive values of caring and professionalism, should help the athletes make a smooth transition out of sport to another meaningful pursuit.

Consultation Goals and Evaluation

Poczwardowski et al. (1998) stated that “evaluation is an essential element to expanding theoretical and practical knowledge of what really works, with whom, and in which context” (p. 200). Holistic consulting like any other intervention is subject to measures of effectiveness to demonstrate its meaningfulness. The novelty of holistic consulting is its focus on the development of the athlete as a human being. Personal growth is a primary intervention goal for holistic consulting. However, measuring personal growth as an indication of consultation effectiveness is rare in sport psychology research. In addressing the issue of how the athlete's well-being may act as a measure of effectiveness, Anderson, Miles, Mahoney, and Robinson (2002) stated that “well-being is a complex multidimensional construct that can involve emotional and physical dimensions. Measurements of subjective well-being may include assessments of happiness, life satisfaction, positive affect, and quality of life” (p. 442). Perhaps the multiple goal format of performance and personal growth is best summarized by Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, and Rotella (2003):

Our ultimate goal is to help people reach their personal goals and live a higher quality of life. We guide the development of strong mental and emotional skills, and balance in living. Our quest is to help people excel at the mental game for both

short- and long-term gains, which includes improved performance, health and happiness. If they achieve athletic or performance 'success' and there is no benefit to health or happiness, we don't see that as being truly successful. (p. 11)

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Coaching teenagers for better results in school and in life

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Marie Lindvall Wahlberg, About the Author: I have been interested in young children and teenagers possibilities to develop positive self esteem and overall well being for many years. I have also been writing books on the subject and conducting courses for teachers, leaders and parents. In this article I share my experiences with a unique Summer Training Camp aimed at helping teenagers succeed in school and life.

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The goal of positive change

In a statement issued by the Swedish Public Health Organization in 2010, it became very clear how important it is for educators and others committed to performance and life enhancement to work in constructive ways with children and youth.

Research with teenagers in Sweden has shown that an increasing number of Swedish teenagers are using medication for anxiety and depression. A lack of quality time with parents, and in some cases others, is believed to one of the leading causes of increased anxiety and depression in teenagers, together with the pressure for teens to "look good" and "succeed" in school.

In 2002 I began implementing a program to coach teenagers who have not performed well in school. I have done this every year (for the past 8 years) at a unique Summer Training Camp. I work there on a daily basis as a consultant and as a Principal. The reason I have continued to work on this project for children and youth is because of the positive results we are getting.

To witness life changing positive responses in these young people, 13-16 years old, is

very rewarding for me and them. These teenagers (like younger children) are honest and I have a unique opportunity to really learn something of value from them.

Coaching Model

The coaching I have been providing for the teenagers has been based on a few models, like GROW or PRAISE 2. I have also used the Rita Dunn & Kenneth Dunn Learning styles model. The combination has proven to be successful.

Every person has a best way of learning but our unique style changes over time. Learning styles include various approaches or ways of learning. "Learners are affected by

- (1) their immediate environment (sound, light, temperature, and design);
- (2) their own emotionality (motivation, persistence, responsibility, and need for structure or flexibility);
- (3) sociological needs (self, pair, peers, team, adult, or varied); and
- (4) physical needs (perceptual strengths, intake, time, and mobility). (see Rita Dunn website for more info or email the author of this article)

Not only can students identify their preferred learning styles, but the research conducted by Dunn & Dunn also shows that students score higher on tests, have better attitudes, and are more efficient if they are taught in ways in which they can more easily relate. Therefore, it is to the educator's and students advantage to teach and test students in their preferred styles.

At our Summer training Camp, the teenagers take a test to determine their learning style and then we build some of the coaching based on their test results. We work on building self-esteem, setting goals and finding out what makes them feel, and stay, motivated. It has been very interesting to follow these young people for 8 years and have the opportunity to follow up on how they doing, over time, and see how they use the knowledge they received in our coach/mentoring sessions.

My own practice has convinced me that a combination of coach/mentoring together with assess learning styles, has been a great combination for those students I have worked with. They often have a lack of self confidence when I meet them and they explain their “problems” as “problems with concentration” or being “to stupid to learn”. When I ask them how they think that their picture or view of themselves affects their attitude towards learning, they often do not come up with an answer right away. However after having some time for reflection on my question they often comeback with an answer related to who has responsibility for their learning. They do understand that it is their own responsibility, but they do not have the tools to actually do it (act on this responsibility).

By offering the Learning style options, in combination with a dialogue around how to improve studying skills, students have

increased their motivation and feel a sense of joyfulness in learning. Working with these young teenagers and seeing them move along this path has been the best coaching/mentoring moments in my career.

I will share a story with you to put shed light on what I am trying to describe. In 2003, I met a young girl who was 14 year old at our Summer Camp. She looked really miserable at first sight. Her body language that told me all about her self esteem, or the lack of it. When we had our first coach/mentoring session, she confirmed my first impressions in words.

“I am a loser”, she said. I asked her to define the word loser. “I can’t do anything right. I am going to be a dropout in school and I will never reach my goals in life. I will be cleaning other people’s bathrooms”. I replied by saying, “Now we know what you don’t want. Tell me more about what you do want in life and why you feel so certain that you won’t achieve it.

She then me told me about school. How she struggled with the books -“reading without reading” she called it. “You see”, she said. “I read and read but I never remember anything. And when I am in the classroom I am so busy with all interaction going on among my classmates, I never pay attention to what the teacher says. Now I am about to fail in almost every theoretical subject”.

Then she told me about her Dream – about what she really wanted to do with her life. “I want to design cloths in the future” and showed me some of her drawings. They were amazingly good! I suggested that she do the learning styles assessment. “Ok, let’s do the assessment”. We had already talked about the ideas behind this assessment, so she was ready to do it.

The outcome;

This girl found out through her learning styles assessment during her stay at the Camp, that she was strongly Auditory (learning best while listening and by then talking about what she had heard). She also had a strong desire or need to work together with others to get best results. Before she came to the Camp, she tried to read books to learn (but didn't remember what she read) and in class she didn't pay attention. Now she was determined to change this behaviour in order to reach her dream goal so she could get into the design program she wanted to pursue.

She wrote down her 'action plan' in our last session, for how she was going to reach her goals and raise her grades. It took exactly 4 hours of coach/mentoring time to get this girl into a positive state of mind to her enhance her learning and possibilities in life. She accepted the challenge and acted on it in a positive way. She took responsibility for her gaining new knowledge and using new tools for learning.

When she got back to her own school she contacted her teachers and told them about what she had learned and what she wanted to do. That whole year she practiced new ways of gaining new knowledge. She audio-recorded her teacher's lessons and instead of reading books, she started to listen both in class and after on audio materials. She also asked her friends to leave her alone in class so she could to concentrate and learn what she needed to learn.

She became very goal oriented, thanks to her belief in her talent in drawing, her creative ideas for designing clothes and her new perspective. The following year she came back to our Summer Camp with a new and confident look on her face and in her body.

I asked her what had happened since I had seen her last year. She told me that the coach/mentoring sessions, her new awareness of her best learning styles and her ability to use what she learned and apply it in school had made a huge difference. She was been able to make an amazing turn-around with respect to her own future.

With teenagers less self determined than this girl, it is helpful to have a couple of follow-up sessions to follow up on the goals that they set during Summer Camp. We normally do a follow-up but in this case it was not needed.

The goal of the coaching intervention model, combined with learning style assessment, was to create a positive change that would be sustainable in long term, if possible. We want to help the teenagers move towards their own expressed goals. We want to help them to feel better about themselves and about their possibilities in school and in life.

So what happened to the girl with the design dream? Well, I actually met a friend of hers recently, who told me she is now working at her own design company, selling her clothes on-line, and doing fine.

I continue to coach young people and help them understand their best ways to learn. I am convinced from my own experiences, that if they want to use the knowledge we have gained and they have gained - they can change their own lives in meaningful ways. They can gain a better sense of self and self esteem just by knowing they have a new path to follow, if choose to walk that path.

I am writing on my next book on this subject and am interested in similar projects, initiatives or experiences going on in Europe, North America or other parts of the

world. Please email me if you are doing work in this area and would like to exchange ideas and experiences.

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The Experience of Preshot Routines among Professional Golfers: An Existential Phenomenological Investigation

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Abstract:

A crucial component of performance excellence is the ability to maintain focus on relevant cues. Focusing on irrelevant information can cause inconsistency during performance (Boutcher & Crews, 1987). Both cognitive and behavioral routines have been shown to significantly increase relevant focus in the sport of golf (Cohn, Rotella, & Lloyd, 1990). Despite this evidence, little research has examined preshot routines from a qualitative perspective. The purpose of the current study was to gain a phenomenological understanding of preshot routines among elite professional golfers. Eight professional golfers were interviewed for the study. The primary research question for this study was: What is the lived experience of elite professional golfers when they utilize a preshot routine? The major themes which emerged from the data analysis included: maintaining focus, physical aspects of the routine, and shot type. Several subthemes were also identified for each major theme. Recommendations on the use of preshot routines are discussed.

Introduction

Crews and Boutcher (1986) have defined preshot routines as “a set pattern of cue thoughts, actions, and images consistently carried out before the performance of a skill” (p. 291). A combination of cognitive and behavioral routines has been shown to be beneficial for obtaining an optimal physical and mental state prior to motor execution (Cohn, 1990). Cognitive routines may consist of cue words, visualization, and self talk. Behavioral routines can be characterized as physical rehearsal, including focused attention on the desired target (Cohn, 1990).

Researchers suggest that golf, as a closed motor skill, is a sport in which preshot routines can be beneficial to performance outcomes (Crews & Boutcher, 1986). Several theories have been offered which explain how routines function to effectively enhance performance (Cohn, 1991). The schema theory implies that preshot routines recreate motor movements in a generalized thought format that can be retrieved and used as a template (Schmidt, 1988). The mental rehearsal theory suggests that positively imagining a skill before performance can transfer to the actual performance of the skill (Cohn, 1990). Lastly, the set hypothesis explains how

warm-up decrements, which are defined as long wait periods that can debilitate performance, can be reduced by utilizing pre-shot routines (Cohn, 1991). According to the set hypothesis theory, pre-shot routines can help the performer increase performance by recreating the action before it is performed. Cohn (1991) concludes that utilizing a combination of these theories can be the most optimal explanation.

Preshot routines have been shown to increase concentration in golf, bowling, basketball, tennis, and skiing (Cohn, Rotella, & Loyd, 1990; Kirschenbaum, Ordman, Tomarken, & Holtzbauer, 1982; Lobmeyer & Wasserman, 1986; McCann, Lavalley, & Lavalley, 2001; Moore, 1986; Orlick, 1986; Wisberg & Pein, 1992). Although there is an abundant amount of quantitative support for pre-shot routines, research examining the lived experience of golfers using pre-shot routines from a qualitative perspective is sparse. Qualitative questions like: “What are professional golfer’s perceptions of pre-shot routines?” “What do they think about as they describe their lived pre-shot experience?” and “How important is the pre-shot routine to a professional golfer?” have yet to be examined in the sport psychology research. Answers to these questions have the potential to help sport scientists understand the lived experience of athletes using this type of technique as well as consultants helping athletes in the development of a routine.

One relevant qualitative model acceptable for gaining insight into golfers’ lived experience is the humanistic model, which involves treating a particular group of human beings as unique rather than as regular objects (Hill, 2001). The humanistic model is concerned with gaining an understanding of the person’s lived experience through their perspective (Hill,

2001). A type of research methodology that supports the humanistic model is existential phenomenology. By using this type of methodology, phenomenological researchers try to gain a rich description from each individual on how they experienced a particular phenomenon.

As researchers in sport psychology have contended (Dale, 1994; Hanson & Newburg, 1992), qualitative procedures have the potential to bring another perspective to research in sport. The present study will be one of the first existential phenomenological investigations to examine pre-shot routines among male professional golfers. The main goal of the present study is to provide a “rich description” of professional golfers’ pre-shot routines.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the present study is to examine professional golfers’ experiences of using pre-shot routines from an existential phenomenological perspective.

Method

Participants

Participants were eight male professional golfers who were competing on one of the following professional tours in the United States: the PGA tour, Senior PGA, Nationwide, and the Hooters Tour. Goodrich (1988) stated that the number of participants in a phenomenological study should not be a statistical issue; therefore the athletes in this study were chosen as a purposeful elite sample (Patton, 2002). A description of each participant is provided in Table 1.

Procedure

Each participant signed an informed consent form. The primary researcher conducted phone interviews in a private setting to ensure anonymity. To increase

confidentiality, each participant was given a pseudonym.

The interview consisted of one open-ended existential phenomenological statement which allowed the participants to lead the interview while still providing the primary researcher with the opportunity to ask probing questions when necessary. The initial statement primed participants to think about their preshot routine experience while playing golf and to disclose their thoughts. The following statement was posed to each participant:

“Tell me about a specific time when you utilized a preshot routine during golf performance.”

The interview continued with probing questions in order to gain a full understanding of the participants’ experience (Patton, 2002). Some of the probing questions included: Can you please explain what you meant by that statement? Can you tell me another time in which you utilized a preshot routine? When asking these questions the researcher used the same vernacular the participants utilized in their answers to avoid imposing biases on the participants (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was adapted from methods developed by Barrell (1988), Goodrich (1988), Hawthorne (1989), Ross (1987), Henderson (1992), and Czech, Wisberg, Fisher, Thompson, and Hayes (2004) as outlined below.

A. Approaching the Interview

- *Interviewing Process*
- *Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist*
- *Obtaining a grasp of the interview*

B. Organizing the data

- *Eliminate from the data irrelevant, repetitive or overlapping statements*
- *Group the text into themes using the computer software program, NVIVO*

C. Summarizing the interviews

- *Preparing major themes and subthemes as summaries of the data*
- *Verifying the themes with the research team and NVIVO software*

D. Releasing meanings

- *Finalize major themes and subthemes*
- *Explain the meaning as it relates to golf*

Reliability.

An examination of trustworthiness is paramount to ensure reliability in qualitative research. More specifically, the extent to which a theme truly represents the participants’ experiences provides a measure of reliability. In the current study the following questions were used in order to determine the reliability of the study: Did the descriptions capture the participants’ experience? Did the structure match the participants’ experience? Did the structure emerge from the data? Did others see the description? All of these questions were carefully considered by the research group throughout the course of the analysis.

Validity.

Validity in qualitative research describes whether or not procedures, data, and interpretations of participant narratives are accurate, defensible, and revealing. Procedures should be easily followed and accepted by the reader so that the processes and conclusions are deemed valid. The following questions were used as anchors for validity (Czech et al., 2004).

- Did this description give an accurate picture of the common

features and the structure that was evident in the examples collected?

- Did the interviewer influence the contents of the descriptions to the extent that the actual experience is not truly reflected?
- Are transcriptions accurate?
- Were conclusions other than those offered by the researcher possible in the analysis?
- Did the specific contents and connections in the transcripts provide evidence for structural description?
- Was the structural description specific to one situation, or does it hold for other situations?

Results

After analyzing the data, the description of the preshot routine experience for these eight elite athletes was developed. In this section, quotes from participants are used in order to describe the experience of using preshot routines that emerged from their interviews.

The investigation of the participants revealed three major themes regarding preshot routines including:

- 1) maintaining focus – the participants described how the routines often helped with focus,
- 2) physical aspects of the routine – the participants described the actual physical experience of the routine,
- 3) shot type- routines were often dependent upon the type of shot that was being performed.

These three major themes formed the structure of the preshot routine experience for professional golfers.

Upon establishing three major themes, researchers identified subthemes within each major theme. For focus, the subthemes included

- (a) focusing on the specific target at hand,
- (b) internal visualization, and
- (c) maintaining consistency.

For the major theme of physical, the subthemes were

- (a) where the participants described standing during the routine,
- (b) the varying amounts of practice swings,
- (c) consistency of use, and
- (d) external visualization.

The last theme, shot types, comprised three subthemes

- (a) full swing shots,
- (b) chipping, and
- (c) putting.

Figure 1 illustrates the major themes, subthemes, and their interrelationships. The interrelationships highlighted the complexity of preshot routines as described by each of the participants.

Theme #1: Maintaining Focus

The first theme that emerged from the data involved the importance of utilizing a preshot routine to maintain focus.

“If you’re focused on one thing positive, you automatically can’t focus on something negative. So sometimes I will think I’m confident that I’m gonna hit a good shot, so I just step up and hit it. If you say something positive, like, “I am gonna hit my target,” or, “It is like me to hit solid,” or something like that, it kinda frees you up and almost relaxes you. (Participant #4)

Several subthemes regarding focus emerged. Participants discussed their targets during performance, use of internal visualization to keep them focused during performance, and having a preshot routine to promote consistency and maintain focus during performance.

Focusing on the specific target at hand.

Most of the participants described having some type of target during every shot. A target kept them more focused on a specific area.

“I’ll stand behind the ball, take one practice swing, and then try and pick out an exact target that I’m aiming at. Maybe if there’s water right, I’ll be aiming 15 feet left of the pin, or if there’s trouble on the left, maybe aiming down the right side of the fairway. Yeah, that’s pretty much it, and then try and zone in on a very specific target.” (Participant #2)

One participant made the target as small as possible in order to reduce the margin of error for each shot.

“When you’re going through your preshot routine, you’ll try and pick out as small a target as possible. Therefore, if you do miss it a little bit, obviously it’s gonna be better than if you picked out a broad sort of target.” (Participant #2)

“In putting, you’ll pick a very, very small spot that you’re gonna try and roll the ball over that’s like maybe three or four feet in front of you and try and roll it over that. If you’re hitting it off the tee, you’ve got a little bit more room for error.” (Participant #2)

For other participants, rather than focus solely on a specific target, they described focus on a specific path that the ball would travel.

“I tee the ball up, and then I stand behind the ball and just take like a little practice swing and just I’m looking at my target. I’m trying to picture the shot like flying in the air right when I’m trying to hit it. Then I go to the ball, and I take five quick glances at my target, and then I go.” (Participant #8)

“I call it “burning a line” into the green from the ball to the hole that I want the ball to travel on. I try to focus so hard on a line, like the track that the ball’s gonna take. ‘Cause by doing that, by focusing hard on blades of grass that connect the ball to the hole, I think that occupies my mind so I can’t think of anything else.” (Participant #5)

An overall use of preshot routines was used to keep golfers away from distractions or bring them back when distractions transpire.

When a distraction occurred, “instead of just going ahead and putting there, I decided to back off and go through my preshot routine again just to stay focused and concentrate and I ended up making the putt and making birdie. But that

was definitely a point that having a preshot routine really helped.” (Participant #4)

Internal Imagery.

Participants obtained focus in preshot routines by visualizing successful performance in the hopes that it would carry over to actual performance.

Many times they visualized how some skill should occur in a positive manner.

“You definitely want to visualize how your stroke should feel kinda in your mind. You’re kinda feeling it out visually.” (Participant #3)

The golfers in this investigation commented on having so many different shots that they need to determine which one to use at that point in time; using visualization was a great way to determine which kind of shot to use prior to execution.

“I believe that you need to sort of visualize what you know, so many times you hit so many fades in your life and then so many draws. You’ve got to sort of visualize one of those coming off.” (Participant #7)

Many times the golfers in this study were trying to visualize the technical aspect of how the green is shaped and how this affects the ball. For example participant #1 stated:

“I’m visualizing and I’m walking around the hole. I’ll walk all the way around the hole and read the putt from every angle. While I’m doing that, I’m visualizing where I think the ball’s gonna go when I’m seeing it.” (Participant #1)

“If I have the ball below my feet or something like that I can visualize how it’s gonna react off the turf.” (Participant #1)

Consistency.

The third subtheme under focus included having a preshot routine to promote consistency. They liked having a routine that is consistent every time, which kept them from having to think about things.

“I think the consistency of it is, you know, I think that’s pretty much the biggest thing, and it brings you back to the golf zone. I mean, a preshot routine is something that you can let your mind go when you’re not in your shot, when you’re walking, but then as soon as you get the club back in, you have to be really focused on what you’re gonna do if you’re gonna pull something off.” (Participant #7)

“I know if you looked at a lot of guys and you start timing them when they start the preshot routine, they usually hit the ball within one or two seconds every single time. If it’s like 45 seconds, maybe one time they’ll be 46 or 44, but it’s really consistent, and it’s amazing that it actually ends up being like that because you know you’re doing everything exactly the same. It’s taking the same amount of time. I think that guys that have really good preshot routines have that timing involved in that. They’re just not thinking about what they’re doing. It just all happens at the same time every time.” (Participant #8)

In summary, the focus theme included focusing on the specific target at hand, using internal visualization, and maintaining a

consistent preshot routine. Each of these seemed to help the golfers maintain focus during their competitions which in turn appeared to enhance performance.

Theme #2: Physical Aspects of the Routine

Participants described physical actions that occurred during their preshot routines. The physical characteristics indirectly emerged while participants discussed the structure of their preshot routine during the interviews.

“I think having a simple, quick routine, for me, helps keep my body relaxed and keeps everything kinda flowing and moving.” (Participant #1)

Position.

The majority of the participants described standing during their routine. Three of the golfers described where they stood during certain shots, as well as how standing affected them during performance.

“I’ll stand behind it. When I’m standing behind the ball, I have no certain amount of time.” (Participant #1)

This participant felt like he could take his time before every single shot. He took his time until he felt like he was ready to execute the shot.

“For a full swing, I stand behind the ball, looking down at my target.” (Participant #5)

“I used to do the same read. I read back, side, and then behind the ball, and then I used to stand behind the ball, make one practice stroke with my head down, and then make three smooth practice strokes looking at

the hole, so I’m perpendicular to the ball.” (Participant #7)

Some golfers had a fairly quick routine as to not be standing in the same spot for too long a period. Time was an important issue to the participants. Golfers in this study liked having something that preoccupied them but did not take up too much time, they liked a routine that is quick and to the point.

Consistency of use.

This theme came about when the participants described how they used their preshot routine consistently. Whether they thought they used it for every shot, every performance and if they did same routine every time.

“I try to do it every time I go play.” (Participant #1)

“That’s the goal is to try and use the same preshot routine for every shot.”(Participant #2)

“I use it every shot. I use it with full shots, putting, chipping, everything you should have a preshot routine” (Participant # 3)

“You try to do the same thing every time to kinda keep the same routine So nothing changes, it’s always the same and you’re not changing anything.” (Participant #3)

“I’ve had people tell me that that never really watched me play before they think it’s funny that I do the exact same thing every time or every shot, so I think my preshot routine is pretty solid.” (Participant #8)

For some players, having a routine keeps them on an equal pace during competition as

to not speed up more than they should or go slower than they should.

“Just try not to get ahead of myself. If I’m behind or if I’m trying to be a little bit slower, I try to just do the same thing every time no matter what it is between shots. When it’s time to hit the shot, I make my preshot routine the same not matter if I’ve been waiting for a long time or I’m rushing. I try to do the same thing, regardless.” (Participant #3)

“I don’t actually ever really think about it while I’m doing it, but I just know that I do that exact same thing every time.” (Participant #8)

Many of the participants believed that the purpose of a routine was to train your body to do the correct thing at the right time so you do not have to think about the skill when the time comes.

“I just think it’s important, because it’s almost like you have to train your body to just do the same thing every time no matter what the circumstances are. I mean if you really have a preshot routine, then your timing is gonna be all screwed up.” (Participant #8)

Practice swings.

Participants described practice swings which consisted of any shot that took place before they hit their shot. Many of the golfers described how the amount of practice swings would vary between different shots during performance.

“When I’m standing behind the ball, I have no certain amount of time. I could take ten practice swings, I could take two practice swings. It

just depends on what type of shot I’m trying to hit and whether I can really visualize it.” (Participant #1)

“Usually one practice swing and then I hit it.” (Participant #3)

“I started over back behind the ball and we got into it and took my two or three Practice strokes and then got over the ball and make it like normal.” (Participant #4)

“The practice swing for a drive or an iron shot, it’s usually behind the ball, a couple paces behind the ball. But if I take a practice stroke from the putting green it’s right by the ball.” (Participant #4)

“Then once I’ve read the putt, I get behind it and usually or three steps into the ball and take two or three practice strokes and then step up to the ball and hit it.” (Participant #4)

Some of the golfers also discussed how they used these practice swings in order to get the desired swing for a shot or the right feeling before hitting a shot.

“On really long putts, I might take a couple practice strokes behind the ball to get a feel for the speed.

“The key for me where I thought it really worked well for me was I focused on visualizing the target and my practice swings getting the feel for the technical part of it, probably like ten feet or so behind the ball.” (Participant #1)

“If I’m behind the ball and I’m trying to hit a draw around a bunker to a dog leg left hole, if I stand

there and make a couple more practice swings to really get that feel before I go in, as opposed to making a certain number of practice swings.” (Participant #1)

“Once I’ve decided what kinda shot I wanna hit, I get behind the ball and make a practice swing that would be similar to the swing I’d make to curve it either way I wanted to curve it. After two of those practice swings, I’d take the steps up to the ball and a couple waggles and would hit it.” (Participant #4)

The final subtheme within the physical descriptions theme was what the participants would see during performance.

External Visualization.

Participants frequently described seeing aspects of the shot. They tended to focus on many different aspects when playing in order to execute the shot correctly during performance.

“With putting, I’ll walk around the hole, read the putt from all angles, and then I’ll stand behind the ball and I’ll plum it, which is just to see an extra view for which way I think the putts gonna break.” (Participant #1)

“Like I said, once I get behind the ball, I’ll plum it one more time to see which way I think it’s gonna break, and then right before I walk towards the ball, I’ll really see the ball. It’s almost like I’m putting to a picture. I just see my putter head coming back and see it striking the ball; see it rolling on the line that I want, and turning in.” (Participant #1)

Some of the participants spent much of their focus trying to see as much detail in the environment as possible in order to increase their performance.

“Well, I generally look at the putt from both sides of the hole. Sometimes when I’m reading greens well; I can definitely see kind of a line that my ball should roll on to go in the hole and looks like a little pathway sometimes.” (Participant #4)

“Then I walk from the side of the hole and find my speed. The back of the hole, I see my line, and then sideways, at 90 degrees, I see the speed, so I can get into the middle of the putt and back off a little bit and see actually if the putt’s uphill or downhill, and I can also see some break in it. And then I get behind my ball, and then this is my final deal, then from there I trace a line. I usually trace a line from the hole.” (Participant #7)

“I think when I see that line in the green that I’m a little more focused than normal.” (Participant #8)

In summary, there were many things that golfers do physically during performance and more specifically during their preshot routine. Though there were many physical aspects to it, the four subthemes of position, practice swings, consistency of use, and external visualization were themes that were prevalent.

Theme #3: Shot Type

In describing their routines, participants frequently distinguished between shot types. Therefore, full swings, chipping, and putting subthemes emerged under the shot type major theme.

Full Swing Shots.

The participants' descriptions of their preshot routines prior to full swing shots are shown in the following statements:

“Then for a full swing, I stand behind the ball, looking down at my target. I would say this year I need to do a better job of actually picturing the shot and kinda picturing the flight of the ball and imagining it landing next to the hole and all that stuff. ‘Cause a lotta times I just pick a target, line up my feet, and pull the trigger, and not really spend enough time picturing the shot.” (Participant #5)

“I would say when I’m behind a full shot and I’ll put my club up to pick my intermediate target. I put a club up, let’s see, you gotta plum it.” (Participant #5)

“If I’m gonna hit a draw, I try to make a little preliminary swing that incorporates what I do to hit the draw, and then if I want to hit a fade, I make a little swing behind the ball, not a full swing, but a swing that gets the muscles firing.” (Participant #7)

Chipping.

According to the participants, chipping was very similar to full swing shots but they had much more control over the swing and could stop it anytime during the motion. For chipping, the routine involved more practice swings as well as more distance determination.

“A preshot routine is going to differ a little bit because with chipping and putting you’re going to figure out a distance. But I got to have a certain yardage for certain clubs to figure

out what club I’m going to use.” (Participant #3)

“So my preshot routine with my irons would be figuring out my distance, figuring out the wind, and then hit the shot.” (Participant #3)

The participants described how their chipping routine consisted of different numbers of practice swings prior to execution.

“Chipping, I’d probably take more practice swings and visualize the shot more for chips than I do for, say, full swings.” (Participant #5)

“Chipping is just kinda, like I said, I’ll just kinda take a bunch of practice strokes, five to seven little practice strokes, some looking down, and then a lot with my head up to kinda visualize how much of a swing I need to make to land it where I need to land it. Then I kinda try to watch the ball nestle up next to the hole. It’s probably within one or two each time, but it just kinda depends on how long it takes me to see the shot.” (Participant #5)

Putting.

For the majority of the participants, it seemed as if they could more readily describe the specific steps taken during their preshot routine for putting than other shot types. Most of these routines did not seem to change from hole to hole.

“Well, with my putting I do the exact same thing every single time.” (Participant #1)

“You know, I pretty much have a ritual on the putting green that I do

the samenumber of strokes every time.” (Participant #7)

Three of the participants described in detail the putting routine. They revealed the process that many golfers have taken during their putting preshot routine.

“So for putting basically I read the putt from behind the ball and then I go behind the hole, read it from there. I do that kind of quickly, just because in golf, you can’t spend all day looking at your putt. I do that a lot just to kind of feel like walking to the hole, it allows my feet to kinda feel the terrain a little bit and gives me time to think about the putt.

I think the time it takes me to walk to the hole and then back around almost allows my brain to kinda get ready to hit the putt. I think it helps me to do that as much as it helps me to get different perspectives on the putt visually.

On really long putts, I might take a couple practice strokes behind the ball to get a feel for the speed. But most of the time I just go up to the ball, take two practice strokes looking at the hole. I’m actually changing it a little bit now. This year I might take one practice stroke with my head down, then one practice stroke with my head looking at the hole and then just pull the trigger basically.

While I’m over my putts, I try to really, I call it “burning a line” into the green from the ball to the hole that I want the ball to travel on. I try to focus so hard on a line, like the track that the ball’s gonna take.

‘Cause by doing that, by focusing hard on blades of grass that connect the ball to the hole, I think that occupies my mind so I can’t think of anything else.” (Participant #5)

“So putting, you also read the putt. You analyze the speed against the green, fast, slow, how much break speed, being the priority, know what speed. The speed will dictate the line that the ball takes, so you concentrate on your speed. You’re trying to analyze and visualize. Your eyes are like a movie camera seeing the ball take off and then, where it slows down and then where it drops into the cup, and then you go into your preshot routine of setting up the putter blade. You know, my hand is on my left side as I’m doing that, and then with my right hand I’m setting up the putter face to my intended starting point, aiming that and then getting the shaft angle correct, and then I step into it from there, widening my stance then lastly taking my left hand and putting it on the grip. When I was kind of growing up and seeing Norman putt a lot, Greg Norman, it’s kind of a copy of his.” (Participant #6)

Another golfer described that “with putting, I’ll walk around the hold, read the putt from all angles, and then I’ll stand behind the ball and I’ll plum it, which is just to see an extra view of which way I think the putt’s gonna break. Once I get all that done, I’ll walk towards the ball and I’ll address like a practice shot, a practice putt.” (Participant #1)

“I’m visualizing and I’m walking around the hole. I’ll walk all the way around the hole and read the putt from every angle. While I’m doing that, I’m visualizing where I think the ball’s gonna go when I’m seeing it. Then, like I said, once I get behind the ball, I’ll plum it one more time to see which way I think it’s gonna break, and then right before I walk towards the ball, I’ll really see the ball. It’s almost like I’m putting to a picture. I just see my putter head coming back and see it striking the ball; see it rolling on the line that I want, and turning in.” (Participant #1)

As many of the participants expressed, putting requires a very narrow focus which may explain the specific detail they gave when talking about their putting routine.

Summary

Most of the athletes in this investigation had similar routines that were relatively brief and simplistic. Chipping and putting routines seemed to have a more definite structure than that of a full swing shot which was highly flexible.

“I think the main thing for me with putting and short game shots, little shots, where I’m trying to be more exact, I think having a simple, quick routine for me helps keep my body relaxed and keeps everything kinda flowing and moving.” (Participant #1)

Many of the participants enjoyed describing, discussing and analyzing their routines with the researcher. Several of the participants enjoyed reflecting on the past and realizing how important their pre-shot routines have been to their performance. One participant

even expressed how his putting was better than his full swing shots and observed that a possible reason for this was that unlike his putting, he had no definite routine for his full swing. He contemplated working on establishing a routine for his full swing shots.

“I can’t remember not having a routine putting. But like I said, with my long stuff I guess I don’t really have a routine, I have a general routine with how I stand behind the ball and visualize and things like that, but not exactly a number of looks or waggles, which maybe I should try to do.” (Participant #1)

Based on the results of this study it appears that having a structured routine for focus and comfort during performance can be paramount for peak performance.

Discussion

The majority of research on preperformance routines has used quantitative methods; therefore, the present qualitative study allowed for a unique, rich description of the lived experiences of pre-shot routines described by professional golfers. Several themes and subthemes emerged that converge with previous research. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to incorporate the results of this study with previous research. Each segment begins with a summary of the current study and proceeds to a discussion of linked research. These sections are followed by conclusions and suggestions for future research among professional golfers.

Maintaining Focus

Focus was a major theme described by participants in this study. In fact, most of the participants in the study described the role that focus has on their performance.

Research has shown that implementing routines can help focus attention, reduce anxiety, eliminate distractions, enhance confidence, and help with mental preparation for a future performance (Czech, Ploszay & Burke, 2004) The participants knew they needed to control their focus by attending to all relevant information and this was achieved by adhering to their preshot routine. Many athletes have been able to reach an ideal performance state by concentrating on implementing routines (Schmid & Pepper, 1998). In turn, concentration has also been enhanced through the use of preshot routines in sports like golf, bowling, basketball, tennis, and skiing (Cohn, Rotella, & Lloyd, 1990).

Target.

Researchers suggest that a closed skill action like the golf swing is an action in which preshot routines could be beneficial to performance outcomes (Crews & Boutcher, 1986). Consistent with this suggestion, the participants described many instances where focusing on a target was very important for the desired swing. Many times the participants tried to pick out as specific a target as possible in order to reduce the margin of error in their shot. This action coincides with many sport psychology consultants teachings of a narrow attentional focus needed before a shot (Cohen, 2005, Rotella, 2002). Since golf and especially putting need such a narrow focus, having a preshot routine may help to keep golfers at this level of focus.

Internal Visualization.

Mental rehearsal/visualization has been shown to improve athletic performance for ski racers, basketball players, gymnasts, dart throwers, and many other athletes (Epstein, 1980). “Prior to every shot, your preshot routine sets the stage for you to make your best swing. The consistency of it is key.

When you have a simple visualization strategy to center and focus your mind you will play far better golf” (Pearse, 2006, p.1). Many of the golfers in the current study tried to implement internal visualization into their routine, but most were not very advanced or had not practiced it. This may be because they do not fully understand the power of internal visualization and how they can manipulate it for various aspects of performance.

The professional golfers in this study utilized visualization in order to reach their optimal level. In many instances it seemed that the participants used visualization in order to see a shot prior to it happening and view the path the ball should travel along. They may visualize their stance, the feel of the ground, the type of swing needed, or even the flight of the ball. Although this was the case, none of the participants expressed working to improve their visualization skills. Consultants should take note of this and realize that increasing imagery vividness and controllability can be an avenue that may enhance performance at this level.

Consistency.

In order to maintain consistency, professionals try to master skill automaticity (Cohn, 1990). Preshot routines in this investigation may have promoted consistency within the participants’ performance. Participants felt that a preshot routine helped them stay in an optimal concentration state and/or bring them back to an optimal concentration state if they lost focus. It appeared that the more they were in their optimal concentration zone, the more consistent they became with their performance.

Participants expressed that time can be a golfer’s worst enemy when too much analysis takes place during the warm up.

Preshot routines can fill the time where warm-up decrement can detract from performance. The set hypothesis states that warm-up decrement can debilitate performance (Cohn, 1991). Filling any spare time with a routine may keep participants focused, which breeds consistency in performance (Cohn, 1991). A preshot routine is good for eliminating extraneous thoughts prior to hitting a golf shot and “grounding” a player, getting them to focus more exclusively on the shot at hand (Blakemore, 2007). Combining focus and visualization to maintain consistency may help the golfer achieve their optimal skill level during performance. They may also feel more relaxed and comfortable having a routine that keeps behavior consistent throughout their performance.

Physical Aspects of the Routine

This theme consisted of subthemes in which the participants often described the physical experience of their routine.

Position.

The participants would describe where they would stand during certain parts of their preshot routine. Moreover, a majority of the participants discussed how they stood behind the ball in order to focus on their shot and line up to a target. Some of the participants also described taking practice swings behind the ball or beside the ball. This small detail, which was seldom compromised, seemed to be of great importance to each of the participant’s descriptions. Even when a distraction occurred, participants took a step back behind the ball and focused on the target again.

Practice swings.

Many of the participants used practice swings in order to experience a preshot “feeling” of being comfortable as opposed to

doing a certain number of swings. Golfers can use a routine to remain on a normal pace; taking too long or too little time can hurt performance (Gallacher, 1986). The participants may have felt that longer type shots were more about the feel of the shot. A longer shot could easily be missed by improper technique; thus practice swings were used to bring a sense of comfort with their technique. This subtheme may have come about because participants expressed that the amount of practice swings could vary, especially for full swing shots and chipping. A reoccurring description was the notion of a “feeling” in their swing before a shot.

Consistency of use.

Some of the participants in this study discussed certain reoccurring actions experienced during performance. One of the more important aspects discussed was the utilization of the same preshot routine every time. A rationale for the reoccurrence phenomenon is again comfort. The golfers in this study did not want any inconsistencies in their routine. Thus, by doing the same thing every time, they were more able to feel comfortable. Another description was keeping the “routine simple and to the point.” Blakemore (2007) stated that “my own experience is that developing a preshot routine helped me improve noticeably as a player. It especially helped me with first tee jitters when I was younger. My pre-shot routine is very simple.” The participants seem to not want anything which mentally distracted them from their performance. A “simple” routine may have kept the participants from any debilitating over analysis.

External Visualization.

The participants described specific things they would need to see during their preshot routine in order to hit their shot to the best of

their ability. One of the golfers expressed that he walked around the ball in order to see all the extra angles that he could. By seeing all these angles he may have felt like he would perform the shot better. Many of the participants really focused on seeing the ball and all of its detail. Pearse (2006) suggests to literally "see" the ball flight or pace of the putt as it enters the hole. Lastly, the participants tried to see the positive aspects of their shot, for example instead of seeing trees or water to the left, they wanted to see only the positive targets. This theme may have come about because golfers find it important to focus on relevant cues during performance. They seem to realize that they should focus on the positive aspects as opposed to any negative visuals.

Shot Type

Full Swing Shots.

It seemed as though for full swing shots the participants' routines were less succinct and organized. Some of the participants even felt like they did not have much of a routine when it came to full swing shots. The rationale may be that for full swing shots, the margin of error was larger as opposed to other types of shots. Since the participants shot did not need to be quite as accurate, they may have kept their preshot routine more general. Some of the participants even expressed having a routine that promoted a comfortable feeling.

Chipping.

Chipping is more of a controlled swing where the participants may stop their swing at anytime. As previously discussed, many of the participants described increasing the amount of practice swings for optimal performance in chipping. The rationale for this action may be that the swing for chipping is much more controlled. Since more control is needed, participants may have felt the need to take more practice

swings until they are comfortable with that specific shot.

Putting.

Participants seemed to utilize a more detailed preshot routine for putting. Rotella and Cullen, (2001) support the notion of how putting preshot routines enhance concentration and relaxation which can facilitate performance.

Research shows that golfers utilize preputt routines in order to keep performance consistent during such a concentrated skill (Cohn, Rotella, & Lloyd, 1990). A rationale may be that putting requires a more narrow focus. Having a routine during putting may promote a higher level of concentration as opposed to having a more general routine which could bring about less concentration. Specifically for putting, golfers need to focus their attention on relevant information, stop negative thoughts, keep from thinking about their well-learned skill, and get in the right physical and mental state of mind (Cohn, 1990). They can empty their minds by following their preshot routine diligently as well as believing in themselves in order to improve putting (Rotella & Cullen, 2001).

In summary, Gallacher (1986) states that a routine, "is a way of giving your conscious mind something to think about and leaving it to your subconscious mind to hit the ball" (p. 42). Research suggests that preperformance routines have shown to help athletes focus attention, reduce anxiety, eliminate distractions, enhance confidence, and help with mental preparation for a future performance (Czech, Ploszay, & Burke, 2004). As cited in Czech et al. (2004), closed skill sports like: free throw shooting in basketball, serving in tennis and volleyball, and punting and place kicking in football are all areas where preperformance routines can be implemented to improve an

athlete's performance (Wrisberg & Pein, 1992). During performance, athletes want to feel they have made the right decisions and a routine can promote positive decision making which will in turn increase performance (Gallacher, 1986).

Based on this knowledge, this study was conducted in order to help other golfers as well as sport psychology consultants have the opportunity to learn how professional golfers utilize a preshot routine during performance. By understanding what professionals do, other golfers may have the opportunity to improve their performance. Also, few studies have examined professional golfers and their experience with preshot routines. In order to understand this elite group, it was felt that descriptive interviews would gain the most information.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Professional golfers in this investigation felt that a preshot routine should be utilized before every shot.
- Professional golfers in this investigation felt that a preshot routine keeps their minds occupied so that irrelevant thoughts did not interfere with their performance.
- Professional golfers in this investigation felt that preshot routines for putting need to be more detailed and specific to achieve a more narrow focus.
- Professional golfers in this investigation did not have the exact same routines but were very similar in content.
- Professional golfers in this investigation utilized a preshot routine to block distractions and focus on relevant information.
- Professional golfers in this investigation utilized a preshot routine in order to gain a comfortable feeling before every shot.
- Professional golfers in this investigation utilized a preshot routine in order to implement visualization.
- Professional golfers in this investigation utilized a preshot routine in order to maintain consistency in performance.

Recommendations for Coaches, Sport Psychology or Focus Enhancement Consultants, and Sport Researchers

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations for coaches, sport psychology or focus enhancement consultants, and sport researchers are suggested.

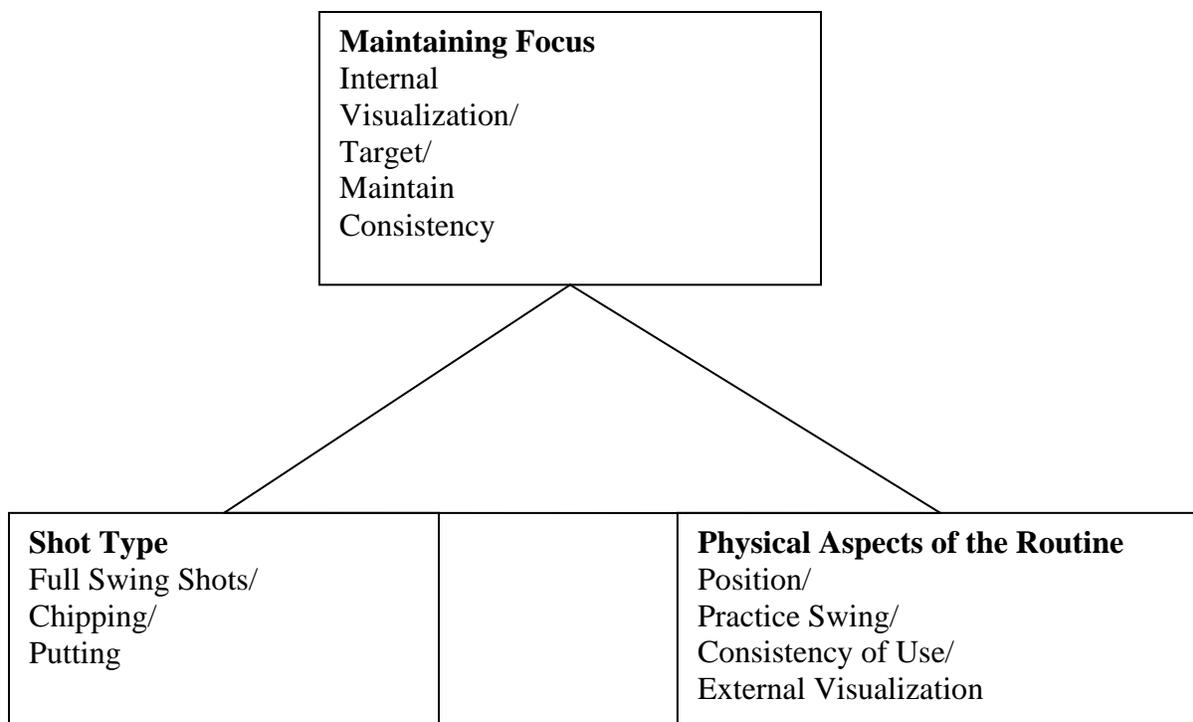
- 1) While teaching the technical aspects of golf, coaches can also include teaching preshot routine skills during practice.
- 2) Coaches can have their golfers describe their preshot routine to enhance their performance awareness.
- 3) Sport Psychology or Focus Enhancement consultants can enhance a golfer's preshot routine by improving visualization skills through training.
- 4) Sport Psychology or Focus Enhancement consultants can help golfers come up with cue words in order to remind themselves to use their preshot routine before every shot.
- 5) Sport Psychology or Focus Enhancement consultants can encourage coaches to work with their players on the detail of each individual's preshot routine.

- 6) Further research should be conducted on pre-shot routines using a qualitative method for various levels of golfers.

Table 1
Description of Participants

	Gender	Sport	Race	Athletic Level	Turned Pro	Affiliation Tour
1	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2004	Hooters Tour
2	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2003	PGA Tour
3	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2001	Hooters Tour
4	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2002	PGA Tour
5	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2001	Nationwide
6	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	1975	Senior PGA
7	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2000	PGA Tour
8	Male	Golf	Caucasian	Professional	2002	PGA Tour

Figure 1
Themes Describing Professional Golfers Experience of Utilizing a Preshot Routine.



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Focus Enhancement: A University Classroom Intervention Experience

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Abstract

Focus plays an integral role in learning, performing in many contexts and daily living. This article presents the results of a focus enhancement intervention that was integrated into a 12 week University course. Students recorded their focusing journey by recording their thoughts, actions and progress in a personal Journal, ten of which were randomly selected for in-depth analysis to better understand their experiences with Focus enhancement. This resulted in themes of preparation, action, reflection and lessons learned which integrated strategies such as goal setting, relaxation, deliberate focusing and creating an optimal focus environment. The focus enhancement experience had a positive impact on students in many areas of their life. Similar action based classroom interventions have the potential to enhance focusing and positive living skills for people of all ages.

Introduction

“Pay attention!” ... “Focus”! Everybody has probably heard this at some point in their life – at school, at home, in sport or in some other performance pursuit. Regardless of one's age, level of talent, desire or urgency, little can be accomplished without focusing or connecting with the task at hand. The ability to focus plays a critical role in learning, in performance and in our daily lives (Abernethy, 2001; Orlick, 2011; Werthner, 2002). While most parents, educators, coaches, performers and students

know, or discover at some point, that focusing is important it is rare that people at any age receive specific direction on how to improve their ability to focus. Given the importance of focus in sport and in daily living as well as previous research in similar interventions with youth (Curry and Maniar, 2004; Taylor & Orlick, 2004) we are left to question the potential impact of a focus enhancement intervention delivered in a university classroom context. This article shares the results of research that examined

student experiences during a University course on focus enhancement.

Importance of Focus

Orlick (2011) defines focus as “a complete, positive connection with an experience, learning opportunity, performance, action or interaction” (p. 101). Focus is reported to be a critical element of successful sport performance (Abernethy, 2001; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Orlick, 2008, 2011; Orlick & Partington, 1988; Werthner, 2002). In an early study with 291 Canadian Olympic athletes, Orlick and Partington (1988) found that both successful and disappointing performance outcomes were determined primarily by the athlete’s ability to direct and control focus in situations that count. A similar study with elite classical musicians showed that focus was critical for consistent high level performance among the world’s best musicians (Talbot-Honeck & Orlick, 1998).

The ability to focus in positive ways and refocus following distractions has also been found to be an important factor influencing the quality of daily living (Orlick, 2011). Hester & Orlick (2006) found that teaching relaxation skills and focus enhancement skills to children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder had a positive impact on their daily lives. Taylor & Orlick (2004) found that a classroom based intervention program designed to teach elementary school children relaxation skills and connected focusing skills resulted in helping those children to cope better with stress, fall asleep more easily at night and perform better in school. Improved focusing skills clearly have the potential to enhance the quality of learning, living and performing for many people at many different age levels.

Improving Focus

There is very little literature that addresses the issue of how we can help people learn to improve their focus and sustain a fully connected focus for longer periods of time. However, focusing is a skill, and like any other skill, it can be learned, developed and improved through relevant practice (Orlick, 2008, 2011; Wilson et al., 2006). Currently, as athletes gain experience in a specific sport they often improve focus by trial and error (Williams & Grant, 1999). Leaving focus enhancement to chance may be a waste of precious time and energy and contribute to unnecessary practice errors and less than best performance results (Williams and Grant, 1999).

Some strategies regarding how to improve focus are available. Wilson and colleagues (2006) suggest that “it is best to find cues that focus on positives rather than negatives, the present (current or upcoming moment) rather than the past or future, and the process (proper form or execution) rather than the score or external movement effect” (p. 413). Relaxation techniques also can contribute to focus enhancement as a way to calm the mind by relaxing the body (Bull, Albinson & Shambrook, 1996; Hester & Orlick, 2006; Nideffer & Sagal, 2006; Orlick, 2008; Wilson et al., 2006). Nideffer and Sagal (2006) suggested the use of breathing techniques for relaxation purposes. Various strategies or mental skills can contribute to the ability to focus however we must clarify how it might be possible to teach people these skills.

University Classroom Intervention

The value of introducing mental skill intervention opportunities within a university classroom was discussed by Curry and Maniar (2003, 2004). They examined the experiences of student athletes in a U.S.A. Division One university setting

who were introduced to mental training techniques (e.g., cognitive-behavioural strategies) to enhance athletic performance through class presentations and through homework. These researchers concluded that “using an academic classroom to help college students and student-athletes learn, adapt, and use peak performance strategies in sport and life can be effective and may be worthy of consideration on other university campuses” (Curry & Maniar, 2004, p. 312). Since athletes have benefit from improving sport performance through mental training this leaves the question of how a similar training program could impact performance in other relevant life contexts.

Orlick has been using a variety of “self growth” projects, mission to excellence projects, focus enhancement projects and life enhancement projects in his undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Ottawa since the early 1980’s. Student feedback has been generally been very positive, however, this was the first study to explore students’ experience using this approach to enhancing the quality of their focus, learning or performance. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of university students enrolled in a classroom-based course which included a focus enhancement project.

Research Design

Given the purpose and exploratory nature of this study a descriptive, qualitative research design was used. Phenomenology was chosen to explore the perspectives and personal experiences of university students through the 12-week focus intervention process. An assumption made in phenomenological research is that the individual’s lived experience makes sense to that individual and the experience can be consciously expressed (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology was useful because this

approach can be used to search for essential elements that are crucial to identifying an experience. The method best suited to the current study was to use secondary texts, in this case personal journals, to collect data related to the experience of focus and the experience of a focus enhancement intervention. This unobtrusive method made use of written work produced during the intervention period.

Research Context

A fourth-year undergraduate level university course (APA 4116: Applied Sport and Performance Psychology) was delivered by Professor Terry Orlick at the University of Ottawa, Canada, in the Faculty of Human Kinetics. One hundred and twenty-three undergraduate men and women were registered in the course. The purpose of the course was that “through the course materials, activities and a major focusing project, [students] will increase [their] understanding and ability to apply relevant focusing skills in the sport context, as well as in other performance domains” (Orlick, 2007, p. 1). Course readings included selected chapters related to focus from Orlick’s books, *Embracing your Potential* (1998) and *In Pursuit of Excellence* (2008), and self-selected articles related to focusing and positive living skills from the online *Journal of Excellence*.

Focus Enhancement Class Activities

In-class activities exposed students to focus enhancement strategies they could apply in their own daily living. An overview of each class can be found in Appendix A. The course content included professor presentations on what focus is, the value of focus, the importance of deciding to focus, and how a connected focus and positive focus can enhance everyday life, learning and performance in all contexts. Guided focusing exercises were conducted during

most classes; for example, during focused listening students made particular efforts to listen for specific things in conversation or when listening to silence in a quiet room. Guided relaxation exercises such as relaxing to the sounds and images of a flowing stream were delivered using audio tracks (Orlick, 2005). Some videos shown in class included interviews with elite performers and youth talking about applying focusing strategies in their own lives, as well as a movie related to focusing through adversity.

Dynamic question-and-answer style group discussions were held during most classes where many students would share, ask questions and respond to each other and to the professor. Small group discussions with approximately six students per group were also used to encourage shared wisdom and collaborative learning. According to the professor's guidelines for the course, "collaborative learning includes sharing personal experiences, lessons learned and new insights gained from your experiences, performances and assignments" (Orlick, 2007, p. 2). Questions were often posed to all students in the classroom to encourage critical reflection and positive action for ongoing focus enhancement.

Focus Enhancement Project

Each student in the course was required to complete a course project on focus enhancement. The project required an action based component and a written component, both to be completed outside of class. Students were asked to attempt to enhance the quality and consistency of his or her focus in a personally relevant life context. Students had to keep a written or typed journal to monitor these attempts. The journal was intended to encourage them to record their actions, personal goals, personal growth, personal challenges, and to guide ongoing positive action and self-monitoring

of focus enhancement strategies. Orlick (2007) explained in the course outline that "In your Focused Excellence Project Journal you will log your personal journey aimed at improving the quality and consistency of your best focus in a performance domain that is relevant to you. You will include anything you act on to try to improve the positiveness and connectedness of your focus" (Orlick, p. 2). Any journal format was acceptable, including handwritten or electronic notes, and other creative sources such as poetry, drawings or photos were welcome. Students were expected to make entries in the journal on a regular basis, with a minimum of three entries per week.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the final class of the course all students were invited to participate in this research project by allowing their journal to be anonymously included for analysis. It was made clear to the students that consent forms and analysis would not proceed until after all final grades in the course were allocated in order to ensure academic grading was completely separate from the research initiative. Over half (64) of the 123 students gave consent to have their journals analyzed for research purposes. Journals were photocopied and each student name was removed and replaced with a pseudo name to maintain confidentiality.

Initially all 64 journals were read without structured analysis and initial impressions were simply noted (Sparkes & Partington, 2003). For the in-depth analysis, ten journals were randomly selected for inclusion. These journals ranged from 18 to 37 typed pages each, providing a total 268 pages of raw data which included personal stories, self-evaluation exercises and artistic presentations (e.g. photos or graphics used to convey certain experiences and personal reflections on their overall journey).

Using a line-by-line approach (VanManen, 1990) statements were identified according to what participants actually said and acted on to enhance their focus. Statements described focus enhancement experiences, strategies used by participants, perceived impacts of the intervention, and any unique situations (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Emerging themes were labelled in order to identify how participants progressed through the intervention (Smith & Sparkes, 2005).

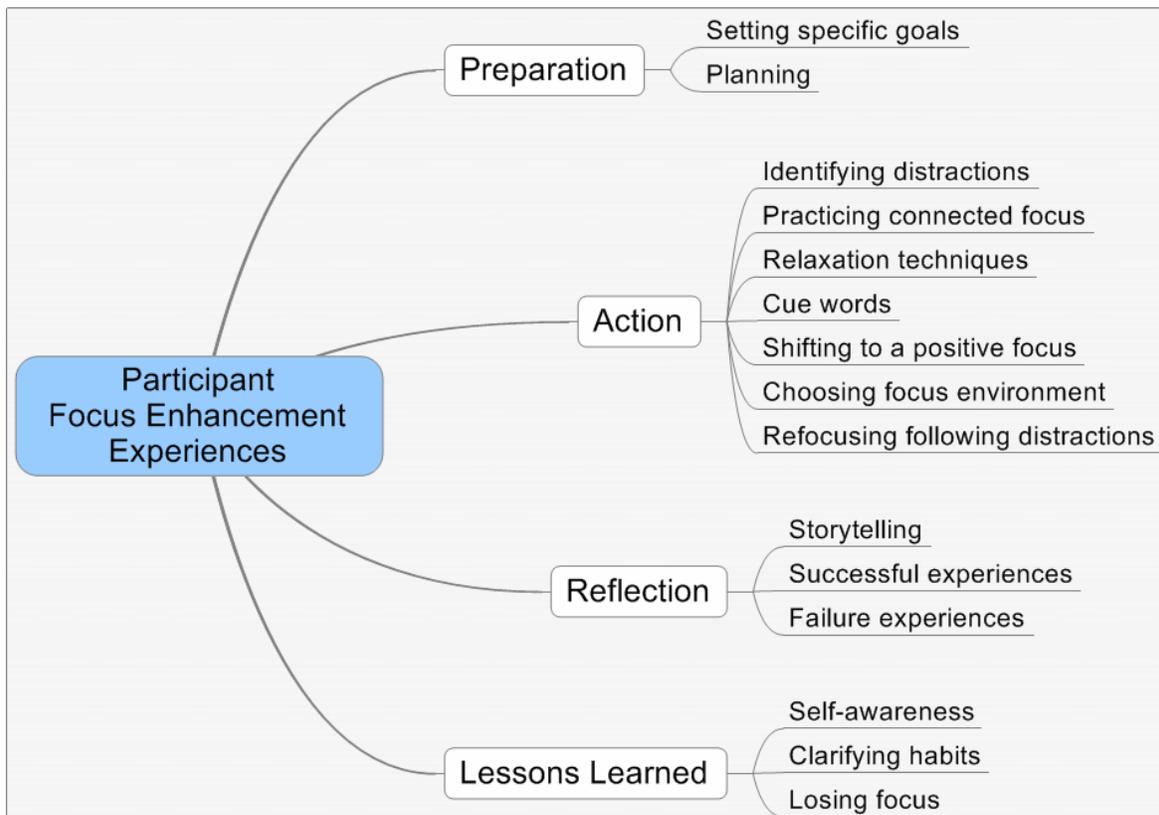
Results

The participants independently selected the life context in which they would enhance their focus. As a result a wide variety of life areas were addressed and a brief summary of each participant's context can be found in Appendix B. The most common life context was academics; participants were trying to enhance focus during lectures, studying, and

on ongoing assignments. Many sporting contexts were also described, including ringette, hockey, soccer, basketball, fitness classes, and weight training. A final context where focus enhancement strategies were applied related to relaxing more and gaining greater control over their thoughts. In addition to their chosen performance context, many participants were able to improve their focus in daily living (e.g. during conversations, falling asleep, improving stress control, and managing emotions such as anger).

Focus Enhancement Experience

Analysis of participant journals revealed four key components of effective focus enhancement; preparation, action, reflection, and continuing to act on focus lessons learned.



Preparation

Preparation to enhance focus began with students learning about high quality focus, reflecting on their own focus, and becoming familiar with focus enhancement strategies. This occurred in class and through Orlick's (2008) course materials. Participants reported undergoing a process of focus enhancement through the following strategies.

Setting specific goals.

Participants often began with bigger goals such as "I am going to try and incorporate positive energy into my life everyday because I believe it will guide me to a more confident me." (Elaine). They then narrowed down that larger goal into smaller parts by targeting a specific task and timeframe for action, such as "So today I figured out my 7 goals, tomorrow I will work on the plan" (Jennifer). Several participants did a task breakdown.

Instead of focusing on what little time I had, I decided to break down my time and set mini goals for myself that would minimize the stress. I decided to finish 2 of 3 parts for my project before I went to soccer. It was a goal that I knew that I could achieve if I just buckled down, stayed focused and stayed positive that I could actually accomplish the goal. It actually worked. (Hope)

Some participants used specific goals from the start while others applied this strategy only after several weeks. For example, during the third week of the course Pete became aware of his own need for more precise and definite goals which he then set.

I feel that the [course material] readings that I have done have given me a lot of valuable information that

I can use to help improve my focus and overall quality of life. Nevertheless, I have not narrowed the focus of what I want to improve. Today I will set myself specific goals that I want to use this new found knowledge for, and will give myself constant reminders of what I am trying to improve (Pete).

Participants began using smaller, specific goals to avoid becoming overwhelmed and to target their focus on what was within their control. "A problem that I experienced was that ... I became overwhelmed with work load and felt a sense of panic because there was so much work to be done and I was already behind" (Christine). When Christine was beginning to feel overwhelmed by her aspirations for academic success she avoided unnecessary distractions through specific goal setting.

Today I wrote down grades, learning objectives and other goals that I hope to achieve in terms of school work. I envisioned what I wanted in each of these areas for the remainder of the semester. I found that this approach gave me a sense of where I want to be and where I am, as well as goals that need to be achieved. This allowed me to improve my connected focus during class time, because I wanted to learn the material and achieve my learning objectives. I was also able to reconnect after losing focus because I was aware of what I needed to do.

This approach of breaking down tasks into manageable parts was referred to by several participants as taking things "one step at a time" (Christine). Nicole literally took her focus step-by-step when she counted each step that she took, counting up to ten and

then over again repeatedly, to make her way through a gruelling, long distance climb. Participants found a way to focus effectively in potentially overwhelming situations by breaking tasks into smaller sections and keeping their focus in the present moment.

Planning.

For many participants planning consisted of making basic plans for how they wanted to focus. Creating a written schedule for the upcoming week was helpful to four participants (Elaine, Christine, Julia, and Jennifer). Many participants planned for a specified period of time, and set specific goals for what to focus on.

Today I made a schedule and a list of goals for each day over the next week in order to pace myself for the upcoming midterms and projects. I found that this exercise relieved a great deal of stress because I was able to look at everything I need to do. I broke it down by day and it made it seem so much more manageable and bearable. Instead of feeling overwhelmed I now know what I need to do every day to keep up with my goals and to make things bearable. Without the stress I am now able to bring a much greater focus to my work in a much more positive and connected way. I am not worried about things anymore. I can just be connected to the material and positively focus on getting it done. It also helps to refocus because if I don't get my goal done one day, the work gets piled on another day and I really want to avoid that so it helps me refocus to stay on track. (Christine)

One participant created a schedule of daily tasks. “To try and keep focus I plan my days

and my entire week in advance. I make a list of what I would like to accomplish each day for the week and then execute it” (Elaine). Jennifer used course materials guide her weekly planning.

I completed the written reminders and answers to [self-evaluation questions provided in course material] and then wrote down my daily goals in my agenda to check it off when it's complete... I am going to put my reminders in a place I will see them every day, use my agenda to set goals, and do all of the above to reduce my stress. (Jennifer)

Planning for optimal focus was also used in very specific situations. For example, Julia, Pete, and Ken used specific routines such as planning to target specific heavy weights at the gym and even visualized specific focus targets in preparation for optimal focus during workouts. Finally, planning was also used to prepare for recovering from distractions. Matt prepared for enhanced focus by anticipating inevitable lapses in focus and creating an effective distraction control plan.

Tuesday: After class I reflected on the bus ride home about what Terry had discussed about distraction control and how we as students may benefit from making a distraction control plan. So I started to make a plan. My plan consisted of first, saying my reminder. If this was not working I would close my eyes and picture a positive performance. Lastly I would tell myself “I better refocus now because I won't want to have any regrets later.” These three things were incorporated because I believe that they will help me refocus on the task at hand, and also help me

regain confidence and be more positive. I closed my binder knowing now that I had made a plan, but kept in mind that changes and adjustments were bound to be made. (Matt)

and reading anything but textbooks. All of these sources are problematic in terms of obtaining and maintaining my best, most connected and most positive focus. (Christine).

Actions

Participants repeatedly took action aimed at enhancing the quality and duration of their focus. These actions included identifying distractions and creating opportunities to practice connected focus. They also took action using relaxation techniques and cue words, shifting to a positive focus and making choices to create an optimal focus environment. These actions were used to improve focus and to refocus more quickly following distractions.

Identifying distractions.

Identifying and dealing with barriers to effective focus were described by participants as first steps towards enhancing their focus. Christine wrote down her distractions when she was trying to focus on her schoolwork.

Anything that takes me away from my positive focus, my connected focus and my ability to regain my focus will be marked down as a distraction source and it will make me better able to realize these problems and correct them. This task proved to be slightly more alarming than I originally thought. Turns out that I have many more distractions than I thought! The main distractions that I identified during class were talking to friends, dazing off into space, and thinking about things I need to do and doing other school work. The distractions that I identified while doing school work were the television, the internet, the phone, friends, cleaning, cooking

Identifying relevant distractions allowed Christine to become more aware of her personal sources of distraction which helped her to take positive actions to eliminate or minimize their impact. Another way that participants improved focus was to become increasingly aware of the ability to control his or her focus. One example was the Focus Control Rating Scale (Orlick, 2008) that Christine used to bring more awareness to her actions. “Today I was much more aware of my focus and my ability to focus at different tasks throughout the day...I did manage to improve my focus throughout the day because I was more consciously aware of it”. The more aware participants became of unwanted distractions the better they were taking action to enhance focus.

Practicing Connected Focus.

Participants combined awareness of distractions or potential distractions with deliberate attempts to improve their focus. Simply practicing, with the goal of more connected focus and of focus enhancement, helped participants improve. “I practiced using positive focus and connected focus with my schoolwork today. This made the process of schoolwork much more enjoyable and more efficient” (Christine). The participants who made the greatest improvements in their focus were the ones who committed to focus in positive and connected ways on an ongoing basis.

Relaxation techniques.

Relaxation techniques were often used to enhance focus in study sessions, in exam writing, in sports and in stressful situations. Some participants used breathing as a target

to focus on during stressful moments. “I took slow deep breaths, listening to the sound of the air as it entered and left my body, while paying close attention to the feeling of my chest rising and falling” (Julia). One participant’s anxiety was rising during a study session; he used a breathing technique to manage his stress and refocus. “I thought to myself that this might be a good situation to do some of the relaxation and focus techniques that I have been working on throughout the semester” (Pete). On one occasion he took a break from studying to focus on breathing before returning to the task at hand.

The first thing that I did was to take 15 minutes to just lie down on my couch and focus on my breathing. I thought about my stomach expanding and relaxing with every breath. I thought about the air coming into and out of my body, and how with each breath [out] the stress began to exit out of my body. At the end of the 15 minutes I felt much more relaxed and had a more positive focus towards what I needed to get done.
(Pete)

Simply taking a break helped participants to relax and enhance their focus. Matt went to the dressing room when he was struggling during a hockey practice to shift his focus “I think this break helped me because I just needed some time away from the hectic practice. This made it a lot easier for me to focus [when I returned to the ice]”. During games he continued to improve his connected focus to the point where he could perform well physically and maintain a positive focus. “I was relaxed mentally so I wasn’t worrying and yet my body felt good and energized and ready to go”.

Many participants used relaxation and focusing strategies to calm the mind and body for sleep. Christine noticed a link between her trouble falling asleep and her “mind spinning.” Adam commented “My mind is always on the go, and many times at night I find it hard to release my day and fully relax”. He found that relaxing his body physically helped him to calm his mind. He focused on each body segment, trying to let it feel as relaxed as possible. Adam shared what he was doing with his father who also had difficulty falling asleep. “[My father] was very intrigued that this small yet very effective focusing task had the power to literally put me to sleep”. Julia had a similar experience.

After doing this [relaxation] for a few minutes I began to consciously relax every major muscle of my body. I began with my toes, legs, trunk, arms, fingers, neck, and finally head. This process was very relaxing ... [my] main focus was on calming feelings with minimal movement. This was helpful in bringing my mind to a peaceful state as opposed to my normal state where I am thinking about a million things at once.

Everyone who used focused relaxation strategies to help themselves fall asleep applied breathing techniques. They often focused on the sounds and feelings of air entering and leaving the lungs.

Cue words.

Almost all participants reported using cue words (or personal reminders) to initiate positive focused action that helped them connect with their best focus. Each participant’s cue word(s) had personal meaning and was directly related to their

target or focus goal. For instance, Julia wrote:

To keep a connected focus with my fitness goals, I came up with a written reminder to help me stay on task and push myself to my full potential. I have chosen to use the word “strength” to represent my desire to achieve my goal. The reason I feel this word is a good representation is that it signifies what I need both mentally and physically to achieve my goal, and it stands for exactly what I want to achieve in the end: strength. [As a constant reminder of her “strength” she]

- *Taped a printout of the word to my water bottle that I use daily*
- *Taped a printout to my bathroom mirror*
- *Changed my cellular greeting to read 'strength'*
- *Wrote strength on the inside cover of both my rough journal and agenda*
- *Changed my computer Screensaver to read 'strength'.*

Nicole drew lessons from a movie in class and used meaningful cue words to focus and refocus during personal challenges.

The "Touching the Void" movie we watched [in class] about the climbers really helped me this week, I found myself getting discouraged and feeling lost and thinking that I had an impossible task ahead of me, so I used the word “climb” to refocus myself....climb for that next obstacle, push through it, stop complaining and just climb past the next barrier. I found it to be bril-

liantly helpful because every time I thought of climbing I thought of [the movie characters] Simon and Joe and how they worked through what actually was impossible and came through it. It made me remember that what I had to do was not so bad. I kept using the word over and over again ... eventually I used it less frequently because I wasn't panicking as much.

Nicole found that the more she used cue words the better she performed. “I think I have learned a lot in the last two weeks about the importance of keeping a positive attitude and the different strategies that help make that work. Now when something bad happens I tell myself to “climb”. She took a lesson learned about her ability to focus and applied that action in other situations.

Shifting to a positive focus.

During course lectures and discussions Orlick emphasized the importance of focusing on the positives and shifting focus from negative to positive as needed. One method Orlick (2008, 2011) suggested for shifting to a more positive focus was to identify, embrace and appreciate simple highlights that are readily available in daily living. Several participants put this strategy into practice.

During yesterday's lecture, we learned to find a highlight in every aspect of the day. That is what I wrote as the “bottom line” lesson for the lecture. It is a marvelous point and I have started trying to apply it to many different contexts. Here are some of the highlights that I experienced today. During my morning lecture, I correctly answered a question that was posed by the professor. I am usually nervous when

I speak in front of a class, but I was proud that I overcame this fear. During my weight lifting session, I got a personal best in the squat. I was very happy about this accomplishment. (Ken)

Later Ken reported finding simple highlights in nature like watching the sun's rays come down and melt the snow. Looking for the positives helped Christine recover from receiving poor grades.

This activity [looking for the positives or highlights] improved my positive focus, my connected focus and my overall focus. As well, I found it was easier to refocus with a positive outlook than a negative one. One area that still needs work is realizing that I am thinking negatively and consciously deciding to stop doing it. I sometimes sulk for awhile before I decide to be positive. I will work on this tomorrow to reduce the turnover time!

Some participants combined relaxed breathing with a shift to a more positive or constructive focus. Virtually all participants at some point shifted from a negative to a more positive focus and this contributed to focus enhancement in general.

Choosing or creating a more distraction free environment.

Taking action to choose or create a more distraction free environment was a strategy used by some participants. Christine chose to physically move to a better space for her focus enhancement in some pursuits.

Yesterday I was successful in reducing a lot of my distractions just by changing locations and removing myself from an area of distractions

(i.e. my apartment). Today while I am in the library, I will use key words, the word "Here" to make myself refocus when I find myself dazing off into space and thinking about other things.

Choosing a more optimal environment was often applied during academic pursuits and at times with physical activity. Another useful approach was to create a better environment within existing conditions. Ken modified his study space to create a more optimal focus environment.

I turned off the music and signed out of the instant messaging program [on my computer]: these two things will only prevent me from connecting with what I am doing at the moment. I think that is really the key; to empty the mind of thoughts which are irrelevant to the task at hand. I will bring my notebook to my kitchen table and write the journals in that calm setting. I am alone in my house, so the kitchen will surely be a distraction-free zone.

Refocusing following distractions.

A significant part of the participants' focus enhancement experience was learning to manage their response to unwanted or unexpected distractions. The desired response to a distraction was usually to refocus on a positive or preferred area of focus as quickly as possible. Adam was chasing his dream of attending medical school when he received a notice of rejection. He was understandably upset and after a few hours of feeling negative he wanted to shift to a more positive focus. At first he was unsuccessful. He then made a list of all his successes over the years leading up to this moment. This action shifted his focus to his strengths and lifted

his spirits which allowed him to regain a more positive focus. He began to consider other options for his future studies and started to contact professors to gather more information. Shifting to a more positive focus empowered him to take specific positive actions which were within his control.

Some form of relaxation or relaxed breathing was often used in combination with a positive shift in focus. Hope wrote about relaxing to help her shift focus before an unexpected pop quiz in an academic context. When her professor passed out this unexpected quiz here are some of the thoughts that flashed through her mind.

I know that every mark and everything I do counts for my future. I could feel my anxiety level rising. I know myself, and I know that I cannot perform or do anything at the best of my ability when I am stressed. As I was looking at the quiz, I found myself just reading the question and not understanding it because I was panicking ... Then I decided to relax and after I finished my relaxation exercise, I decided that I would read each question one by one and just focus on each individual question. When I broke it down, and started to just have a totally connected focus on each question, I realized that I knew all the answers. Because of my relaxation exercises I was able to focus on the test and disregard the fact that it was a pop quiz. Today just made me an even stronger believer in this whole journal writing thing and that relaxation and focusing really will help me in achieving my goals. (Hope)

Cue words or personal reminders were often used by participants as a refocusing strategy. To draw on an example that was previously mentioned, Nicole regularly used her cue word “climb” to refocus. Adam illustrates how he did this in a conflict with his girlfriend.

When my girlfriend and I argue I usually stick with what I feel is right, and try to argue my side to exhaustion. Yesterday I used my focus skills to calm down during the argument and to hear her side. I told myself to “stop” and “think”. The “stop” thought made me stop all of my thought processes, and “think” allowed me to truly hear what she was trying to tell me. After I calmed down, I helped calm her down. We both took a few deep breaths and then were able to talk out the disagreement instead of arguing. By calming myself down (as well as her), instead of acting on pure emotion, we were able to resolve the conflict a lot quicker and effectively. This example demonstrated to me how I was able to override emotion, to help resolve a conflict. (Adam)

Two of the refocusing strategies taught in the classroom were called “umbalakiki” and “changing channels” (Orlick, 2008). With ‘umbalakiki’, the participant imagines that he or she is actually putting the negative or distracting thought into something concrete like a desk or a tree. Jennifer refocused during her ringette game by using umbalakiki. She symbolically placed anger into her ringette stick, refocused on playing the game and later scored. ‘Changing channels’ was designed to teach young people to take control of their own focus ‘channels’, as you would with a remote control for your television channels. You

simply push a button to change the channel from something undesirable to something more positive. One participant wrote about using changing channels in combination with relaxed breathing to shift focus while waiting for his girlfriend who was running behind schedule.

As I started to feel very impatient, I took a deep breath, knew that she was on her way, and just tried to relax. I realized that it was not the end of the world if we were a few minutes late for class, and decided to change channels.

Reflection

Participants were instructed to keep journals to record their ongoing experiences related to focus enhancement; therefore numerous personal reflections were described. All participants shared reflections throughout their journeys, primarily through storytelling and critical reflection after specific success and failure experiences. Constructive reflection often occurred when a participant took the time to think back to a specific effective or ineffective attempt to improve their focus and extract the lesson(s) learned. For example, Julia reflected on the how she had successfully taken focused action and actually improved her focus.

This project proved to help me stay focused on what was to be done ... unlike before when I was unmotivated and lacked direction ... I was on a strict schedule, I had less time to distract myself and made it to the gym without hesitation. It felt really good to know that I had planned on going to the gym and then actually made it there. This allowed me to see that the direction I take and decisions I make are governed by my own control and that only I can make

what I want to happen actually happen.

Story telling.

At times simply writing the story of an experience provided opportunities for participants to reflect in meaningful ways about their focus and their control of focus. After having a bad night and feeling discouraged, Elaine awoke the next day with a clear mind and applied her focus enhancement strategies at the gym and during her school day. Later on she was sitting outside enjoying gorgeous weather and was inspired to write about her turnaround.

*This beautiful day has lifted my spirits and motivated me to get down to business and finish my paper. I feel fantastic today and I just had to share that with someone. Nothing can beat this feeling at this moment and I have Terry [Orlick]'s guidelines [class content] and encouraging words to thank for it. It's amazing what sunshine can do for a person! Start fresh tomorrow.
(Elaine)*

Personal stories sometimes revealed even unpredictable personal challenges that occurred during the timeframe of this course. Near the end of the course, Elaine shared a moving story about how she coped with the potential death of a loved one by applying newly acquired skills.

This weekend, we were out grocery shopping when I received a phone call from my father telling me that my 91-year-old grandmother was in the hospital with several problems and they weren't sure if she was going to make it. I was devastated of course, but my boyfriend and his

family comforted me ... I continued with the task of grocery shopping ... I focused on the positives [like how fortunate I was to have had her in my life all these years] and told myself that she would pull through. Before this, I was agitated and started to get stressed out about the situation. We then went home and I made some calls to locate my parents and find out the situation. I finally got a hold of my parents and I was told that she had pulled through and could possibly go home that same night! After I hung up the phone, I stayed in my room and did a short breathing exercise to relax myself. It worked! I felt a sense of calm pass over me and I just kept thinking how thankful I was that I had been introduced to Terry's [applied course content for focus and life enhancement]. I had a relaxing, positive weekend during which I maintained a connected focus. (Elaine)

Learning from successful experiences.

One beneficial form of reflection occurred following successful focus experiences. For example, when a small or large goal was reached, it was very helpful for participants to write about this experience in their journal. Positive experiences became a valued asset, worthy of thought, reflection and recording in their journals.

After leaving the class lecture tonight, I felt happy, and at ease. I never once lost focus during the lecture, something that I struggle with in school. I don't know whether it was because of the amazing movie we watched (Touching the Void) or whether I was focusing on being connected, but I managed to not become distracted throughout the

whole lecture. So you can imagine the relief I felt [considering my struggle with my learning disability] when I realized after the lecture that I had maintained focus throughout the three hours (Elaine).

Lessons from successful experiences in one life area, such as academics were often transferred and applied to other unrelated contexts such as sport. Hope explained how this happened for her.

I was able to stay positive while playing in my game and when I got home I not only finished the third part to my project, but I also had time to write this journal. Positive thinking (and focusing) really does alter your own future. It's funny because it is such a simple concept, but when it is applied, it actually works.

Learning from failure experiences.

Success inspired reflection on what was working to enhance focus; however, failures provided a strong incentive to reflect upon the need to improve focus and perform differently. Pete realized at one point in this course that while many of his life areas would benefit from improved focus, he had not yet chosen a context to take action on his focus intentions.

I do not feel that my focus is at the level I want it to be. My mind is constantly racing with anything and everything ... from school work, practice times, and what am I going to eat for dinner ... all of these areas of my life seem to be consuming my thoughts during the day. I am unable to focus all of my energy and potential to one specific task at a time. Although I am having trouble

with this part of my mental training (living in the moment), I believe that I may have a reason for why I am having such difficulty. I do not feel that I have completed the first element of the wheel of excellence: commitment...I need to make my goals more specific, so that I will be able to achieve them.

Pete was realizing that if he wanted to change his focus to improve his performance and his life then he would have to commit to act on making those positive changes. Failure certainly presented opportunities for participants to find and focus on ways to avoid repeating those failures in the future.

Yesterday I didn't really plan out my day and found that I wasted a good portion of time when I could have been working out or doing some homework. Nevertheless, I decided to take yesterday as a learning experience on how I do not want the rest of my days to go. (Pete)

From academics to sports, participants identified specific opportunities to avoid or correct mistakes. Matt made this link from planning to the importance of controlling his focus in his hockey game.

Our game went into a shootout and I was chosen to be one of the shooters. The goalie I was facing was the best goalie in the league. I realized it was going to be hard to score. I started to worry about what others were going to say if I missed. The ref instructed me to go and I missed by a mile. This showed me that worrying about the outcome caused me to have a horrible shootout. From that point on I knew thinking about the final outcome was not something that

would help me boost my confidence in important times. The next time something like this occurs I will use my refocus plan and a previous confidence boosting moment to try to score.

Lessons Learned

Participants drew a variety of focus enhancement lessons from course material and from personal experiences related to focus enhancement. One important lesson for Ken was about being in the moment. “One lesson that has really stuck with me [from the course] is that of being fully connected to each experience... I believe it is a tremendous waste to be mentally absent during a great experience... I think that is really the key; to empty the mind of thoughts which are irrelevant to the task at hand”. For Jennifer the most important lesson learned was that with a quality focus, the quality of an experience changes. “I stayed focused on getting my work done, and found that the time went by a lot faster. I think that is the key ... focus fully on the task at hand and before you know it, you’re done” (Jennifer). The immense value of being fully connected and in the moment in all contexts was specifically mentioned by various participants in the study.

Self-awareness.

Gaining an enhanced awareness about their ability to direct and control their own focus was another huge lesson learned by the participants in this study. Statements towards the beginning of their journal, expressed their need to gain awareness of the ability to focus and to identify relevant focus enhancement targets. For example Christine wrote, “I need to be aware of my focus before I can do further activities to improve it”. The importance of self-awareness became evident when participants began identifying changes in the quality of

their focus. “My focus seems to be going up and down, but I know that it is normal at the start” (Elaine). After attempting to implement different strategies to enhance their focus participants reported additional lessons learned regarding self-awareness. “Even though I did not shift my focus this day to something more positive, it is something that I am aware of and will work towards” (Pete). When participants became more aware of a negative shift in their focus this permitted them to create an opportunity to do something concrete to improve their focus.

By being able to see the effects that my negative focus has on others and on myself, makes me realize that if I am able to 'change channels' and shift to a more positive focus then I will impact those around me in a more positive way. (Pete)

The importance of enhanced awareness was one of the main lessons learned through the focus enhancement experience.

Clarifying habits.

Participants extracted meaningful lessons about their focus by clarifying their habits related to best and less than best focus, interactions and performances. In some cases increased commitment to reflect upon and improve poor focusing habits came after failure.

Tonight I reflected on my focusing abilities of today. I realized that I have horrible focus. I was unable to maintain my focus for any length of time. As well, even when I managed to focus, I found that it was often not a positive focus or fully connected focus. I am easily distracted by any and all sources during classes and schoolwork. My longest attempt at

focusing was much less than 10 minutes. I realized that I need to improve my best focus, my positive focus and my fully connected focus in the face of distractions and unpleasant school work and classes. I will look into different methods of improving my focus to attempt in days to come. (Christine)

During the second week of the course Matt was identifying distractions to improve his focus in hockey. “I realized that the audience was probably one of my greatest distractions. I was always checking to see if any scouts were watching or any hot girls. This was clearly not what I should have been concentrating on”. He identified his distractions and took focused action steps to keep his focus inside the boards and on executing his desired role on the ice. Habits which centered on a negative self-focus, self-criticism, anxiety or worry about poor performances did not contribute to a positive focus and best performances. Choosing to focus on the positives instead of the negatives helped participants to focus on strengths and complete tasks successfully.

Losing focus.

Participant reflections led to lessons learned about the frequency with which they lost or abandoned their best focus. As they progressed individually through their focus enhancement experience, many participants realized the poor or inconsistent quality of their focus. Ken identified his habit of not focusing in classroom lectures. He clearly stated that simply recognizing his lack of focus (early in this course) stimulated his work to gain a better, more connected focus. One month after beginning his focus enhancement project Ken was continuing to improve his connected focus but was still not able to maintain his focus for a full 90 minute lecture.

I suppose I had a pretty good connection during this lecture but I have yet to sit through an entire lecture without spacing out for a period of time. However, I find I am generally becoming more focused as time goes by. I think that realizing I am unfocused was a tremendous first step. (Ken)

Becoming aware of a lack of positive or connected focus and recognizing the added value of enhancing focus was a powerful lesson learned by Ken and other participants.

One way I have noticed that I can check if I am connected is if I can recall what the professor was just talking about. If I am not focused, my thoughts wander and I will often lose track of what is being said. I have been using this simple test to make sure that I remain mentally present during the lectures.

Ongoing reflection on actions taken led to lessons learned and informed future efforts to enhance focus. In this manner, participants repeatedly cycled through the stages of preparation, action, reflection and lessons learned in their focus enhancement experiences.

Impact of the Experience

All participants reported improvements in the quality and duration of their focus over the 12-week intervention period. Their focus improvements included being able to attain and sustain a connected focus for a longer period of time, increased control over their focus, fewer distractions, less negative thinking and, a more positive focus overall. All participants also reported improvements in the quality of their daily living - including

improved stress control, more positive focus and increased confidence.

Increased focus quality and duration.

Participants reported learning how to reach and maintain a higher quality focus for a longer period of time. Pete, for example, improved his focus during study sessions. “I could see how much more focused I was on the work and how I was able to sustain that focus for long periods of time”. Participants learned or refined practical strategies to connect more fully with their current task or experience, relax as needed and use simple effective goal setting to enhance and sustain their focus.

Increased control of focus.

Participants reported experiencing an improvement in their ability to control their own focus over the course of this intervention. This appeared to be a fairly simple process for most participants—however this happened only when they decided or made a clear commitment to work on improving their own focus. Adam explained that “at the beginning of this course, I took a step back and began to look at what I could control and what I could not”. Adam then “surprised” himself with his own ability to shift focus to the positives in a situation that would normally have bothered him. “I was able to accomplish such a [positive] mental shift so simply”. Some participants took more time to begin to gain control of their focus but all participants, at some point, improved their control of focus. These results align with Wilson et al. (2006) who suggested that individuals should “learn to practice with a positive attitude and specified intention” (p.419).

Fewer distractions.

Participants reported having found ways to reduce the distractions in their lives by

removing themselves from distracting environments or not paying attention to potential distractions. For example, Jennifer chose to study away from her home environment. “I studied for a good amount of time, while being fully connected. I did this in the library where it is quiet and there is no MSN [online messaging program] and no distractions”. In a sporting context Matt made a decision to focus fully on the present task. He “eliminated all the external distractions” by keeping his focus on what he was doing and feeling at that moment rather than looking at the crowd or thinking about anything else. In several contexts, distractions remained but participants found ways to focus through distractions. Elaine commented. “I don't know whether it was because I was focusing on being connected, but [for the first time ever] I managed to not become distracted throughout the lecture”. The value to participants of having identified focus targets confirms previous research and applied work indicating the importance of using specific task relevant cues, or focus reminders, to direct focus towards productive thoughts, feelings and actions (Nideffer & Sagal, 2006; Weinberg & Gould, 2003; Orlick, 2008, 2011; Wilson et al., 2006). Through focus planning or environmental adjustments, and the use of specific relevant focus reminders or cue words, participants experienced fewer distractions, more connected focus and overall positive improvements with their focus.

Fewer overwhelming thoughts.

Participants reported having fewer overwhelming or distracting thoughts overall. After completing a focused relaxation exercise Julia commented, “This was helpful in bringing my mind to a peaceful state as opposed to my normal state where I am thinking about a million things at once”. Previous research and applied

work had also supported the value of relaxation, relaxed breathing or clarity of mind to enhance focus (Bull et al., 1996; Gauron, 1984; Hester & Orlick, 2006; Nideffer & Sagal, 2006; Orlick, 2008; Wilson, Peper & Schmid, 2006). By learning to make wise choices regarding what to focus on and how to achieve that focused connection, participants were better able to control, direct or sustain their focus.

Less negative thinking.

Participants reported experiencing an overall decrease in negative thinking and increase in positive thinking during their participation in this focus enhancement project. Matt wrote “Not once did I find myself worried or doubting myself as I made my way down the ice” (Matt). Jennifer recounted how she had her best focus by completely releasing all negative thoughts. “I just kind of let go of all my negativities” (Jennifer). One of the strongest impacts of the experience appears to have been an ability to focus on the more positive elements, opportunities or beneficial aspects of an experience. Elaine makes this point in her journal. “I am a more positive person and my life is less stressful now than before”.

Stress control in daily living.

During their 12-week journey to focus enhancement, participants described feeling less stressed and in some situations stress was gone altogether.

From the class lectures and the readings I have learned to 'let go' of the things which I cannot control [that really don't matter]. I have been using self talk occasionally, but the majority of my efforts have been simply due to dropping these issues [that I cannot control] mentally. I simply do not attend to them ... I tell myself that I cannot do anything

about this particular issue, and therefore there is no sense in thinking about it. (Adam)

Matt made a plan to focus on specific tasks in his life that were within his control. “Instantly I felt some of the stress go away because I was now not so confused as to what I was going to do”. The value of setting specific attainable goals was identified in previous research and applied work as a method of managing stress and sustaining focus during performance (Bull et al., 1996; Nideffer & Sagal, 2006; Orlick, 2008). Christine commented that when she began to focus on what she could control she was able to reduce her stress. “The reduced stress level allows me to focus more positively and in a more connected manner” (Christine). Many participants decided not to be stressed and to shift their focus to more positive aspects of an experience. Adam described the impact of this course on his daily living.

I have noticed since I have been taking this class, that my anxiety attack episodes have decreased substantially. I have been able to stop them when I feel as though one is approaching. I have also noted that I have been less anxious over all, and that aspects of my life which were suffering (relationships & my health), are beginning to get back on track. (Adam)

Confidence and life enhancement.

Participants in this study wrote in their journals about a link between positive focus and confidence. Matt struggled to improve his focus in hockey. He eventually identified a lack of confidence in his own skills as a big part of the problem and took action to use positive thinking along with his focus enhancement strategies. For example, Matt

reminded himself to keep his legs moving while he was on a breakaway and focused on the positives which freed him to play much better. Christine gained confidence when she organized herself at the beginning of her day and decided to bring a quality focus to her pursuits.

This gave me more confidence in myself that I could complete what I needed to get done during the day, which provided me with a more positive focus throughout the day...It gave me a sense of "I can do this" and connected me with my focus and the material...As a result, I felt less stressed and disconnected ... and was able to improve my quality of focus for a longer period of time. (Christine)

When participants chose to draw upon their best focus and acted on that choice, it brought feelings of confidence and personal control to their pursuits. Choosing a preferred focus and acting on that choice helps you to achieve a fully connected focus and find quality in your experiences and in everyday life.

Conclusion

A focus enhancement intervention delivered within a 12 week university class resulted in positive improvements in students' focus in a variety of different contexts. It is strongly recommended that similar action-based course content be offered to students in a variety of educational contexts, for example, through relevant course work in university, college, junior and senior high school and elementary school. Focusing strategies can be readily adapted to the specific needs of any age group using the educational materials available online and in print (Orlick, 2011). It was apparent from this study that there was added value in the

students' use of personal journals to guide and monitor their progress. Even students who were not initially keen on journaling found it to be incredibly valuable and rewarding to strengthen their efforts to continue to enhance the quality, direction and duration of their focus. It may be beneficial to request a sample of each student's journal entries at several intervals during the course in order to provide supportive feedback along the way. Establishing small on-going interactive discussion groups, as we did in this study and as did Curry and Maniar (2004), provides yet another learning advantage. These groups can meet regularly during the course for peer collaboration and guidance

in journal writing and drawing lessons from each of the students' experiences. Students can truly benefit from reflecting upon their successes, failures and lessons learned related to their focus and life enhancement goals.

We hope this positive, action-centered approach to focus enhancement and the strategies that worked best for the participants in this study will be useful as a guide to other teachers, parents, performers, researchers and practitioners. Focus enhancement programs have great potential for generating very real and positive impacts on students and performers of all age levels and in all areas of their lives.

Appendix A

Class	Class Activities Overview
1	Introduction to the course, focus in high performance, personal capacity to control focus, examples and open questions.
2	Focus in extreme sport and student-defined extreme situations discussed, Video viewed
3	Discussion on the ability and strategies for shifting focus, achieving and maintaining positive focus, focusing exercises, video viewed (i.e. Touching the void)
4	Discussion on achieving the impossible, exercises on setting small goals, Student-selected articles from the Online Journal of Excellence openly discussed
5	Discussion related to positive thinking and negative thinking, effective focus strategies and journaling. Interview regarding high performance focus enhancement with astronaut Chris Hadfield.
6	Relaxation techniques presented (audio CD Orlick, 2005), Refocus strategies (e.g. cue words) were introduced, and individuals planned and in small groups gave peer-feedback.
7	Wheel of excellence introduced (Orlick, 2008), planning sheets, athlete panel video, focus project status discussed in small groups
8	Positive living skills for children introduced (see Orlick 2011), discussed relevance of focus enhancement for all ages and project status discussion.
9	Individual Reflection questions, discussion. (E.g. What have you learned about sustaining your positive focus? Your connected focus? What do you still want to change or improve with respect to your focus?)
10	Relaxation exercise using audio CDs (Orlick, 2005), Student-selected articles from the Online Journal of Excellence discussed in small groups.
11	Personal Focus Enhancement Project status discussion in small groups. Positive living skills for children video viewed, open discussion related to focus enhancement with children.
12	Final Reflection questions regarding maintaining personal ongoing learning with respect to quality and sustainability of focus, and long-term goal setting. Open discussion with Orlick, students shared overall experiences and impact of what they had learned.

Appendix B

Participant pseudo name	Context for Focus Enhancement Project (additional areas of application)
Jennifer	Academics & ringette (stress control, career preparation)
Ken	Academics & strength training (enhancing connection in daily living)
Adam	Daily living (social situations, relationship, weight training, academics)
Christine	Daily living (remaining in the present moment, focus to fall asleep)
Pete	Daily living (basketball coaching, relationship, weight training, academics)
Julia	Improve fitness (focus to fall asleep, focus on positive perspectives)
Matt	Hockey performance (confidence, focus on positive perspectives)
Nicole	Daily living (family frustrations, after suffering an arm injury)
Elaine	Academics & self-esteem (focus on positive perspectives)
Hope	Daily living (medical school dream, academics, positive perspectives)

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Caddying is timing: An interview with Joe Skovron, PGA Tour caddy

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Abstract

Previous journalistic (Donegan, 1998), anecdotal (e.g., Abram & O’Byrne, 1996; Dabell, 1997, 200) and research literature (Lavalley, Bruce, & Gorely, 2004) suggests the golfer-caddie partnership is important to performance. The following interview is with Joe Skovron, a former professional golfer and college coach, who caddies for a top player on the PGA tour. Joe provides valuable insight into his role and our how their relationship works both on and off the golf course.

Can you tell me about your role as a PGA tour caddy?

Everybody’s role differs a little bit. Personally mine differs from someone else’s but some of the general things you’re doing are: hours at the golf course, yardages, reading the greens, aiding in practices, amongst other things. Besides that, it’s the relationship with the player. There’s definitely going to be some psychological factors that come in. For example, what you’re talking about in between shots, overall encouragement, keeping your player thinking correctly and just encouraging good

things going on with them. Besides that, off the golf course I think it depends on the relationship with the caddy, what’s required of them. Some players get their caddies more involved with practice sessions during off weeks if they live in the same city. Some players live in a different country and just show up at the tournament and it works that way. It all depends on that specific caddy-player relationship.

What's it like being a PGA tour caddy for one of the best players in the world?

To me it's fantastic for many reasons. In a short period of time I've gotten to experience things I dreamt about as a kid. To me the best part about it is when you're competing at the highest level. For me, it's all about playing in those big events, being in those situations, mixing it up, and seeing what your player can do in those pressure packed situations. Some of my advantages compared to maybe a caddy that's working for a guy that's not as high in the ranking, is that we are playing in the bigger events, traveling to places around the globe, and being exposed to a lot of really cool people, places, and things. Working for a Top-50 player in the world definitely has a ton of advantages and to me makes it one of the best jobs in the world. With that, as your player's popularity increases you also start having to deal with new challenges like having to deal with crowds, on the spot autograph and time requests for your player, and getting them [the players] to and fro in a timely manner. You get a bit more "protective" of your player with outside people.

What's it like dealing with the crowd?

What's your role in all that?

I think, my player, does a great job with it and his agent does a great job with it, so it makes it easier on me, but I think there's times when you have to protect your player and you have to be the guy that steps up and says something. For example, there are times when your player is trying to prepare for a round of golf, playing a practice round, or on their way to the tee and people are asking for autographs. There's a time and a place and sometimes you have to help them manage that. Other things, like when the crowd gets bigger either for your group or the pairings around you. Dealing with the crowd is something I've learned, making

sure no one's moving behind the green, people are not talking or taking pictures, etc. My player is very easy with that stuff because he's not real particular, he pulls the trigger pretty quick and not much bothers him but you still have to make sure nothing distracting is going on outside the ropes.

Address your role outside the ropes maybe before a tournament or after a tournament.

Outside the ropes might be a little bit different because we were friends before I started working for him. I've known him since he was five years old and watched him grow up. I'm older than him. He's my boss but we also have a relationship back from him being a little kid. So we definitely spend some time together off of the golf course whether it be dinner or staying at his house a couple days before or after a tournament. Traveling together occasionally, but not all the time. Sometimes sharing a room, we might have done that three-four times this year. It goes a bit more in depth with us because of the dynamic with the friendship.

Do you think your relationship helps you be a better caddy?

I do, I'm one of those guys, and I don't think I would be a caddy just for the paycheck. I think having an emotional investment in the person and really caring about them and their success is important rather than just the basics you get from their success. I know plenty of guys that have been successful in different ways but you look at their relationships and they have developed over time. The big caddy/ player partnerships that you can think of or that you look at have become friends and whether they were friends before or become friends after I think the relationship is an important part in the trust factor and knowing that your caddy has your back in any circumstance.

Is it a strength of good players to not have to share everything with their caddy? Do some bad players maybe rely on their caddy too much?

When people name off the best caddies, they usually name the caddies with the best players. But a lot of times the information you're giving may be a lot less than the caddy working a player who is lower in the world rankings and who might be more reliant on his caddy. I think to be a great player you have to accept all the responsibility. They are making the final decision and pulling the trigger. I think that if you look into it you will see that the best players in the world take full responsibility for what goes on out there. I can't think of many times when I have heard Tiger Woods or Phil Mickelson blame losing a tournament on their caddy. That being said, there is obviously times when caddies make mistakes that contribute to their player making a mistake and we deserve a bit of blame. We are the first one's to know when we make a mistake, and I know when I make a mistake I feel terrible about it. I think communication is extremely important in the caddy/player relationship. They pay us to be prepared and provide accurate information. When it comes to decision making, all we can do is be as prepared as possible to give them the best opinion we can and go from there. Ultimately, the player makes the final decision and he has to be comfortable with it, right or wrong. As one of my friends likes to say "there is a reason their name is on the bag."

How important do you think your role is as a caddy?

That is something that the player has to answer in my opinion. I think only the player knows how valuable his or her caddy is. It really comes down to the player being able to hit shots and perform under pressure. The caddy can support that but I don't really

think they can create that. I mean there's an old saying "you're only as good as your player is". Even though you might be able to help your player improve in certain areas and instill confidence in them or that reassurance at the right time or set them up with a club or whatever that might be, it still comes down to them.

How important is a caddy to the mentality of the player and how they're performing?

It would depend on the player and what his need is. I think what gets overlooked a lot of the time is a caddy and player's relationship in-between shots, how they're talking in between shots. How they talk after the round. How the caddy takes the failures and how the player takes the failures. How the caddy takes success just like the player takes the success. How the caddy deals with bad shots just like the player deals with bad shots. It's somewhat like a coach, if you're getting down, obviously, the player is getting down and if the player is getting down you can't be getting down. I think it's very important for a caddy to not have too many highs and too many lows and stay positive as much as possible because it's just like when you're around positive people, eventually it's going seep through. If you're around people that are negative eventually that's going seep through too. Lastly, I think that always having your players back and trusting in their abilities is extremely important.

Is there anything that you do to kind of keep your own mental game in check?

I learned a lot as a player regarding what I should have done and should have been applying while I was playing. It's important to not let your player see concern or doubt on your face. I think I've naturally gotten to that point and I think being around each other helped me get to that point even more

because he doesn't doubt me very often either.

Do the mental challenges for you change when you're playing really well? What are the mental challenges for you?

I actually think for us and for our relationship things get easier when we're in the hunt. That's where we both want to be and that's where we're comfortable. I know that speeding up has been one of our tendencies; things get faster and sometimes we just need to slow down a bit. Slow down your walk, your breathing, and your pre-shot routine. Make sure you've got all the information assessed, make your decision, and then just react and go. Sometimes things can start moving fast and we can get distracted by outside factors that don't give us an effective shot. You just have to stay in your routine as much as possible and maybe slow down a bit more to make sure you're taking all the numbers [distances] and factors that allow you to make the right decision.

Is it more difficult as a caddy when your player's just not playing so well?

I think that's the hardest part about being a caddy, you want to be able to help. I know that's my personality. I want to be able to help, I want to be able to say something that's going to make you get better, otherwise you feel kind of helpless. Sometimes there's nothing you can do. Sometimes just sitting back is the best thing you can do. You can overdo it and try to force it, and sometimes you just have to let that happen and let it take its course. You've done your job and that's all you can do, it's just going to take its course. That was something that was hard for me. Because I was always the guy that wanted to say something, control something, get something going. Sometimes, there's nothing to be said and you just got to lay back.

Does that just come with experience?

Knowing your player?

Oh yeah, so much of caddying is just timing. You might be saying the exact right thing but maybe it's the wrong timing. Maybe you needed to be a hole earlier, maybe you needed to be a hole later, maybe you needed to be a day later, and maybe you need to be a week earlier.

Can you elaborate on that? Do you have an example of when the timing was right or when it wasn't right?

I've noticed that there's so many times where you could say something but choose not to that ends up being the best thing or you choose not to and you should have said something. With that, I think it comes from what you believe in. If they ask you for your opinion you need to say it at that time and you need to give them your opinion whether it be a club or whatever. One thing I've learned is that if they're asking you they're probably not completely sure and if they are sure they'll just kind of throw out your opinion anyway. That's why I think it's important to give your opinion. But when it comes to things like attitude and inspiration I think it's really important to pick the right time and I think there's a feel for it.

If you've misread a couple putts what do you do to be confident that your next read will be on?

That's tough, you just have to keep reading them and do the best you can and go that direction. Depending on the player they might go away from asking you for a while if you've misread a couple. They [the players] might think it's important [to not ask] although it can affect a caddy's confidence. I've seen it happen in other caddy relationships where the caddy just gets reamed for it. I think that it's important that the player doesn't do that because then a caddy can stop giving their full opinion and

just agreeing with what the player has in their head in order to protect their job or whatever. A caddy is going to be wrong sometimes, but both the player and caddy have to deal with it and move on just as if the player hits a bad shot. All you can do is do your best, and to prepare the best you can, you're going to give opinions that are wrong sometimes, you just are. I think it's important for both the player and the caddy just to stick to their routines and get going at it and not lose that trust. Obviously if you're messing up over and over there is something that needs to be checked out in that relationship to see if that trust is still there or if something is wrong with that relationship.

What was your fondest memory of this past season (2010)?

The Ryder cup for sure. The week of the Ryder cup was unbelievable. Getting to be around the best in the game, hanging with guys I had looked up to my whole life, being a partner with the guy that I wanted to be with when I was 11 years old, unbelievable. As a player I always dreamed of winning The Masters and playing in a Ryder Cup. I was a team sports guy and representing your country and being part of a team makes it that much more special than anything else that you do. On top of that, the way that my player finished the last five holes, being in the most pressure packed situation in golf, made it extremely special. The way it came down to him and the last match with the Ryder cup on the line. That's pretty fun stuff. The only thing that could have made the week better would have been bringing home the cup.

Can you describe that experience?

He was playing well all week. It got away from us 9 through 12. It just all of a sudden got away. I think we lost two or three of those holes and all of a sudden we are four down. It just kind of came out of nowhere. It

wasn't like he played bad the whole day or anything like that. Just a couple bad shots and boom, you're down down. Then we saw these things happen in front of us and all of a sudden this comeback was in place. He just got up on there on the tee on 13 and our opponent gave us an opening, he hit it way left off the tee on the par three. I said there's our opening, let's go hit a good golf shot. He knew exactly what to do; he made three and won the hole. We went to 14 and our opponent hit another bad one off the tee and my player hit a great tee shot, we were sitting up there just perfect and then our opponent pulled off a great shot to tie the hole. Heading to 15 three down it got to where we just said, "let's just keep taking him one more hole" and that's all we really concentrated on was let's take him one more hole. I kept saying that over and over to [player]; "let's take him one more hole". Whether we win this match or not, the game was different in that situation than it was in individual tournament. We felt like the longer we take him; the more it gives the other US Player on the course a chance in his match. You kind of feed off the momentum of other teammates. My player hit a great shot into 16 and won that hole. 17 he hit it in there and made that putt. All of a sudden we go to 18. If anyone was watching a telecast and saw the putt he made on 18, that's about as good as it gets. The highest pressure he has ever experienced brought out the best golf in him.

What did you do to keep your emotions in check in the Ryder Cup?

I kept thinking about the process and what we were trying to do out there. Obviously it was exciting and obviously it was fun. More than anything it kept our adrenaline flowing but also helped me be ultra focused on what I was doing with my job and what I was seeing rather than getting caught up in all the other stuff. The key is to not get scared,

your nerves almost make you that much more focused and make you that much better when you feel those nerves. If you're going to caddy for high level players you've got to be able to deal with that. I don't know if there's anything I did to combat it rather than focus on what we were trying to do. I didn't feel like it was that hard to do, you go through the process, you do your thing, you get your numbers, and you just stay positive with him. Especially in that tournament, I just kept reiterating "ok let's take it one more hole, let's take it one more shot, let's hit a good shot here, and let's hit a good shot here". As a caddy you don't have to physically perform the shots so it makes it a lot easier to stay calm under pressure. And when you REALLY believe in your player it makes it much easier to deal with all that is at stake as well.

Do you think that is something you just kind of have it or you don't?

Yeah, without being a sports psychologist, being around sports as much as I have, I think you can develop a certain amount of it. I think that's maybe why guys hit their prime at different times and maybe realize how to deal with the pressure and do those things. But to react like that the first time at the Ryder cup, that's something that you're born with and that's something that's inside that only special people have, and he has that. That kind of pressure you just respond to it differently. You know, when he describes those putts, people ask him if he was nervous and he said he wasn't nervous when he got over the putt because he was so concerned with his process and getting the read right and hitting a good putt and all those things that all that other stuff went out the door. That's just something that strengthened over time with his successes and his confidence in himself but that's something that you just have or you don't have.

Are those the moments that kind of solidify your confidence and make you a stronger player?

Yeah, we did play five more events after that and he finished 22nd and 25th in two of those. He had a third, a fourth, and a fifth as well. I don't think it changed anything but I think it solidified that he can make the putts under pressure and he made a few more putts the rest of the year. I also think it's something that we can draw on down the stretch at any time and can give him a lot of confidence down the stretch as a finisher. I also think, and other players will have to answer this, but other players took notice of it. If his name is on the board I don't think anyone is going to expect him to go backwards because of what they saw at that Ryder cup. And I might be wrong on that but I got a lot of comments from some big time players on how impressed they were at how he handled that and I think a lot of people took notice of that. One way or another, the Ryder Cup finish will benefit us at some point when we are in a pressure situation.

What happens in between shots between you and your player?

I think that everyone is a little different but sometimes we won't talk at all, but mostly we'll talk about something that happened the day before or maybe something that happened at dinner or we'll joke around about something or maybe we'll pick something out in the crowd that I see that might be funny. If I think there is a time when something funny needs to be said I'm definitely not scared of walking up and cracking a joke about whatever it needs to be about. I think that's important. But really the conversations vary but they're very rarely about golf. They might be about golf for a little time after he hits a shot and we're talking about something that didn't react the way we thought it would but that's only for

20-30 seconds then we're talking about something else. A lot of times you're talking about whatever comes to mind, whatever chitchat there might be and another player is involved in chitchat and whatnot. I think that's important to kind of take a break in between shots and not always be focused on golf. Every player is a little bit different. We are both laid back out there so you'll see us kind of laughing and joking a lot of the time in-between shots even coming down the stretch. I definitely think that's the way it's supposed to be and that's what it's about. You know some people take that as you don't care sometimes but I think that's completely wrong, it's more that you're enjoying what you're doing and having a love for what you're doing. I think if anything it helps your performance. If you're laughing and joking and doing those things it kind of relieves a little bit of stress or pressure.

Do caddies experience flow or being in the zone?

I definitely think you have your days where you just read greens well and every time

they [the player] get over a shot you know what that shot calls for, it's a little seven iron here, it's a little six iron here. You have your days where you really get it. You can call that in the zone, call it whatever you want, but you know you have those moments where you're getting everything right. You also have those days where it's a struggle and you've got to go through things in your mind that don't usually bother you. For example, when you're not seeing the greens very well, you definitely have those days where you have to work that much harder to figure it out when they ask you something. You know you're worrying a little bit more about the information you're giving, than the process, I don't know what it is or why it is, but you just have your days like that when you're not quite as sharp. Even if you prepared the same way, maybe you're just not seeing things the same.

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