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From Canter to Cantor - Negotiating constraints, and the perceptions of elitism in serious leisure pursuits: The experiences of a high performing athlete and artist.

Lorraine O'Neill

This thesis is presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure  
Faculty of Business and Law  
Edith Cowan University, Joondalup  
Western Australia

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.



### Abstract

Everyone experiences leisure differently but, for people who excel in a chosen field, a hobby can become a serious goal-oriented leisure pursuit. Many talented people, however, fail to reach their leisure goals due to constraints. This study explored individual life experiences of serious leisure participants. It focused on the lived experiences of individual event [horse] riders and opera singers who successfully negotiated their constraints, enabling them to reach their high performance goals.

The purpose of this study was to explore positive personal strategies that individuals used to negotiate constraints in serious leisure. This was done by exploring intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural leisure constraints using an individual's life experiences. During the process of this study, elitism in the leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing, and the perceptions about individuals who participate in these activities, were also explored.

A multidisciplinary approach was used in this study using a two stage mixed research methodology. The first stage explored the lived experiences of two individuals through a series of in-depth case study interviews, followed by interviews with their parents and coaches. Focus groups followed to establish if a wider group of participants within the same leisure pursuits experienced similar findings. The second stage of the study used a quantitative method, which consisted of a broader national survey. The survey data validated the qualitative findings and strengthened study outcomes.

The findings of this study related to the *opportunity-seeking* skills an individual develops throughout their leisure life. These opportunity-seeking skills were linked to the likes, needs and wants an individual must have to reach a high performance level. It also found four principal 'C Factors' important to individual decision-making processes: conditioning, change, choice and control. Research findings revealed that early support and encouragement, however small, *conditioned* and motivated individuals to start and continue in a particular leisure activity. It also showed that those who had the ability to improve their talent, who personally believed in themselves, who viewed difficulties or complicated situations positively, and sought opportunities to enhance their leisure goals and *change*

constraint outcomes, continued to succeed. Individuals had to make *choices* to enable them to *control* their goal achievement and deal with constraints throughout their leisure life. High performance success was found to be related to superior opportunity-seeking skills. Constraints arising from perceptions of elitism within serious leisure pursuits were found to be based on an individual's life experiences and societal opinions, and not on the actual activity itself.

In this study the strength of an individual's motivation and self-belief, had a direct influence on their perceptions of constraints, and how they personally used opportunity-seeking to negotiate these constraints. Although the ability to predict which athletes or artists will become national or world class is limited, the conceptual framework developed in this study based on successful constraint negotiation strategies, could aid individuals wishing to reach a high performance level, and guide their parents and coaches to provide optimal support.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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.....

Lorraine O'Neill

November 2010



Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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.....  
Lorraine O'Neill

November 2010

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I would like to express my appreciation to all the people who were part of this study. Especially to “Madeleine” and “Maria” who shared the ups and downs of their life experiences with me. I thank you for allowing me to enter your lives.

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Personally, my achievements in life would never have happened if it were not for my parents - my mum, who encouraged me continually with her endless love and my dad, who showed me how to laugh and continue to dream. I know he would be proud. Your trust and encouragement when I was younger allowed me the freedom to choose a wonderful life. I am what I am now because of you two. I love you both. Special thanks also go to my surrogate parents Aunty Irene with her retail therapy, and Uncle Jud and his frequent wine tasting sessions. They really had no idea what I was doing but kept on checking I was taking a few breaks anyway!

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### **The Researcher's Perspective**

*I potter around horses and I sing in the shower, and if you had asked me when I was 20 what my dreams were, I would have answered, “to become a famous Olympic rider or a star of the stage”....but hey, doesn't everyone have big dreams?*

*Now, 20 years later I have worked alongside champion equestrians and emerging international opera singers, assisting them to gain that elusive world-class title. But how do some people reach a high performance level when others don't?*

*While I was pondering on this thought I realised that I was in a unique position; I could examine first-hand how high performers reach their goals when so many around them fail or simply continue to dream.*

*As a past CEO of a sporting organisation, lecturer, and later a private consultant and mentor, I have worked closely with athletes and artists for over 12 years, watching and helping them to evolve from novice to a high performance level. During these years I came to notice similarities in the way horse riders and singers developed their personal skills, leading them to their performance goals or careers. I also noticed parallels emerging between the two leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing. Both these leisure pursuits were seen as elite pursuits, perceived to be undertaken by those who are wealthy, or are from an elite social class; both are individual pursuits where males and females compete as equals; both are recognised internationally; and both have a large number of competitors vying for limited places at the top.*

*The more I thought about it the more I began to notice the similarities between two talented, high performing women – one in the equestrian field and one in the opera field. They didn't know each other, they were in totally different leisure pursuits, yet they both seemed to be going through the same trials and tribulations in reaching their desired goals.*

*More questions arose: What inspired each of these individuals to develop their hobby into a serious pursuit in the first place? Over the years while they increased their techniques and*

*skills, how did they overcome everyday obstacles that others, equally as talented, could not overcome? What did they have that allowed them to reach such a high performance level? Was it external support or something the individuals did themselves that led them to where they are now?*

*One thing both women had in common, that was plainly visible to everyone, was their talent. Some would say that talent is a pre-requisite to becoming world-class, yet others would say it is not the most important requirement. Keeping motivated and finding ways to overcome difficult situations may be the most important. Even with loads of talent, a lack of confidence or negative thinking in the face of a constraint, may override that talent.*

*It was not my intention to explain, explore or expand on the actual pursuits of event riding or opera singing. Both areas are complex and too diverse to investigate sufficiently within a single study. I also do not profess to be an expert in the eventing or opera fields, my aim was not to improve how a person rides or sings, but to explore experiences to reveal how event riders and opera singers negotiated constraints and took advantage of opportunities.*

*Without the ability to overcome constraints many talented people never reach their dream – they continue to potter around horses or sing in the shower.*

## Chapter 1

*Ability is of little account without opportunity.*

*Napoleon Bonaparte, French General and Emperor (1804)*

### Introduction

This study developed from the curiosity of the researcher regarding the question: “How do individual athletes and artists develop their hobby to reach a high-level of performance?” An answer was needed to explain why some extremely talented people never make it, while others with less talent do. There are many books for entrepreneurs on how to be successful in business, but limited information for individuals who want to become high performers in their chosen leisure field.

This study is an exploration of a leisure-work journey of individuals in the sport of event riding and the art of opera singing. The study explored how two talented women, the key informants of this study, overcame everyday constraints to pursue their hobbies and develop careers from their chosen fields. To enrich the researcher’s knowledge of the key informants, external support entities such as their parents and coaches were also interviewed. Findings were broadened further through focus group discussions conducted with current event riders and opera singers. A national survey was then implemented to establish if individuals within the same leisure pursuits had similar experiences, strengthening the overall outcomes.

The coincidental connection of the lives of a high performance event rider and a high performance opera singer presented a unique opportunity to explore the concepts of *constraints* and *opportunities* within leisure. In this study, leisure in the context of *serious leisure* is explored. The issue of *elitism* and its affect on these leisure pursuits, an area that arose in the course of this study, also led to further exploration.

This chapter outlines the overall study. It begins with the background, including a brief outline of leisure, and explores the context of the study. It then states the overall purpose, the research objectives, research design and significance to current research. The research



questions provided the drive for this study, which utilised a mixed-method approach undertaken in two distinct phases. The first phase used a qualitative method and the second phase used a quantitative method.

This chapter also introduces the two key informants who were the focus of the case studies, with an overview of the two leisure activities chosen – event riding and opera singing. It also highlights the similarities of these leisure activities and parallels that emerged.

### **Definitions in relation to this study.**

For the purpose of this study, and to alleviate confusion, the following definitions will be used:

#### Leisure

Leisure relates to those activities that people do in their free time, because they want to, for their own sake, for fun, entertainment, self-improvement, or for goals of their own choosing, but not for material gain. (Argyle, 1996, p. 3)

#### Serious Leisure

The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge. (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3)

#### Leisure Constraints and Constraint Negotiation

Constraints are typically portrayed as inanimate obstacles or conditions which can sometimes be overcome through individual effort and initiative. Negotiation of leisure constraints refers to the successful navigation of those obstacles. (Samdahl, Hutchinson, & Jacobson, 1999)

### Elite

In sociology elite refers to an individual [or a relatively small dominant group] within a larger society who enjoy a privileged status. Elite class can be related to the high status value of cultural forms and practices - according to birth, status or wealth. (Bennett, Emmison, & Frow, 1999, p. 183)

### High-level Performer

High-level performers who exert high effort in most situations to maximise learning and performance improvement regardless of the level of task difficulty, seek high-level performance. These performers believe that ability and skill can continue to be refined throughout their careers, and define success in terms of self-referent standards, striving for learning, skill improvement, goal attainment, and/or task mastery. (Burton & Naylor, 2002, p. 480)

### Eventing

Eventing is the most complete combined competition discipline recognised by the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). It demands of the competitor considerable experience in all branches of equitation and a precise knowledge of the horse's ability and of the horse a degree of competence resulting from intelligent and rational training. It covers every aspect of horsemanship: the harmony between horse and rider that characterise Dressage; the contact with nature, stamina and extensive experience essential for the Cross Country; the precision, agility and technique involved in Jumping. (FEI, 2008)

### Eventing Classification

In the sport of eventing, the level of difficulty is classified by star ratings from one to four, depicted as CIC \*, CIC\*\*, CIC\*\*\*, CIC\*\*\*\* (Concours Internationale Complet). There are only four events worldwide that have the highest four star rating - two in the United Kingdom, one in the United States of America and one in Australia. The majority of events in Australia

are classed as One Day Events (ODE) with three stars as the highest rating. (EFA, 2004; , 2006; , 2007)

### **Background to this study.**

Leisure is an important part of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with trends suggesting that it is of growing significance to society as a whole and not class dictated (Veal & Lynch, 2006). Leisure activities can be grouped into categories such as, entertainment, the arts, social interaction, hobbies, sports, games and outdoor recreation (Veal & Lynch, 2006).

Research shows that increasing numbers of individuals, male and female, are undertaking a broad range of leisure activities (Handy, 1995; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Stebbins, 1997; Veal & Lynch, 2006). This can be confirmed through recent Australian Bureau of Statistics reports stating that one in three Australians over 15 years participated in some type of sport or some type of physical activity (ABS, 2007), and between 2003 and 2007 there was a 20% increase in cultural activity participation (ABS, 2008b). Data on children under 15 years who participated in sport and cultural activities between 2000 and 2006 also show an increase, with sport participation rising from 59% to 63% and cultural activity participation from 29% to 33% (ABS, 2006a).

With this increase in numbers comes an increase in participant competitiveness and leisure pursuit commercialisation. Seriousness in serious leisure pursuits continues to rise (Stebbins, 1992; Veal & Lynch, 2006). With this increased competitiveness comes work-like behaviour. As performers strive to improve their leisurely hobby, the activity becomes more work-like (Handy, 1995; Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996; McQuarrie & Jackson, 2002; Raphael & Itzhak, 2002; Stebbins, 2007). Individuals set difficult goals to enable them to gain higher levels of performance, in turn they exert more effort to reach those goals (Iso-Ahola & Hatfield, 1986). Due to the amount of time and effort a person puts into reaching goals in high performance activities, the concepts that differentiate leisure and work begin to blur (Handy, 1995; Iso-Ahola & Hatfield, 1986; Raphael & Itzhak, 2002; Stebbins, 1992, 2007). Because of this leisure/work paradigm, the growing seriousness of leisure and the changing

concept of social class, this study also examined findings from related studies in leisure, and from other disciplines, such as business and psychology.

Previous studies have explored the notion of serious leisure becoming work-like and work becoming more leisure-like (Handy, 1995; Raphael & Itzhak, 2002; Ware, 2001). Although the word ‘serious’ is more commonly associated with work than leisure, with the changes in society concepts of work and leisure becoming blended, finding a specific definition for leisure is complex (Handy, 1995; Jackson, 2000; Stebbins, 2007). Stebbins (1992, p. 8) stated that “serious leisure is often described and analysed in terms more appropriate to the world of work than to the world of leisure.” He also defined serious leisure as becoming “sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career therein” (Stebbins, 1997, p. 17).

With the profound changes that took place in the working environment in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and the continuing evolution between work and leisure in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Iwasaki, Mackay, & Mactavish, 2005; Snir & Harpaz, 2002; Stebbins, 2000) studies exploring the links between work and leisure will further impact on serious leisure and its relationship with work. According to Snir and Harpaz (2002), leisure aspects will receive increased attention in future research in order to clarify the differential effects of leisure and work within society.

Business educator Charles Handy claimed work practices were continually changing giving individuals increased freedom, with work becoming “more in tune with the rest of life;” he found that leisure can be associated with work practices and that “the best form of leisure is nearly always active leisure, or work of a sort” (1995, p. 166). The concept of freedom in relation to leisure varies according to the individual (Veal & Lynch, 2006), therefore the work-leisure paradigm is determined by the perceptions of the individual undertaking the activity.

Stebbins (2007) generally viewed serious leisure participants as those who continue to persevere at their chosen leisure pursuit, despite constraints, to establish a career or professional standing in their chosen field. The two key informants in this study commenced their leisure activities as hobbies - horse riding and singing - for the enjoyment it gave them.

As their abilities improved these hobbies became more intense and time consuming, developing into the more specialised serious leisure activities of event riding and opera singing. Consequently, the leisure-work paradigm was studied further using the participants in this study. It also explored whether or not the participants required external income to support their leisure activities, as increasingly individuals need to work to gain funds to support their serious leisure interests (Stebbins, 2007) and if participants perceived their leisure as work-like.

Many individuals discontinue their leisure activity, not because they want to personally, but because they are unable to overcome obstacles, they encounter, either from the activity itself or from pressures in life. For example, increased work pressures can limit the available time a person has to continue in a serious leisure activity, or a personal injury can stop an individual from active participation.

Past studies have investigated constraints, and constraint negotiation in leisure, finding that constraints are seen as inanimate obstacles or conditions sometimes negotiated by individuals through effort, initiative, acceptance or adaptation (Samdahl, Hutchinson, & Jacobson, 1999). However, constraints do vary among individuals (Jackson, 2000), and individuals react differently to similar constraints (Jackson, 2000; McQuarrie & Jackson, 2002; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Searle, 2000). Jackson (2000) alluded to a noticeable lack of research directly relating to innovative strategies that people used to negotiate the effects of constraints in leisure. This study broadens these findings using a social perspective, looking at how an individual views leisure, society and their environment through their lived experiences. As Samdahl, Hutchinson and Jacobson (1999) suggested, research should also incorporate individual ideologies, using a social perspective; therefore the thoughts, feelings and viewpoints of high performers will be explored.

The study also explored research from other disciplines, such as business and psychology, as non-leisure research can also add valuable understanding to leisure questions. While recognising that leisure is a unique field of study (Samdahl, 2000), this decision was made not to dilute leisure research, but to gain additional knowledge to strengthen and expand leisure research within this study.

Few studies appear to have explored the way individuals can enhance their leisure activities by reducing the effects of constraints through strengthening opportunities. This study aimed to find gaps in leisure research specifically relating to opportunities and constraint negotiation from the perspective of individuals. To do this, it examined responses to constraints experienced, and opportunities available, within two leisure activities by exploring the leisure backgrounds of two high-level female performers – one in the sports field of eventing and one in the arts field of opera. The study also identified life opportunities, motivations, external influences, and personal strategies used to achieve a high performance status, and it also recognised how an individual's positive view of constraints could lead them to achieve their desired outcomes. Outcomes were later tested on two populations – event riders and opera singers.

An additional aspect to this study was the perception that general society tagged certain sport and art activities as *elitist*. This perception was explored further to determine whether these perceptions affected the participants in event riding and opera singing.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The overall purpose of this study was to explore constraints and opportunities experienced by individuals in their endeavours to reach a high performance level. Perceptions of elitism were also examined within this study using both an individual viewpoint through the key informants themselves and a societal perspective through interviews with external support subjects, focus groups and a national survey. The study aimed to develop a framework giving a logical and diagrammatic overview of how individuals developed the skills to recognise opportunities, and negotiate constraints, in the serious leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing, that maybe appropriate for other fields.

### **Research questions.**

Three main research questions with several sub-questions drove this study:

- Q1. What opportunities and constraints affect an individual's pursuit of a high performance leisure activity?

- 1a. *What opportunities and constraints do individuals encounter in their chosen leisure field?*
  - 1b. *What degree of parental expectation, encouragement and influence did they receive?*
  - 1c. *What degree of coach expectation, encouragement and influence did they receive?*
  - 1d. *What critical success factors influenced their rise from a hobby status to a professional status?*
- Q2. What strategies have successful athletes and artists used to overcome intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints on their path to high performance?
- 2a. *What do successful athletes and artists perceive as important factors to high performance?*
  - 2b. *How do they anticipate and plan to negotiate future constraints?*
- Q3. What does the term 'elite class' mean to high performing event riders and opera singers?
- 3a. *What leisure activities are perceived as being elitist by event riders and opera singers?*
  - 3b. *How does the term 'elite' affect the activities of eventing and opera?*

### **Research objectives.**

Six specific research objectives were developed to achieve the purpose of this study and to answer the research questions.

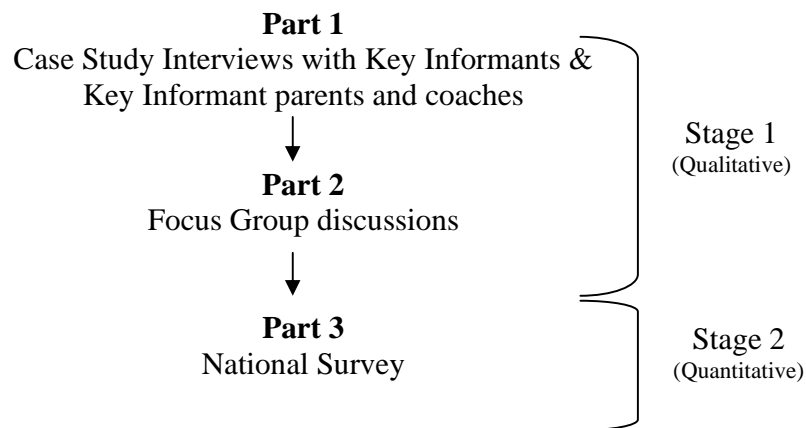
These were:

1. To explore the experiences of two selected women at high-levels of performance in equestrian and operatic leisure pursuits, and their progression towards their high performance.
2. To identify opportunities and constraints that influence progression towards high performance levels.
3. To explore how the various support systems contribute to the opportunities and constraints for a high performing individual.
4. To identify strategies used by the performers to negotiate constraints encountered throughout their performance life.
5. To confirm or not any universality of the constraint negotiation strategies by testing the case study findings on a larger peer group of equestrian and opera performers.

6. To explore perceptions of the term elite as it relates to the sport of eventing and the art of opera.

### **Research process.**

This study used a mixed mode of research using both qualitative and quantitative methods, to ensure that the research questions and research objectives were achieved. By using this mixed method approach the weaknesses often found in an individual approach were overcome. It gave the study a more accurate perception of reality, knowledge and truth (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004), and as a result the mix of both qualitative and quantitative findings provided a broader and richer outcome.



*Figure 1.1* Overview of research design.

The overall design of this study incorporated three main parts. The first consisted of in-depth case studies, including interviews with the key informants, parents and coaches.

Information from these case study interviews was used to develop the discussion topics for the second part of the study – the focus groups. Both the first and second parts incorporated the qualitative stage of this study. Information from the discussions was used to develop questions for the second quantitative stage - a national survey – the third and final part of the study’s design (see Figure 1.1).



These survey questions related specifically to issues that arose in the first two parts, the qualitative stage, of this study. The survey data were analysed using statistical techniques to support findings that originated from the case studies and focus groups.

It was the purpose of this study to explore the personal experiences of two high performing women in different leisure activities, and expand on the findings through discussions with focus groups and a national survey. By identifying strategies used by successful high-level performers it was possible to develop a conceptual framework that may be used by other individuals, enabling them to better understand the influencing factors, and the stages in the process, of achieving a high-level of performance in a leisure pursuit.

Understanding how these two leisure activities were perceived, albeit from related populations, added to the knowledge of participant constraints. It was anticipated that leisure activities associated with the elite or *highbrow* tag might have added constraints, due to society's perceptions of these pursuits, compared with other leisure activities such as playing Australian Football or singing with the church choir. Whether or not this perception affected leisure participants needed to be examined, via literature and through the research questions, giving a broader understanding of constraints within the leisure fields studied.

Analysis of literature and interviews with key informants, external support participants and focus group discussions, and the use of a national survey were used when conducting this study. Multiple techniques were used within and across each of the research stages allowing for the merging of the qualitative and quantitative methods. At no time was the purpose of this study to explore or investigate the technicalities of event riding or opera singing. Nor was this study specifically conducted from a feminist point of view, as event riding and opera singing are each high performance pursuits, in which men and women have equal chance of success and are therefore considered gender neutral. However, gender was an area explored as the key informants and the researcher were all women.

**Significance of the study**

In leisure studies, few theories and conceptual frameworks address successful negotiation strategies of high performing individuals. There is limited research that explores leisure, using a comparative research focus, and very little specifically relating to the two leisure activities of event riding and opera singing; two leisure fields - totally different, yet with substantial similarities.

Studies undertaken by Stebbins (1997), Henderson et al. (1999), Samdahl et al. (1999) and Kelly (2000) suggest there is a lack of information that links serious leisure and personal history together using a perspective that focuses on the social experiences of an individual. By using a sociological perspective to explore the lived experiences of individuals in this study, new knowledge on constraint negotiation can be obtained to fill gaps in leisure research, specifically relating to opportunities and constraint negotiation from the perspective of individuals. Using comparative qualitative and quantitative methods strengthened this study by providing richer and more detailed results.

Jackson (2000, p. 64) suggested that “to understand how society affects individuals, leisure research should look at contextual issues rather than using a psychological perspective.” Contextual issues are important but to gain more depth of understanding in this study, other academic discipline perspectives of leisure, especially in business and psychology, were also explored. Using both psychological and contextual views Johnson, Tenenbaum and Edmonds’ (2006) 4-factor model found relationships involving workloads, supportive environments, individual coping skills and that an individual’s predisposition directly links to individual high performance outcomes. This study addresses from an individual’s viewpoint specific life conditions, such as coping strategies, leisure placement in everyday lives, and how constraints were negotiated rather than being seen as barriers that cannot be overcome. Constraints in leisure vary due to the activity pursued and the individual (Henderson, 1997), with universal constraints such as time, money, isolation, politics and travel prominent in past leisure research (Jackel & Wollscheid, 2007; Konstantinos, Charalambos, & George, 2002; Shannon, 2006). Specific leisure activities themselves also had individual constraints associated with them (Konstantinos, Charilaos, & George, 2007; McQuarrie & Jackson, 2002; Ware, 1999). The horse and the voice, for example, were specific constraints found

only in activities related to horse riding (Endenburg, 1999; Kathen, 2005) and singing (Sandgren, 2005; Ware, 1999).

The leisure activities of event riding and opera singing were found in this study to have other external constraints, such as the perceptions of elitism. The perception that these activities are for the high born, or wealthy and only available to the minority, has the potential to reduce external support for participants. Past studies on elitism focused on society or industry perspectives (Hollands, 1988; Vincent, 2000), and studied society from a class viewpoint (Lemann, 2000; Morton, 2004; Saunders, 1990) not from an individual artist or athlete's perspective. The degree of impact perceptions of elitism had on leisure activities in Australia and on the participants themselves was explored further in this study.

Although the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing are regarded as being gender neutral (Cargher, 1988; Green, 1986), a female viewpoint cannot be avoided as this study focuses on the experiences of two women and is written by a woman. However, it is not the intention to view this study from a feminist perspective, as Henderson, Shaw, Bialeschki and Freysinger (1996) point out research should be a foundation for a better understanding of women's, as well as men's leisure. By using a more holistic view of constraint negotiation, and focusing on opportunities, it is hoped that strategies developed from this study will be adaptable by other women, and men, who wish to reach a high performance level in a wide range of leisure pursuits. This would strengthen the focus of this study and allow adaptability as new approaches are needed to explore and understand the negotiation of constraints for both men and women in leisure (Shaw, 1994).

This study aimed to provide an original and broadened pathway of research giving a more informed perspective on how individuals, undertaking a leisure activity, can negotiate constraints to reach their high performance goals. Individuals shape and create their own lives (Samdahl, Hutchinson, & Jacobson, 1999), by allowing participants to communicate their own meanings (Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996). By exploring why some individuals, particularly successful in their leisure field, not only negotiate constraints, but view constraints in a positive way, this study will fill gaps mentioned by Jackson (2000) and Kelly

(2000) in leisure research relating to successful constraint negotiation. It will also assist other high performers to “fashion their own optimal leisure lifestyle” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 135).

### **Introducing the Two Key Informants**

This study focused on two key informants and this section provides some preliminary insights into their backgrounds. Both were born and raised in Australia and, at the commencement of this study, both resided in Western Australia. The key informants were high performing women in their chosen pursuits, aged in their 30s, single with no dependents.

The key informants provided specific information, but all names and places have been altered in an attempt to protect their privacy and provide a degree of anonymity. Similarly, years and locations of world competitions are deliberately vague. Because of their high public profiles both participants were aware that they could be identified by people who are very familiar with their fields and their individual achievements.

#### **The athlete: Madeleine Phillips (eventer).**

To enable her to continue her farm duties, Madeleine Phillips’s mother had to put her daughter on a horse at the tender age of three. This was the start of Madeleine’s love of horses. Later Madeleine recalled:

“I remember sitting at high school watching the Olympics and I thought, I can do that – I’m going to do that one day.” (ABC TV Landline interview with Madeleine by Shoebridge, 2004)

A grazier from rural Australia, Madeleine Phillips has been riding socially and competitively from an early age. A circuit of pony clubs within two hours of the family’s home allowed Madeleine to learn the finer points of riding and develop her skills. In her early riding life all the horses on the Phillips farm were used for work, although later in life she depended on training horses and selling them to help finance her leisure pursuit. Formal riding facilities on the farm were non-existent, sheep paddocks became dressage arenas and fallen logs became

jumps. Galloping horses through the bush after feral cows gave Madeleine the confidence to jump big jumps and take risks. By the time Madeleine was 12 she rode in adult level competitions at equestrian shows, as officials noted that she was too good to compete with juniors.

Madeleine received numerous awards and trophies, including local government awards for Best Sportswoman in her district. She competed and won Three Day Events throughout Australia and in Europe. Her experience and professionalism led to invitations for her to instruct clubs and individuals around Australia. Internationally she was the only coach invited to train a former Olympic Equestrian Team in Asia.

Madeleine missed selection for one Olympics by two points. Four years later she fell from her horse in the selection process for the next Olympics, and even though she came fourth and went on to win the following day, the Australian Olympic selectors chose another horse and rider combination for those games. The weekend after the Olympic Team was announced that year, Madeleine rode in a National Three Day Event and came first. This achievement qualified her to ride for the World Cup. She was the only person residing in Australia selected as an individual rider for the World Cup Equestrian Games in Europe that year.

At the World Cup, Madeleine was the only rider to achieve a clear round in the show jumping phase, and was placed fifth in the world, immediately qualifying her for an individual place at the following World Cup. That year Madeleine was selected and rode for the Australian World Cup Team at the following World Equestrian Games in Europe, even with an unfortunate fall on the cross country, Madeleine and the team won Bronze. As a result Madeleine was invited by the Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA) to be in the Australian Olympic Training Team in preparation for her third Olympic attempt. After winning internationally and nationally in the lead up to events, Madeleine and her horse joined 24 other rider and horse combinations in the National Elite Squad.

She was then selected by the EFA (the acronym for Equestrian Federation of Australia to be used throughout this thesis) as part of the 13 riders and horse combination Elite Eventing Squad. At the time of data collection, Madeleine and her horse were in extensive training

with squad members waiting for the final selection process for the Australian Olympics Eventing Team.

**The artist: Maria Sutherland (mezzo-Soprano).**

Maria's love of vocal music began at an early age. She was born in Australia, and her family travelled around before finally settling in an outer city suburb of New South Wales while she was still in primary school. To entertain herself she would play the piano and sing. It was in NSW that her musical abilities were encouraged by her mother when she joined the school choir.

Maria performed at the Sydney Opera House with her primary school choir and later became a member of the National Youth Choir of Australia. She majored in vocal performance at university, graduating with distinction. During her time at university, she performed in several significant and demanding opera roles.

A long-standing member of her university choir, she has performed as soloist in several works. Maria was the alto soloist in several productions of a well-known choral society and symphony choir. She was a finalist in the State's Eisteddfod Operatic Aria. Maria was employed as principal vocalist on the soundtrack of a documentary film that aired on television. She also assisted in creating the music for a documentary on the life of a famous Australian for the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Maria travelled with an opera company to perform in England, China and Japan and in 2004 performed major operatic roles with this company. Maria has performed in over 175 performances, performing to the public in classical operas, musical theatre, cabarets and concerts. The performances have been to audiences ranging from a few dozen people to crowds of thousands. She has performed at well-known professional venues around Australia such as the Sydney Opera House and His Majesty's Theatre, and internationally at Covent Garden in London and opera houses in Beijing and Tokyo.

In 2005, Maria undertook her final year contracted to an opera organisation as a mezzo-soprano, automatically receiving an audition with Opera Australia. In 2006, Maria undertook

contractual work including solo performances for private companies to finance her European solo career internationally. Maria married a fellow opera singer and both of them travelled to Europe. At the time of data analysis they were both performing in the United Kingdom with future performance auditions scheduled in Germany.

## **The Leisure Activities of Eventing and Opera**

### **An introduction to eventing.**

Many equestrian sports evolved from the traditional roles and behaviours of the horse. The origin of the sport of eventing lies in the testing of the military charger. The horse was required to be fearless and fast across the battlefield, to have the agility to move in any direction yet be elegantly obedient on the parade ground (Podhajsky, 1967). Equestrian events were included in the modern Olympic Games for the first time in 1900, and in 1912 the sport of eventing was officially included as a regular event at the Olympic Games (IOC, 2004).

Initially eventing was restricted to military cavalry officers whose cavalry skills were tested. Civilians could only compete in the jumping and dressage phases, but they were not eligible to win a medal. The military-controlled competition changed in 1948 when the Olympic sport of eventing was opened to any rider (IOC, 2004). In accordance with the International Olympic Committee, the sport retains a format in the current Games, very similar to the original (IOC, 2004).

In Australia, an Olympic accredited eventing competition is known as a Three Day Event (IOC, 2004) or horse trial, and is recognized by the Australian ruling equestrian sporting body, the Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA, 2007). Eventing is an Olympic equestrian sport often described as the equestrian triathlon. It is a sport where the rider and horse combination compete in a three-phase test that demands the complete training of the horse on the flat and over fences. Equestrian sports are the only Olympic sport where man or woman and an animal are recognised team-mates, and one of the few where men and women compete on equal terms (Green, 1986).

Eventing covers all the Olympic equestrian disciplines within its three phases; dressage, cross-country and show-jumping (EFA, 2004). The phases are clarified by the International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2004) as follows: the first phase, dressage, could be described as a sort of ballet on horseback in which the rider guides the horse to perform certain intricate manoeuvres at different paces. Judges evaluate how well the horse executes the prescribed moves required for different test levels. The second phase of riding is the cross-country phase for which a course is set over 5-8kms of countryside, with 30 to 40 solid “natural” obstacles that the horse and rider have to complete. Show jumping, the third phase, consists of negotiating a series of fences without knocking them down. Scoring is by a series of tables including timing and obstacle points that evaluate each day's performance.

Eventing is one of the equestrian Olympic sports in which Australia has predominately won both individual and team medals for over 40 years. Australian riders in both team and individual events have achieved consecutive gold medals in three successive Olympics, 1992, 1996 and 2000 (DatabaseSports.com, 2008): a feat unheard of in any other Olympic sporting event. Consequently, Australia is known as one of the leading countries, whose horse and rider combinations excel in eventing at an international level.

### **An introduction to opera.**

Just as the sport of eventing combines several equestrian disciplines, so opera combines several disciplines within the arts - music, voice, drama and theatre. Opera is also known by four sub-categories: *opera-comiqué* (comic opera), such as Mozart's “The Marriage of Figaro”; *opera seriá* (serious opera) such as, Bizet's Carmen; *operetta* (small opera or recitals); and *the beggar's opera*, which is closely related to today's musical theatre (Orrey, 1972).

As with the origins of the Olympics, opera is generally accepted as a development from the ancient Greek plays (Orrey, 1972; Podhajsky, 1967). The earliest documented information relating to performances similar to opera came from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and suggested that the medieval church used drama incorporating music, costumes, action and scenery, to promote the Christian message to people who were unable to read. The person who had a special



singing role or led the singing at these ceremonies was called a ‘cantor.’ According to Orrey (1972, p. 11) these documents show all the elements required for an “opera” as it is known in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Plots and action increased in variety and spectacular stage effects introduced, as travelling troupes performed musical dramas throughout medieval Italy. Orrey (1972, p. 9) suggested that in 1637 the opening of the first official opera house in San Cassiano, Venice, to the general public could be seen *as the birth of opera* in its modern form; a dramatic work where music is a dominant part of the performance.

The date of the first opera performed in Australia is unclear. Mozart’s opera *The Marriage of Figaro* performed in 1833 is often identified as the first. Yet *The Poor Soldier*, a play accompanied by music was reportedly performed in 1796 in a theatre built by one of Australia’s first convicts to an audience of 120 people (Cargher, 1988). It could be argued that *The Poor Soldier* was the first *opera* performed in Australia, reflective of the early definition of opera as a dramatic act performed to music (Orrey, 1972).

The first official opera season was brought to Australia by Mrs Michael (Anne) Clark in 1842 in Hobart, Tasmania (Cargher, 1988). Interestingly, women founded and ran numerous opera companies in Australia from the earliest years, until the private companies, developed in the 1950s, such as the now defunct Elizabethan Opera Company (Cargher, 1988; Warren-Smith, 1983).

There are some interesting connections between sporting events and opera. In 1956, the Elizabethan Opera Company performed four operas by Mozart to coincide with the Melbourne Olympic Games. Warren-Smith (1983, p. 1) an acclaimed opera singer and founder of the now defunct Elizabethan Opera Company, recorded that, “the Mozart opera season was the greatest sporting event of them all, because, like every athlete taking part in the Games, we were determined that we were going to win.”

Australia is known internationally for its opera singers such as Dame Nellie Melba, and Dame Joan Sutherland, and for its architectural operatic landmark the Sydney Opera House.

**Ride-a-Cockhorse: The Similarities of Event Riders and Opera Singers**

*Ride a cockhorse to Banbury Cross,  
To see a fine lady upon a white horse,  
With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,  
She shall have music wherever she goes.*

*17th Century English Nursery Rhyme*

Prior to undertaking this study similarities were observed relating to the way horse riders and classical singers developed their personal skills, leading to performance goals or careers. Even though they are in independent leisure fields, there are noticeable links between event riding and opera singing. For example, both have stringent training regimes, both are internationally recognised leisure activities, and both are seen as being gender neutral.

Sandgren (2005, p. 31) noted in her research on opera singers that “athletes might serve as a suitable comparison group to individuals engaged in professional artistic activities, especially performing artists.” She also noted that, “both groups appear to share the achievement orientation, the dependence on physical attributes and a particular motivation for excelling in the activity.” Over the last two centuries a symbiotic relationship has slowly developed between sport and the entertainment industry, specifically in commercialisation and promotional areas (Gregson & Huggins, 1999). For example, music is increasingly being used to promote sporting activities, and artists are commonly seen opening significant events. This developing relationship can also be seen between horse riding and opera singing.

Historically, horses and music have been linked. In Louis XIV’s reign horses became a part of opera (Orrey, 1972) and equestrian ballets were incorporated into operas during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Copeland, 2007). Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some operas included the horse on stage; for example, in Giuseppe Verdi’s opera “Aida” horses can be integrated on stage along with the singers.

Kathen (2005, p. 20) suggested in his article on musical dressage that “equestrian dressage is like the opera.” When opera was becoming popular in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, a

gentleman's finishing school *Fiaschi* in Ferrara, Italy, produced a treatise giving music notation for tunes men were supposed to sing while training their horse (Copeland, 2007, p. 13). It has also become commonplace to use opera arias as the preferred music, due to the dramatic and often well known themes, for performances of musical dressage and equestrian demonstrations.

Parallels and other commonalities can be found between these two leisure pursuits throughout the course of this study. In this study the parallels that emerged between eventing and opera pursuits included;

- Both are seen as elite pursuits perceived to be undertaken by those who are wealthy or are from an elite social class (Cargher, 1988; Lawrence, 1988; Podhajsky, 1967; Vincent, 2000);
- Both are individual pursuits yet could be undertaken in a team situation (Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005; Westre, Hammermeister, Baldwin, & Chase, 2005);
- Both leisure pursuits are perceived as gender neutral, they allow males and females to perform as equals (Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005; Green, 1986; Sandgren, 2005; Ware, 2001);
- Both are recognised and participated in internationally (IOC, 2004; Siefert, 2004);
- Both have regular competitions available for individuals to enter.
- Both have a large number of competitors vying for limited places at the top in Australia and worldwide (EFA, 2006; Ware, 2001);
- Both combine different activities from outside their leisure pursuit; the sport of eventing combines several equestrian disciplines – dressage, cross country and showjumping; and opera combines several disciplines within the arts - music, voice, drama and theatre;
- Both equestrianism and opera have been associated historically (Copeland, 2007; Kathen, 2005);
- Both rely on a physical resource or 'equipment' – the horse and the voice.
- The skill of precise muscle co-ordination in the vocal apparatus is similar to the control and poise that an athlete, in this case the rider, must have. (Sandgren, 2005);
- Both have a similar participation rate in Australia – horse riding 0.6%, opera/recital 0.5% (Veal & Lynch, 2006);
- Both have audience appeal. According to the most recent figures available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics approximately 440,000 spectators attended EFA equestrian events excluding horse racing (ABS, 2006b) and 471,000 people attended the opera (ABS, 2008a).

Purely coincidentally, both key informants had experienced each other's leisure activities. Comments made by parents of both the key informants, indicated that their daughters were exposed to both leisure pursuits at a very young age; for example the event rider sang and the opera singer wanted to farm:

She was a member of the local church choir. I was just thinking the other day about Madeleine going to Pony Club, she would sing in the choir then she would go up to take communion and there would be Madeleine with her jodhpurs and riding boots sticking out under her choir robes, but she would change in the car on the way to pony club. (James, Madeleine's father)

As a music teacher I have taken children's choirs; she was in those choirs, probably from the age of 8. But as a small child I remember, she expressed the desire to be a singing farmer! (Sue, Maria's Mother)

### **Chapter Summary and Overview of Thesis**

This chapter provided a broad description of the background, purpose and significance of this study. It outlined the research questions, described the research objectives and some constraints and observations. The chapter also laid out the life history and backgrounds of the two key informants, followed by an overview of the two activities, event riding and opera singing. It concluded by outlining the similarities found between event riding and opera singing, giving a clearer picture of the two activities chosen. Although in the different fields of sport and art, this section showed how using two activities can be used to explore overarching issues common to both.

The next chapter, the review of literature, explores related areas studied within this thesis. Literature from the leisure field and other disciplines is used to give a deeper understanding. The third chapter describes the methods and materials used in the first phase of this study, the qualitative phase. Chapter Four follows with the findings of the qualitative discussions held with the key informants, external support entities and the focus groups. It focuses on constraints and opportunities, strategies and support via intrapersonal, interpersonal and

structural factors. Chapter Five describes the methods used in the second phase, the quantitative phase, explaining the rationale for choice of a survey, dissemination issues and a breakdown of the survey sections, using statistical analysis and tables where appropriate to describe findings. The sixth chapter presents the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases. It provides answers to the research questions and achieves the initial research objectives. Using the information gained from Chapters Three to Five, Chapter Six provides a conceptual framework illustrating the stages in an individual's path to high-level performance and concludes with recommendations from this study and for further research.

## Chapter 2

*A musician must make music, and an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to ultimately be at peace with himself. What a man [sic] can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization....It refers to man's desire for self-fulfilment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially; to become everything that one is capable of becoming.*

*A. H. Maslow, Maslow on Management  
(Stephens, 2000, p. 1)*

### Introduction of Literature

An abundance of literature was available on constraint negotiation, however, literature that directly examined experiences of individual athletes and artists from a social perspective - specifically exploring strategies to overcome constraints – was lacking. Even less literature related directly to the development of high performers in event riding and opera singing. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of high performers; therefore, in order to support the development of a suitable framework for this study further exploration of the literature was required.

This chapter focuses on a number of relevant issues:

- The use of a case study
- Leisure, serious leisure and work
- Hobby, amateur and professional
- Motivation theories
- Leisure constraints
- Gender issues
- Class, society and elitism

As an additional aspect to this study, this chapter also addresses the term elite and the Australian perception of elitism, in relation to eventing and opera constraints.

#### **The use of a case study.**

This section reviews literature on appropriate research methodologies used in this study. Patton (2002) consistently emphasised a pragmatic approach. He stressed the need for

flexibility, common sense, and the choice of methods best suited to produce the needed information. The approach for this study included qualitative analysis as a complement to the quantitative analyses often used in leisure research (Jackson, 2000). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods can create a broader view to a study (Henderson, Ainsworth, Stolarczyk, Hootman, & Levin, 1999; MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). Linking data in this way generated more information about the breadth and depth of the topic, and strengthened findings to research questions, especially when using the two main case study informants.

Case studies provide in-depth accounts of an individual's viewpoint; they incorporate research procedures that produce descriptive data presenting the individuals' views and experiences in their own words (Patton, 2002). Case studies are not synonymous with qualitative research but can include qualitative research. Quantitative approaches are often used in academic and leisure research, but while they tend to produce uniformity of measures, which have the advantage of facilitating direct comparisons, the use of qualitative approaches show differences, idiosyncrasies and uniqueness (Patton, 2002).

Case studies are often known as exploratory research (Patton, 1990, 2002; Yin, 1984, 1994; Zikmund, 1994) suited to areas where there are few theories or a deficient body of knowledge. Case studies focus on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting and are an example of phenomenological methodology, an approach that assumes that the social world is constantly changing, and that the researcher and the research itself are part of this change (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Samdahl's (2000) perspective on leisure studies, was to maintain an ideological goal of enhancing people's lives through a better understanding of leisure - from an individual's viewpoint. Likewise Carter (2000) and Henderson et al. (1999) successfully collected life stories via case studies, and interpreted their meanings into a historical and sociological context. The idea of using a more sociological approach by viewing individual experiences that incorporated social relationships, society interactions and cultural aspects in leisure research was supported by Kelly (2000) who suggested that any research should be related to *ordinary life*.

*Leisure, serious leisure and work.*

The definition of *leisure* has changed throughout history in accordance with individual and societal attitudes (Veal & Lynch, 2001, p. 20). As far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BC, the ancient Chinese saw leisure as a carefree state of being; or the freedom from the necessity of being occupied (Veal & Lynch, 2001, p. 6). The Greek philosopher Aristotle stated that leisure was an enduring state of being, free from the necessity to labour, yet he included educational self-development, such as learning music or studying philosophy, as acceptable leisure activities (Veal & Lynch, 2001, p. 7).

Several perspectives relating to the definition of leisure identified in literature involved several specific areas; the time available for personal relaxation; the freedom to choose a pastime or activity; or an individual's way of thinking. The definitions differed due to the individual's perception or focus (Veal & Lynch, 2006). Finding a solid definition of leisure is difficult, especially when leisure has become more work-like and work practices are becoming more leisurely (Handy, 1999; Snir & Harpaz, 2002; Stebbins, 1992, 2000). Literature has confirmed that some individuals now consider their work to be a leisure pursuit (Handy, 1995; Snir & Harpaz, 2002; Stebbins, 2000); therefore the definition of leisure can be redefined depending on the individuals' perception of a particular activity or state of mind (MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006; Veal & Lynch, 2006). An alternative view of leisure that relates to this study is that 'free time' is a 'state of mind' and is not dependent on time or nature of the activity.

Historically, leisure was an activity for rest, relaxation, restoration and as a cultivator for the arts. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, sport and art are socially accepted forms of leisure, but are also forms of professional work. Noel Coward the famous actor, said "work is more fun than fun," and noted business scholar, Charles Handy (1995, p. 166), wrote about leisure becoming a part of normal working life suggesting that "leisure is of our choice, in our time and under our control." The most common definitions of leisure related to activities that individuals freely undertook in their own time, for their own sake (Argyle, 1996; Iso-Ahola & Hatfield, 1986). Using this definition as a foundation in this study encapsulates the freedom to choose, time availability, and personal mindsets - all major issues when speaking about leisure in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



The boundaries between work and leisure are often blurred. Even in 1976, Parker saw work and leisure blending (Parker, 1976). Stebbins (1992) stated that serious leisure participants are those who continue to persevere at their chosen leisure pursuit, despite constraints and barriers, to establish a career or professional standing in their chosen field. He categorised it as either serious or casual leisure explaining that some people are more *serious* or *work-like* in their leisure activities than others (Stebbins, 2007). Both activities of eventing and opera fall easily into the serious leisure concept, a concept that increases the work-leisure blurring. Terms often used to describe business activities, such as planning, commitment, knowledge, skills and goals, also describe serious leisure activities and have been recorded in previous research on the leisure activity of music (MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). According to Parker (1972, p. 63) perceptions of leisure depend on the way individuals spend their leisure time. It also tends to vary, dependent on the demands and satisfactions of work, as some leisure activities can be related to work (Neulinger, 1981).

Along with definitions of leisure, leisure paradigms - how leisure ideas relate to one another - are changing due to society's changing attitudes and the blurring of work and leisure (Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996; McQuarrie & Jackson, 2002; Raphael & Itzhak, 2002). Because of changing attitudes, exploration into individual success strategies needed to incorporate environmental, social and personal experiences (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010a; MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). To do this it was important to explore past research specific to high performers from several associated fields, such as; business, psychology, sociology and leisure (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; Holmes & Smith, 2002; Iwasaki, Mackay, & Mactavish, 2005; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010b; Myburgh, 2003; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Stebbins, 1992).

An expectation of using mixed sources in this study is to advance current leisure knowledge that is adaptable to other fields. To advance knowledge by utilising past findings, and developing new perspectives on how an individual's lived experiences can assist them to negotiate constraints and seek opportunities in their leisure activity, is relevant in contemporary leisure (Henderson, 1997; Jackson, 2000; Johnson, Tenenbaum, & Edmonds, 2006; Kelly, 2000; Samdahl, 2000; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Searle, 2000).

This study draws on Stebbins' (2007, pp. 11-13) concept of *serious leisure* and the six interrelated qualities he associated with serious leisure:

1. Occasional need to *persevere* in the activity to overcome difficulties.
2. Ability to find a *career* in the leisure activity.
3. Personal effort using *knowledge*, training, experience and/or skill.
4. Durable *benefits* such as self-actualisation, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration, accomplishment, improved self-image, social interaction, belongingness and personal fulfilment.
5. A unique *ethos* within the leisure environment.
6. *Identify* strongly with their chosen pursuit.

Stebbins' six qualities provide identifiable attributes that can be associated with event riders and opera singers during their lived leisure experiences, experiences that expose individuals to particular environmental, social and personal phenomena.

To develop a suitable framework for this study it was necessary to examine the life of a person engaged in a serious leisure activity - from an introductory level to a high performance level. Examining how an individual develops a *hobby* and follows it through to a higher level of serious leisure - that of a *professional* - allowed a broader and more insightful approach.

### ***Hobby, amateur and professional.***

Stebbins (2007, p. 5) states that serious leisure is “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a leisure career.” A singer's credo: “To sing for fun rather than personal glory or money” (Ware, 2001, p. 34) reflects the hobby level that is applicable to both event riders and opera performers. Throughout the stages of becoming a professional, this credo definitely changes. To understand individual high performers it was necessary to understand their continual development from the hobby stage.

A *hobby* can be described as a specialised pursuit outside one's occupation (such as stamp collecting) that has little or no resemblance to ordinary work roles (Stebbins, 1992). A person may start a hobby to fill in some free time or out of curiosity. As their interest grows, their

knowledge expands; they spend more time and money on their hobby and may even sell the product of their hobby. Unlike serious leisure participants, hobbyists are dedicated to their activities but have no social or personal obligations to them (Stebbins, 1992, 2007).

*Amateurs* are differentiated from hobbyists by their individual characteristics such as manual dexterity, scientific knowledge, verbal skills, long experience in a role, showmanship, athletic prowess, and persistent individual effort (Stebbins, 1992). Amateurs operate in the fields in which professionals work, primarily those of art, sport, science, and entertainment (Stebbins, 2007). Stebbins (1992, p. 46) noted two important dimensions that distinguish the seriousness of the participant, those who are dedicated to their pursuit and those who are less dedicated. The dedicated dimension concerns career paths, and reflects those amateurs who intend to join the professional ranks. Stebbins (1997, p. 121) had also differentiated amateurs and professionals by their degree of *continuance commitment*, meaning that amateurs do not persevere as much as professionals in an activity.

Ware (2001, p. 32) listed three stages that a singer goes through – *amateur; semi-professional and professional*. An *amateur* singer pursues music initially as a *hobby* or avocation; a *semi-professional* is an amateur who intends to join the professional ranks and earns a portion of income from the activity. This definition is a common economic type of definition that differentiates on classification based on making an income from the activity (Stebbins, 2007; Ware, 2001), and finally, the *professional*, a person who obtains his or her income from a career in the activity. Semi-professionals and professionals in opera, according to Ware (2001), are serious leisure participants who demonstrate the characteristics previously identified by Stebbins' six qualities (1997). They are highly confident in their skills and knowledge, they persevere, are committed to continuing their activity, are well prepared, and they perceive themselves as professional. Both Stebbins (1997) and Ware (2001) observed that professionals, or serious leisure participants, earn all or most of their income from their chosen leisure pursuit, and the individual's motivation develops the path from hobbyist to professional.

*Motivation theories.*

*Motivation* determines why people behave in a certain way, why people choose a particular course of action in preference to others, and why they continue with a chosen action, often over a long period, sometimes overcoming difficulties and problems (Mullins, 1993).

Motivation incorporates internal factors that can link to the amount of expectation, energy, effort and enthusiasm that a person is prepared to commit, and external factors such as support, society and environment, and how they affect an individual's desire to be motivated. With high-level performers motivation prepares the individual to move forward, to reach desired goals, or to produce desired outcomes (Roberts, 2001).

Due to the relatively small number of research papers on the eventing and opera leisure fields, literature findings focusing on motivation in sport or art, although not necessarily in the eventing or opera fields, and studies on motivation from other fields, guided this study (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Burton, Lydon, D'Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006; Deci, 1975; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001; Havitz & Mannell, 2005; Johnson, Tenenbaum, & Edmonds, 2006; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010a; Markstrom, Li, Blackshire, & Wilfong, 2005; Naffziger, Hornsby, & Kuratko, 1994; Patrick, Ryan, Alfeld-Liro, Fredricks, Hruda, & Eccles, 1999; Prasad & Thakur, 1977). Motivation in sports has attracted substantial attention and used to study numerous issues in relation to high performers. These issues include athlete behaviour and emotions (Bailey, Moulton, & Moulton, 1999, Spring; Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Carroll & Konstantinos, 1997; Deci, 1975; Kerr, 2002), improving coaching and performance techniques (Abbott & Button, 2006; Allen & Shaw, 2009; Lloyd, 2005a, 2005b; Loehr & Schwartz, 2001) or understanding environmental, and social influences (Fossmo, 2006; Iso-Ahola, 1995; Johnson, Tenenbaum, & Edmonds, 2006; Konstantinos, Charilaos, & George, 2007; Myburgh, 2003). Motivational research on art is limited in comparison to sport, although increases in research on musicians and motivation is significantly higher than other art forms (Chaffin, 2001; Jorgensen & Lehmann, 1997; Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996; MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006; McPherson, 1997; Patrick et al., 1999; Young & Pain, 1999). This confirms findings by Reid (1995) who noted that studies of motivation specifically relating to the arts, and the time spent in practice, are few. Most studies on motivation in the arts were restricted to quantitative studies carried out by psychologists. However, recent research by psychologists on musical development used

semi-structured interviews (MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006); obtaining information from artists in this way provides an important resource in recording an individual artist's perception of poor or high performance, and what motivates them to continue and deal with constraints.

There are many theories on motivation. Roberts (2001, p. 4) identified 32 clearly distinguished theories of motivation, stating it as a dynamic and complex process. Motivation can be entrenched in basic needs, for example, to minimise pain or maximise pleasure, or in specific needs such as eating or sleeping. Motivation can also be attributed to the desire for an object such as a hobby, a goal or a state of being, or attributed to less obvious reasons such as selflessness, or morality (Naffziger, Hornsby, & Kuratko, 1994; Reiss, 2004). Motivational theories focusing on high performers are commonly based on achievement behaviour (Roberts, 2001). Since the 1950s, researchers have developed frameworks and models for specific motivations and strategies, from all fields, especially business, psychology and education. These theories, their frameworks and models, have assisted in the advancement of leisure research.

This study drew on several motivational theories, including: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, relating to how an individual's wants and desires can influence behaviour (Csikszentmihalyi, 1995; Stephens, 2000); Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, also known as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, initially developed to determine job satisfaction (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Burton, Lydon, D'Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006; Deci, 1975; Iwasaki & Mannell, 1999; Konstantinos, Charalambos, & George, 2002; Naffziger, Hornsby, & Kuratko, 1994; Reiss, 2004); and the Goal Setting Theory, which was split to separately identify mastery and performance, task and ego, or approach and avoidance goals (Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005; Burton & Naylor, 2002; Cooper & Argyris, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Holmes & Smith, 2002; Keats & Bracker, 1988; Kingston & Swain, 1999; Markstrom, Li, Blackshire, & Wilfong, 2005; Pensgaard & Ursin, 1998; Roberts, 2001; Stein, 1999).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a well-known self-actualisation theory, illustrated by a pyramid that defines five sets of goals – physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-

actualisation. These hierarchical levels are what an individual requires to achieve individual expectations or goals (Stephens, 2000). Individuals need to reach self-actualisation to reach a high performance level. Identifying what makes some people succeed while others discontinue their leisure pursuit aligns with this study. As Loehr and Schwartz (2001) believed, a successful approach to sustained high-level performance is to understand the person as a whole, and not just their cognitive abilities. Expanding on Loehr and Schwartz's (2001) approach, it was recognised that further research, of an exploratory nature, in the sporting and the music fields, using more qualitative methods were needed. In particular, exploration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to establish a more complete picture in the motivation of high-level performers (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Jackson, 2000; Jorgensen & Lehmann, 1997; Reid, 1995; Stebbins, 2001).

Hertzberg's Two Factor Theory incorporates intrinsic and extrinsic factors; two fundamental motivational areas relevant to this study. *Intrinsic* motivations are those motivations that rely on personal perceptions, specifically relating to individual thoughts or feelings; and *extrinsic* motivations relate to the social or environmental factors that affect an individual's motivation (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). Intrinsic motivation comes from activities that are worthwhile or satisfying, in their own right, not because they are a means to a goal (Veal & Lynch, 2006). An example is an athlete who plays soccer for the pleasure of learning new moves (Roberts, 2001).

Alternative concepts in leisure research incorporated in this study associated with intrinsic motivation and high performance, included imagery or visualisation, meditation, positive thinking and Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Holmes & Smith, 2002; Lloyd, 2005a); motivational techniques that work together to assist individuals to negotiate constraints and reach goals. *Visualisation*, is the creation of a future event, or the recreation of a past one, in the mind (Lloyd, 2005a). *Meditation* is typically viewed as a *spiritual practice* method that incorporates deep breathing (also achieved through yoga, another spiritual practice). It assists in slowing brain activity and stimulates a shift in mental activity (Loehr & Schwartz, 2001). Using *positive thinking* techniques competitive behaviour is maintained and increased (Lloyd, 2005b). By focusing thoughts away from negative emotions such as frustration, impatience, anger, fear, resentment or sadness, individuals can effectively transform inner

experiences into ones of challenge. Loehr and Schwartz (2001, p. 65) wrote that, “it isn’t always in our power to change our external conditions, but we can train to better manage our inner state.” Athletes and artists who are motivated, have feelings of enjoyment and well-being, and have mental and physical satisfaction often refer to being *in the zone* (Fossmo, 2006; Young & Pain, 1999). These characteristics are also the core components of *flow*, reflecting Csikszentmihalyi’s (1995) belief of total immersion in the self by lessening mental activity.

An individual who wants to perform at their highest level relates their goal achievement directly to their own needs, expectations and values, and in turn, links these to incentives or aspirations (Wood, Wallace, Effone, Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1998). Some of these incentives or aspirations are found in extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivations are those drives (Reiss, 2004) that occur due to interpersonal or structural issues, and are undertaken as a means to an end and not for their own sake (Deci, 1975). Unlike intrinsic factors, extrinsic motivational factors are those that come from outside the activity itself (Veal & Lynch, 2001, p. 108). For example, an artist may be motivated by the recognition she receives from her audience, and another by the monetary reward she receives for her performance. Iso-Ahola (1980) stated that intrinsically motivated behaviour is not free of external forces such as social influences and that the field of leisure studies depends on the construct of leisure needs. It was also argued that the initial view based on the levels of intrinsic needs could also have an extrinsic value and that it is the *unsatisfied* needs or goals that energise an individual to reach a higher level throughout their life and not the satisfied ones (Csikszentmihalyi, 1995; Iso-Ahola, 1980).

Goal Theory suggests that personal perceptions can prejudice motivation. Motivational outcomes are dependent on what the goal is and the meaning of the situation to the individual at that particular instant (Reiss, 2004; Roberts, 2001). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggested that an individual is motivated consciously through their chosen goals. As with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the Goal Theory also suggests that the more an individual gets, or the more the individual sets goals, the more they want once they have reached that goal. It is expected within this study that as the individuals reach higher levels of performance they will set themselves more difficult goals, because high performers who set themselves specific

goals continue to climb to higher performance levels (Cooper & Argyris, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Studies of high performers have found individuals to be emotionally stronger, have higher productivity, higher motivation and drive, and lower levels of anxiety than the average person (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Freeman, 2000). Motivation gets people to act towards their goals (Alkire & Deneulin, 2000), and goals are dependent on intrinsic and extrinsic factors or motives (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). The only way to understand individual motivation, according to Alkire and Deneulin (2000, p. 14), is to explore individuals and their behaviours, and also explore their social, cultural and historical environments. Literature suggests that a person's beliefs about their performance capabilities can be affected through external verbal persuasion causing changes to occur in their self perceptions (Bandura, 1994; Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005; Benabou & Tirole, 2003). For example, if a singer who believes they sing well is told they do not, they can lose confidence and discontinue their leisure activity.

How individuals pursue their goals, exploring only their internal characteristics was not enough; their external situations also needed exploring. How individual high performers achieve success, overcome constraints and recognise opportunities depends on many factors, including the social circumstances he or she experiences.

### *Leisure constraints.*

Being motivated is not enough to become a high performer. An individual also requires an understanding of constraints; they also need skills to negotiate constraints successfully in order to reach goals. Jackson (2000, p. 68) suggested that research into constraint negotiation enhances theoretical richness and gives support to knowledge and practice within leisure studies. Leisure constraints is a growing sub-field in leisure research (Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997), defined as factors that are “assumed, perceived or experienced by individuals that limit the development of leisure preferences, and inhibit or prohibit, participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 2000, p. 63). Constraints, and the way that individuals perceive their constraint experiences are varied and can prevent individuals from



achieving leisure goals (Jackson, 2000; Stebbins, 1992). Within his studies Stebbins (1992) found that participants in serious leisure pursuits were often restricted by differing constraints depending on their selected leisure pursuit, and that the constraints and pressures individuals face are important for continued leisure participation.

The notion of leisure as ‘free time’ is usually defined as time free of domestic and personal obligations such as shopping, eating or cleaning (Stebbins, 2007). Having made a commitment to an activity there comes an obligation to continue (Stebbins, 2000) and this continuance can lead to a successful leisure career. However, Stebbins (2000, p. 9) also suggested that individuals who undertake serious leisure activities abandon the activity when they find it becomes an *obligation*. Individuals differ on what constitutes an obligation in leisure as it depends on the state of mind, attitude or behaviour, and stems from both psychological and sociological enterprises (Stebbins, 2000, p. 1). Obligations vary from person to person, and successful individuals see obligations in a more positive and agreeable way (Stebbins, 2000). It is anticipated that high performers in both eventing and opera will need to undertake obligations within their activity, therefore obligatory issues associated with event riding and opera singing will be explored.

The possibility of benefits or rewards that counteract obligatory tasks (Stebbins, 1992) are also explored. According to leisure research, leisure experiences are sought primarily as pure enjoyment, but those who engage in serious leisure encounter additional constraints and costs associated with their activity (Baldwin, 1999; Holt, 2001; Pensgaard & Ursin, 1998; Stebbins, 2000, 2007). Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 68) suggests that most enjoyable activities are not natural, they demand an effort that some people are reluctant to make. What personal attributes build a high performer and how they approach leisure obligations will provide additional information in overcoming constraints in this study. Previous literature suggests that constraints in leisure can be overcome (Carroll & Konstantinos, 1997; Henderson, Shaw, Bialeschki, & Freysinger, 1996; Hultsman, 1995; Jackson, 1997; Konstantinos, Charilaos, & George, 2007; Myburgh, 2003; Patrick et al., 1999; Robert, 2000; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Stebbins, 2000), depending on the way an individual views their leisure activity, and how they balance costs and rewards within their real life situations (Robinson, 1999).

Depression, stage fright, frustration, embarrassment, fear of success/competition, finances, time, support, money, isolation and health are some serious leisure constraints stated in leisure constraint research (Jackson, 2000; Rosenblum, 1979; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Stebbins, 1992; Ware, 2001). Other researchers noted that constraints to leisure can also stem from a lack of opportunities, or the lack of facilities or programs (Deem, 1996; Freysinger, 1995). Pensgaard and Ursin (1998) found that external distractions and personal expectations led individuals to focus on problems that affected their performance. Literature stated that individuals perceive choice and time differently. An individual's available time for leisure activity participation is limited, depending on their lifestyle. Jackel and Wollscheid (2007) suggested that the same amount of leisure time (in minutes) can be perceived differently by individuals (depending on the individual's perceived level of stress or satisfaction during the activity). Stebbins (2007, pp. 4-5) noted that choice is "conditionally hedged" and time is "dependent on an individual's expectations and negative attitudes towards an activity," however in this study all life experiences in and around leisure will be taken into account, including personal choices and how time is used to develop a serious leisure lifestyle.

Pensgaard and Ursin (1998), while exploring stress and coping effects among high performers, found that external distractions and expectations also led individuals to focus on problems that affected their performance. For example, increased pressure by a sponsor on an athlete could affect an event rider's performance or loud audience behaviour could affect an opera singer's performance. They noted that athletes in the Olympic Games found the most stressful experiences were prior to the Games, usually while training, and not during the competition itself. This finding also supports research conducted fifty years ago (cited in Gregg, 1998, p. 1) that compared the weight loss that occurred through performing, in a professional football player playing a major league game and an opera singer during a major performance. It was reported that the opera singer lost more weight than the footballer, supporting the evidence that an opera singer has as much, if not more stress than an athlete does. This also gives strength to the notion that the comparisons of an athlete (event rider) and a performing artist (opera singer) may have more in common than would normally be expected.

*Gifted* refers to individuals who have potential, or are believed to be born with an extraordinary natural *gift*. According to literature everyone is born with an extraordinary natural gift in some activity (Freeman, 2000; Gagné, 1997; McPherson, 1997). However, only some individuals develop their gift to its fullest (Freeman, 2000; Gagné, 1985). Those individuals with the potential to do well during their early years through enhancing their gift can only succeed if they develop that gift into a talent. Researchers have stated that an individual can be gifted without necessarily being talented, however they cannot be talented without first being gifted (Gagné, 1985; McPherson, 1997).

Talent is seen as a quality that is dependent on internal and external changes within an individual and their environment (Freeman, 2000). Gagné (1997, p. 72) describes talent as a characteristic of “someone who demonstrates superior performance, as a result of specific training.” Relevant personal attributes relating to developing talent include skills, knowledge, self-esteem, self efficacy, motivation, levels of social resources, practice and access to funds or other material sources (Fossmo, 2006; Freeman, 2000; Gagné, 1997, 2007; Shaver & Tudbull, 2002; Stamm & Lamprecht, 1995). An integral part of studying high performer success is to understand what personal attributes or characteristics are relevant, as without the ability to develop their gift, individuals do not become talented high performers. Individual characteristics according to Johnson, et al. (2006) dictate need for a unique and multidimensional approach to maximising high performance development.

Studies of talented children and teenagers found that the stronger the social support, the more developed the individual’s skills will become, especially at dealing with difficult tasks and overcoming constraints. They also found that parental support was the most effective social factor affecting individuals and how they perceived constraints (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Freeman, 2000). This supports Shannon and Shaw’s (2005, p. 1) statement that “within the parental unit, mothers may have greater opportunities to introduce their children to a wide range of leisure activities, helping them in developing various leisure skills, and fostering the development of positive leisure attitudes.” However, fathers were also important in relation to easing common constraints in leisure pursuits, and were usually seen as supporting spectators, helpers, and financial backers by their children (McCrossin, 2004).

Developing a family unit provides a mini-culture (Freeman, 2000), a culture unique to individual families. Undertaking interviews with key informant parents as part of this study developed a clearer picture of a successful high performer's upbringing. The mothers and fathers of key informants will have developed a mini-culture within their own family unit; a culture that dictates to them how they bring up their children and make decisions based on their own culture, their upbringing, experiences and hopes. In this study, the effects of divorce required additional exploration as one of the key informants had experienced parental divorce at an early age. According to Freeman (2000) parental divorce may cause a temporary halt to a child's development or have life-long effects on their leisure pursuit, however, continued good relationships between a mother and father after divorce in relation to their children's upbringing were seen as crucial factors to a child's success in life activities (McCrossin, 2004).

Leisure research on constraints focusing on training regularly associated coaches as major constraint factors. High performance athletes or artists develop close relationships with their coaches (Fossmo, 2006; Goudas, 1998; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001; R. G. Green, 1991; Iso-Ahola, 1995; Jorgensen & Lehmann, 1997; Myburgh, 2003; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Pensgaard & Ursin, 1998; Podhajsky, 1967). Good coaches encourage positive intrapersonal behaviour, and provide interpersonal resources, in order to facilitate rather than control an individual's goals and behaviours (Iso-Ahola, 1995) providing opportunities rather than constraints. Research examining coaching behaviours has found that a coach's instructional style can have a strong impact on individuals (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Bailey, Moulton, & Moulton, 1999, Spring). This study explores coach characteristics and their importance to an individual's success in high performance leisure activities.

The leisure constraints model developed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) was considered useful for this study. This model signifies three main types of leisure constraints: *intrapersonal*, those constraints directly attributed to the person, *interpersonal*, constraints caused by outside relationships, and *structural* constraints, such as finances or time. Exploration into intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types from a personal perspective will also determine which issues have a stronger effect on an individual in relation to continuing their leisure pursuit.

Innovative strategies and a competitive mindset can assist individuals in overcoming constraints (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010b; Meyers, Bourgeois, LeUnes, & Murray, 1999). However, how an individual develops their personal strategies to overcome constraints and continue to pursue their leisure activity requires further exploration. Several leisure scholars point to the lack of research that links serious leisure to an individual's well-being (Henderson, Shaw, Bialeschki, & Freysinger, 1996; Jackson, 2000; Kelly, 2000; Stebbins, 2007). This includes the lack of processes of leisure constraint negotiation; processes that enhance an individual's success in achieving their serious leisure goals. Psychological research by Burton, Lydon, D'Alessandro and Koestner (2006, p. 761), revealed that well-being and increased confidence can develop from positive feelings and satisfactions associated with the interesting nature of an activity, "so long as the activity meets the individual's needs." Therefore high self-esteem, determination and a positive attitude can affect an individual's behaviour and confidence level, and in turn promote goal achievement.

Markstrom, Li, Blackshire and Wilfong (2005, p. 87) stated that having *confidence* can steer individuals into sport or art activities because of the skills they possess. This confidence increases an individual's self-esteem, and in turn, gives their ego a boost. Having confidence, knowing that you are good at what you do also lessens constraints. They claimed that ego is often associated with increasing a high performer's self-confidence and motivates an individual to continue in an activity. Ego has both positive and negative connotations. According to Stein (1999), Freud interpreted ego as unruly, selfish, aggressive and sexual with potential to do damage if not controlled - an interpretation that links to constraints, whereas, Adler described ego more positively, as a sense of contact, connection, trust and empathy, giving a logic of conscience and morality – an opportunistic interpretation.

In relation to achieving high performance, having an ego is not necessarily a negative attribute to performance per se, as behaviour of world class performers can differ. This can be seen in all sport and art activities; take tennis players Lleyton Hewitt and Bjorn Borg (Abbott, Collins, Sowerby, & Martindale, 2007); or opera singers Maria Callas (Siefert, 2004) and Leslie Garrett (Walker, 2001). In each example one is highly strung and the other calm. Associations between self-image and ego development (Lindfors, Elovainio,

Sinkkonen, Aalberg, & Vuorinen, 2005, p. 391) can also be expected in this study, especially if an individual has a good body-image and is also a high performer.

Further studies have shown constraints that also relate to gender differences in leisure including gender inequality (Cartwright & Warner-Smith, 2003; Freysinger, 1995; Henderson, 1996; Little, 2002); and that women face more constraints than men do (Deem, 1996; Shaw, 1994). However, there are multiple dimensions to leisure and how the individual sees leisure (Freysinger, 1995) regardless of whether they are male or female.

### *Gender issues.*

Gender differences have been reported in both men's and women's leisure patterns as well as the opportunities available to them (Henderson, 1996; Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; Hollands, 1988; Iwasaki, Mackay, & Mactavish, 2005). This study does not focus on gender specifically; however, there are certain reasons that a female perspective cannot be avoided within this study as the researcher and the two key informants are women. As this study explored the equestrian and operatic leisure activities from an individual's point of view, it was considered probable that the female perspective would be dominant within the study, and gender equality became a point of examination.

Gender discrimination has often been studied in relation to women in leisure, in a range of leisure activities from adventure to swimming or cycling (Carter, 2000; Deem, 1996; Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; James, 2000; Shultz, 1999; Simpson, 2007). Other studies explored the historical social reinforcement of gender roles through leisure experiences (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989; Henderson, Shaw, Bialeschki, & Freysinger, 1996; Little, 2002; Roberts, 2001; Shaw, 1994). Literature suggests that leisure motivations and meanings vary over an individual's lifespan (Green, 1986), with meanings also varying between genders (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1989; Roberts, 2001). Therefore, outcomes in this study will be dependent on the goals, actions and significance of the circumstances specific to the individual – whether they are male or female.

As part of this study, intrinsic and extrinsic factors were explored to reveal how an individual negotiated constraints (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Burton, Lydon, D'Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006). This complies with Gill (2002, p. 356), who noted that we cannot fully understand the individual without considering his or her social context. As part of the two key informant's external social context, interviews were conducted with parents and coaches of the key informants, allowing both male and female viewpoints to be discussed. The addition of focus groups and survey respondents, from both sexes, enforces gender viewpoints. It is acknowledged that within these interviews the issue of gender will naturally arise because parents, teachers, peers, and coaches "react to us as girls or boys" (Gill, 2002, p. 359). Having a mix of male and female perspectives in this study should result in findings having generic attributes - common to both disciplines - regardless of gender.

Literature states that certain leisure activities are open to both male and female participants, including those that were historically male domains, such as boxing, Australian Football and cricket (Hollands, 1988). Stell (1991, p. vii) in her book on women in sport said, "the exclusion of women from the traditions of sport does not mean that they have actually been absent from the sporting fields." This confirms literature on event riding and opera singing, as historically both activities were viewed as male only domains, yet women were still active in the leisure pursuits of riding and singing (EFA, 2006; Orrey, 1972). To reinforce the concept of gender equality in both leisure activities Green (1986) and Cargher (1988) stated that event riding and opera singing are now *gender neutral* leisure activities. These statements have been further confirmed in recent studies on event riders (Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005) and opera singers (Sandgren, 2005), as both genders now participate and perform at the highest levels.

### ***Class, society and elitism.***

Sections of society, specifically the aristocracy and upper classes, have been historically linked to the sport of event riding (Endenburg, 1999; Robinson, 1999; Taylor, 2001), and the art of opera singing (Gregson & Huggins, 1999; Orrey, 1972; Ware, 2001). Reviewing the significance of social class and elitism is seen as an important additional part of this study as leisure can have different outcomes for individuals, dependent on their structural relations in

society (Shaw, 1994). Participants discussing their lived experiences in this study will incorporate their environment, upbringing and interrelationships. As historical views involuntarily ally both leisure activities studied with an elitist tag, personal perceptions and perceptions of society towards these activities, and their links to possible constraints and opportunities, will be explored.

Two important sociological theories that viewed class in areas such as power, authority, wealth, working and living conditions, life-styles, life-span, education, religion, and culture, were the Weberian approach which looked at life-chances according to income; and the Marxist approach that viewed society as being classless or having no classes (Wright, 2003). As Weber was a consensus theorist (class changes by consensus) and Marx, a conflict theorist (class changes by conflict), the use of these theories ensures sociological perspectives on class are covered. Historically, social classes were distinguished initially by income and were labelled by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as ‘lower class’, relating to individuals who were poor, alienated or marginalised; ‘working class’, which focused on unskilled labour; and the largest ‘middle class’, the skilled labour force (Wright, 2003). A fourth class evolved from the powerful ‘aristocrats’ during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century into a separate ‘upper class’, those who owed their success, wealth and power to commerce, industry, and the professions (Abbott & Button, 2006; Bennett, Emmison, & Frow, 1999; Bourdieu, 1984, 1999; Wright, 2003).

Literature on class implies that lower or working class individuals have poor self-esteem, leading to low self-motivation, and are less achievement-oriented (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999; Henry, 2000). However, there have been Olympic Gold medal winners from low or working class backgrounds in the sport of eventing; such as multi gold medal winners Bill Roycroft and Gillian Rolton; and internationally renowned opera singers, such as Gregory Yurisich, Yvonne Kenny and June Bronhill. Whether social class influences leisure success is further explored in this study.

Eipper (1986, p. 11) asserts that class is not specific and explains that it is a mix of interests’ which characterise the structure of society. He states that society is defined by social relationships that possess “a fluency which evades analysis” and class changes are dependent



on the approach taken. In Australia the notion of a classless society and community solidity has been supported in past literature on rural towns (Dempsey, 1990; Wild, 1974). However, Masterman-Smith and Cottle (2001) suggested that in the 21st century efforts to characterise, disprove or ignore class differences can be undermined by the lived experiences of individuals within society, and that numerous variables must also be taken into account.

It is acknowledged in this study that other variables can also change an individual's life circumstances, variables such as gender (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; Henderson, Shaw, Bialeschki, & Freysinger, 1996); parental or coach support (Freeman, 2000; Freysinger, 1997; McCrossin, 2004; Pensgaard & Roberts, 2002; Shannon & Shaw, 2005); personal mindsets and behavioural characteristics (Benabou & Tirole, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kerr, 2002; Konstantinos, Charilaos, & George, 2007) and social influences (Gordon, Edgar, & Jinyang, 2007; Holt, 2001; McQuarrie & Jackson, 2002). These variables are taken into account and explored further as part of this study.

To view how an individual becomes a successful high performer by exploring an individual's everyday life will incorporate changes in occupations, leisure relevance to class structures, evolving networks, society perceptions and individual perceptions and experiences. This technique of exploration is supported by research which suggests that due to the changing structure of social classes there needs to be a different research strategy that enables examination into the politics of a person's everyday life (Bourdieu, 1999; Eipper, 1986; Masterman-Smith & Cottle, 2001).

Dempsey (1990) maintains that the network of interpersonal relations reduces the importance of status and class, and encourages people to rely on one another for support and assistance. This was validated by Shaver and Tudbull (2002, p. 5) who suggested that facilitated relationships and social interactions across social divisions within a community promotes social cohesion. They stated that "such divisions may be between different generations, groups defined by socio-economic status and class, racial and ethnic groups, and urban and rural residence." However, these networks can also have negative connotations through gossip, social exclusion or malicious actions (Dempsey, 1990; Shaver & Tudbull, 2002).

Whether the two leisure activities being studied substantiate these findings in relation to networks and social perceptions needs to be addressed, although being active in leisure related pursuits can delineate class and social anomalies. As Dempsey (1990, p. 103) wrote “...participation in sporting and other organised recreational activities provides the basis for the development of a personal sense of identity with the community that transcends class and gender divisions.” To understand event riding and opera singing from a historical and societal view, literature directly relating to these leisure activities is examined in the following sections.

### *Elite and society perceptions: Event riding.*

Equestrianism within society is traditionally linked with wealth and the aristocracy. In Europe, riding as a leisure activity was reserved for the ruling elite (Robinson, 1999). This perception of equestrianism as an elite pursuit comes from historical links, including the perception that riding a horse gave the rider increased power, as well as arousing a sense of inferiority and envy in pedestrians (Lawrence, 1988; Robinson, 1999). For example, in Europe during the age of Chivalry, Christian knights rode horses into battle, while their serfs went on foot; interaction with the horse contributed to the development of the knight’s high profile character. Riding [for pleasure] continued throughout history to be a pastime of the aristocracy and/or wealthy throughout the world (Taylor, 2001).

The perception of an elevated status of non-aristocratic or lower class riders was seen in early America and Australia, where the cowboys and land owners in the colonies, considered themselves superior to the non-mounted farm workers (Endenburg, 1999). It appears that psychological and sociological factors influenced the elevated status of riders, or as Robinson (1999) suggested, those associated with horses in some way. The idea that riders had more power due to the increased height when riding, and the knowledge that horses were expensive, and could only be afforded by those with money or influence, enforced the high status ascribed to horse riders (Endenburg, 1999).

With urbanisation in Western society and the relatively high cost of horse care, it is thought that in Australia some people are excluded from horse-related leisure activities. However,

with the availability of riding establishments and increases in perceived leisure time, horse riding is no longer restricted to the upper classes (Robinson, 1999). It is possible to take up riding without owning a horse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Elite and society perceptions: Opera singing.*

Within the leisure field of opera, there also seemed to be a mixed perception of music as either highbrow/lowbrow, elite/popular, and non-commercial/commercial (Vincent, 2000, p. 81). In 2005 these perceptions fell into two areas of music classed as mainstream music, such as pop and contemporary music (lowbrow/popular) - that have large audiences and are highly commercial; and non-mainstream music, such as opera and symphony orchestras (highbrow/elite) - those that lack commercial viability (Vincent, 2000; Ware, 2001).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century's contemporary, pop-oriented culture, classical singing is often considered as an elitist enterprise. The percentage of general public supporting classical music is relatively small in comparison with the contemporary field (Ware, 2001). Yet over the past thirty years current music trends have shown a definite rise in the popularity of classical music (Vincent, 2000). This rise is mainly due to the new way of selling old music that alters existing cultural structures and principles associated with high and low culture (Orrey, 1972; Vincent, 2000). Marketing practices, techniques and activities reinforce this by providing new ideas that give people what they want (Sandgren, 2005; Vincent, 2000).

Classical music is performed as it was 80 years ago but instead of the stereotypical opera singer - mature, overweight, men and women performing on stage in a fully staged opera - opera is also being commercially and successfully marketed to a younger generation through movies, sports, solo and group artists. Although classic opera has always been available to the masses, marketers in the large music corporations have now made the old classics attractive to the younger generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vincent, 2000). By choosing "catchy" well-known songs from classic operas and matching them with young, attractive, "modern" artists who perform them, for example the UK operatic group, *Amichi*, the classical instrumental band, *Bond*, and the young Welsh soprano, Charlotte Church, a new younger listening market is attracted.

In the televised Australian talent contest called ‘Australian Idol’, the 2004 runner-up, Anthony Callea, according to his website ([www.anthonycallea.com.au](http://www.anthonycallea.com.au)), shot to number one on the Australian charts with his newly released self-titled album, *Callea*. He received a standing ovation for his classical performance of *The Prayer* on the popular T.V show *Australian Idol* watched by a large teenage audience. His rendition of *The Prayer* received prime-time airplay on radio stations who usually focus on pop songs and whose listeners were in the 15-30 year old bracket. Callea also sang for the late world famous tenor Luciano Pavarotti during his world tour in 2005 and was invited to train with Pavarotti in Italy. This is another example of the changing role of classical opera within society.

As one of Australia’s prominent male baritones, the internationally known singer Gregory Yurisich (2005) said, “the adaptability of classical music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the increase in emerging young artists willing to sing opera, are helping to attract a larger and younger crowd to opera productions in Australia.”

As literature for both leisure activities suggests, changes occur that alter social perceptions regarding specific activities; whether it is a person’s occupation, parentage or leisure pursuit. Class distinctions, similar to work-leisure boundaries are blurred. In leisure, social networks can be seen as a group of people who share the same interests, social experiences, traditions and values (Dempsey, 1990; Eipper, 1986; Masterman-Smith & Cottle, 2001; Saunders, 1990; Wright, 2003). This study addresses how individuals define themselves compared to external social class groups, and how this affects their performance.

### **Summary of Chapter Two**

This study required ideas, beliefs and past theories to assist in planning and deciding what issues would be suitable to support a usable structure around which a framework could be built. Overall, the literature on serious leisure, motivation and constraint negotiation showed a clear need for new and progressive strategies within the leisure field specifically focusing on an individual’s perspective. The study of past frameworks and theories from both leisure

and other disciplines in the areas of constraints and motivation assisted in the development of a practical framework for this study.

Apart from technical research associated with how to ride or sing, there was a noticeable lack of literature in both the leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing. This lack of research was seen as both advantageous and disadvantageous to the study outcomes. The lack of information ensured that the focus of this study remained original, adding new knowledge to the study of leisure, and giving guidance to high-level performing individuals. At the same time, the lack of relevant previous studies to provide peer guidance and specific evidence to draw upon for the study was disconcerting.

The extent of literature on constraint negotiation by high-level performers, specifically from an individual's viewpoint, in relation to serious leisure was also deficient. This study aims to impart an understanding of the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, specifically relating to an individual in pursuit of their leisure goals, and how these individuals, successfully negotiate constraints to reach their desired performance level.

Literature findings on the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing revealed that perceptions in society differ between individuals in relation to social class and elitism. How these perceptions can affect individual high performers is explored further in this study. Exploration into the way an individual advances in their leisure performance will also determine if success is dependent on an individual's class or perceived position within society, - specifically in the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing. The review of the findings of social class and associated areas provides no straightforward formula for constraint negotiation building or high performance success. It does, however, draw attention to issues in the structure and development of social life within the two specific leisure activities of event riding and opera singing. Reviewing this area of literature provides a useful basis for reflection on appropriate strategies for high performers, taking into account the different types of social perspectives revealed in the leisure activities being studied.

Information gained from the literature provides a basis to deliver new elements to high-level performance constraint negotiation, specifically in the leisure pursuits of event riding and

opera singing. It also gives a foundation towards the development of a suitable framework for this study in conjunction with the qualitative and quantitative findings outlined in the following chapters.

### Chapter 3

*All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents.*

*John F Kennedy, President of the United States of America, 1917-1963*

#### **Methods and materials**

As the purpose of this study was to explore successful personal strategies individuals used to negotiate constraints in serious leisure, from a social viewpoint, the selection of an appropriate research methodology was important. In this study a mixed method approach was used. By using two research methods, a qualitative method and quantitative method, richer findings, and according to McMurray et.al., (2004, p. 260) “vast opportunities for reciprocal advantages” between each method was possible.

This chapter outlines the methods used in the first qualitative phase and second quantitative phase; it describes steps taken in the selection of the interview participants, the focus groups and the development of the survey. Processes involved in research design, data collection and analysis procedures are discussed, and limitations, bias and ethical issues relating to this study are raised.

#### **Design.**

The overall design of this study had three parts consisting of the case studies, the focus groups, and the survey (see Figure 1.1); information provided from each was used to explore the final part as outlined in Table 3.1.

The use of a qualitative method as the first phase of the research design, gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the key informants, their external support structures, and their personal experiences. This was particularly relevant due to the low number of participants in Australia (at a high-level) in the leisure fields of event riding and opera singing, and the complexity of issues arising from this.

Table 3.1  
*The study design.*

	<b>Part 1. Case Study</b>	↔	<b>Part 2. Focus Group</b>	→	<b>Part 3. Survey</b>
<b>Qualitative Phase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> interview with key informants: 1 event rider 1 opera singer</li> <li>• Interviews with external supporters: Key informant’s parents Key informant’s coaches</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview with key informants (after external support and focus group interviews &amp; before surveys).</li> </ul>	<b>Qualitative Phase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group discussion conducted with male and female event riders within the state.</li> <li>• Focus group discussion conducted with male and female opera singers within the state.</li> </ul>	<b>Quantitative Phase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey developed from Part 1 and Part 2 findings.</li> <li>• National survey sent to event riders in Australia.</li> <li>• National survey sent to opera singers in Australia.</li> </ul>

Based on two main factors the researcher decided to select a suitable event rider and opera singer to be the key informants from the population of interest. Firstly, the key informants chosen had to be currently riding or singing at a high performance level, and secondly, they needed to be agreeable to be part of this study and be available for a minimum of two face-to-face interviews over a 10-month period during March and December 2006.

As the researcher had met suitable case study subjects during consulting work, contact with the two key informants chosen for this study proved relatively easy. Rapport was quickly established with the key informants, and their external support participants, as these participants knew of the researcher prior to the interviews taking place.

***Data collection process.***

In order to capture the essence and gain an understanding of both the key informants’ stories from a personal perspective, a *case study* approach was used to explore their lived experiences (Yin, 1984, 1994). Researchers, in particular social scientists, have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). It is seen as an example of *phenomenological* methodology as it is an extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 65). Yin (1984, p. 23) defined the case study research method as “an empirical inquiry that



investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Using case studies within this qualitative methodology, allowed for the examination of present-day, real-life situations, and provided a basis for the research.

As shown in Table 3.1, part 1 of the study involved two interviews conducted with the key informants. The first interview provided information such as personal history and demographics, while the second interview further explored their experiences and perceptions. Intrapersonal constraint information was developed by gaining an understanding of the individual’s perception of opportunities, constraints, and strategies they had used in pursuit of becoming a high performer. Once the initial key informant interviews had been carried out, in-depth interviews were conducted during April and May 2006 on people who had direct influence on them - their parents and coaches.

Parent interviews enriched the background knowledge of the key informants from an interpersonal support viewpoint. It was important to understand the personal circumstances, and experiences, that shaped the lives and leisure activities of the key informant from childhood. Parents were able to provide new information and verify or broaden experiences mentioned by the key informants. Interviews with coaches explored the key informants’ training experiences, from an external and professional viewpoint. As coaches were once high performers themselves, they also added detail to leisure constraints and opportunities experienced by event riders and opera singers.

Part 2 of the research design involved focus group discussions. The use of a focus group for each leisure pursuit added to the social perspective within the study, and allowed information to be gathered from individuals whose perceptions of event riding and opera singing was in context with those of the key informants. Local riders and singers, of both sexes, who were recognised by their associated industries as being high performers or prospective high performers, were invited to join the focus groups being held in October 2006. The use of males and females in the focus groups ameliorated any gender bias found within the study and provided details on whether or not both genders dealt with similar types of constraints and opportunities experienced by the key informants.

Focus group discussions, one from the equestrian field and one from the operatic field, provided the researcher with confirmation and strategic guidance for the remainder of the study. They also allowed data to be acquired in a short time frame (Sekaran, 1992). The information gained from the focus groups was analysed to identify any preliminary details of an individual high performer's opportunities and constraints. This information was refined and developed, allowing the final deeper and more focused follow-up interview session with the key informants conducted prior to the third part of the research design – the survey.

In April 2007 the third part of the study, a quantitative survey, was sent nationally to selected high performers, men and women, in the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing around Australia. Responses to these surveys were statistically analysed. Findings from the qualitative and quantitative phases were further examined in relation to the research questions.

Investigating human behaviour and attitudes using case study and focus group tools were considered valuable by Patton (1990). By using different sources and tools at various points in the study's qualitative and quantitative phases, for example case studies, focus groups and surveys, the researcher was able to build on the strength of each type of data collection used and minimise any weaknesses found by using a single approach (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004).

### ***Pilot study.***

An important part of the research design was the use of pilot studies. Using pilot studies prior to conducting interviews or mailing surveys, served to modify and improve the research instruments. A qualitative interview guide was developed for each leisure pursuit, in relation to the individual and focus group interviews, and was piloted on three external individuals (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). These individuals included one opera coach, one retired event rider, and one professional public servant experienced in interviews and interviewing techniques. No data obtained from the pilot study were used in the main study.

The interview pilot participants were asked for feedback and comments regarding the interview guide, content, and style. This allowed for refinement of the interview guide and framing of the questions. No changes were made to the content of the interview guide. However, as with research conducted by James (2000, p. 124) the pilot outcomes highlighted the need for the researcher to minimise any background noise during the interview sessions.

Once the interview process had been completed, and prior to the survey dissemination, a pilot survey was tested to ensure that the sections of the survey flowed, the questions were understandable and participants within a set timeframe could complete the survey. Using a pilot survey prior to its dissemination allowed for further refinement to the sections and to the questions within the sections. Four individuals who had knowledge of event riding and opera singing, but who could not take part in the main study were used to assess the pilot survey. The survey pilot participants were asked for feedback and comments regarding the survey. The only change resulting from the pilot survey was the addition of lines for survey respondents to write their answers for the final questions (Questions 37 & 38). No data from the pilot survey were used in this study.

### **The Interview Method – The Qualitative Phase**

A set of in-depth interviews were undertaken with the two key informants, their parents and their coaches. These interviews were followed by focus group meetings. It is acknowledged that focus groups involve organised discussions with a selected group of individuals; however, according to Patton (1990, p. 335), focus group interviews are conducted as interviews, they are not discussions or problem-solving sessions, and participants are not a decision-making group.

Although the interviews were conducted in an informal conversational approach, they followed Patton's *general interview guide approach* (1990, p. 280-283). To use this approach a simple interview checklist was developed, ensuring relevant issues relating to research objectives and questions were covered. It also allowed information about specific topics to be obtained from the individuals, enabling exploration and further probing (Patton, 2002). The questions focused on comparing the two key informants, who were at a high-level of

performance within the leisure industry, their relationships with others and their personal motivation strategies. It was vital that questions in the qualitative phase of the study were not ambiguous or leading, and were easy to understand. This increased the depth and understanding of responses received for analysis.

In-depth interviews were conducted with all participants and were characterised by the use of probing and open-ended questions (Zikmund, 1994). Interview questions used for the key informant's interviews laid the foundation for external participants and focus group interview questions.

The key informant interview guide had two components:

- Component 1 - concerned the key informant's life, their external support structures, and their chosen leisure pursuits; including historic information, and how they progressed to their current level.
- Component 2 - explored the key informant's view of constraints, negotiation strategies and opportunities.

These were combined into one complete set of questions for other interviews. Case study research generally answers one or more questions that begin with "how" or "why" (Yin, 1994). In this study questions were deliberately configured to include why, how and what.

Questions that needed further investigation were dealt with via feeder questions. These were directed as open-ended questions, keeping in line with the interview format. An example of a question raised in the middle of an individual interview was, "You just mentioned about something going wrong at the World Equestrian Games (WEG). Can you explain what happened and how you dealt with it?"

Using this type of mixed questioning allowed the participants to answer the factual questions easily, and allowed them to elaborate on what they felt about their leisure pursuit and about their own experiences - with minimal input. Using this type of open ended questioning technique ensured rich information was obtained, and alleviated one word answers. During

this process, attention was focused on any inconsistencies between individual and focus group interviews. None were found.

By using data from the initial key informant interviews, the external support participant interviews and the focus group interviews, quality information was gathered that enhanced and developed questions and directions for the final survey or quantitative phase (see Chapter 6).

### *The interview process.*

The first interview session consisted of two face-to-face interviews, based on open-ended questions, undertaken with the two key informants. All the interviews took place in a relaxed, private area selected by the individuals. The first interview drew out demographic and overview information while covering areas specific to this study. The second interview refined information, explored more deeply and included new findings. These findings resulted from the first interview, external participant interviews (parents and coaches), and the focus group discussion. It focused more directly on exploring the study objectives.

Interviews were tape-recorded using a *Sony M-529V Microcassette-Corder* with a built-in microphone using 90 minute audiocassettes. The interviews varied in length from 1 to 1.5 hours. Notes for future reference were taken of any non-verbal cues, during and immediately after the interviews. A *Sony Memo-Scriber* was used to transcribe, verbatim (with the individual's consent) all interviews. The two key informants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts and make additions, changes or deletions. These changes were duly made. The revised transcripts were used to further develop questions to enhance the study in other interview stages, for example the focus group interviews.

To give an alternative, external perspective on the key informants' background and experiences, and allow cross data checks (Patton, 2002) interviews were undertaken with the parents and coaches of the key informants. These interviews allowed supporting data to be collected, and provided in-depth external information on the key informants for further qualitative analysis. These interviews were conducted, after completion of the first key

informant interviews. Prior to conducting these interviews, the key informants gave permission to contact the individuals concerned.

The interviews with parents and coaches enabled in-depth information to be obtained on the key informants that incorporated historic and timely information, and information that the key informants may not recall. These emerging issues proved to be important to the development of, and continuation of, this study. Complex dynamics occur in people's lives that can both encourage and inhibit an individual's involvement in leisure pursuits (Henderson, Ainsworth, Stolarczyk, Hootman, & Levin, 1999). Undertaking the interviews with parents and coaches, using a triangulation method (discussed further in this chapter), enriched the background knowledge already gained from the key informants, and provided an insight into external support perceptions. Within this study, the key informants' family and coach relationships were important to investigate to see if external support systems had any impact on an individual's perceptions of, opportunities for, and involvement in, their leisure-related pursuits, and subsequent careers.

#### *The focus group interviews.*

To give a balanced and clear understanding of constraint negotiation from both a male and female perspective, and to further explore information gained from the key informant and external support participant interviews, group interviews were undertaken using two separate focus groups. In this study the focus group participants were a purposive sample of men and women taken from each field [equestrian and opera] (Patton, 2002). A small number of individuals for each focus group were selected. Each focus group consisted of six individuals who were actively involved in the two leisure activities being studied.

According to Patton (1990, p. 335) the use of focus groups is a highly efficient qualitative data collection technique. A good focus group requires four simple characteristics: the proper composition, an open environment, a probing moderator, and in-depth analysis. The expected benefits of using focus groups in this study included gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life. It also showed the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation (Gibbs, 1997; Patton, 2002; Sekaran, 1992). Using a focus

group in this particular study was appropriate to assist in obtaining a range of perspectives about the research topic.

To ensure focus group participants were information-rich and represented the leisure activities being studied, a combination of sampling methods was employed. *Purposive sampling* (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004; Patton, 2002; Sekaran, 1992), was used to recruit one focus group participant (who conformed to the selection criteria for focus group participants) to find other suitable focus group participants. Two individuals were targeted through purposive sampling (Sekaran, 1992); Sally for the Eventing Focus Group, and James for the Opera Focus Group.

Sally and James, contacted in September 2006, were asked to network and find suitable participants for focus groups held in October; specifically those who met the focus group selection criteria (see Appendix A for more details on focus groups). The rest of the focus group participants were recruited through a network system or *snowball sampling* (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004; Patton, 1990).

The selection criteria for focus group participants were:

- Athletes, as a minimum, had to have competed in official EFA events in the discipline of eventing that allowed point accumulation for the Eventing Leaderboard.
- Artists, as a minimum, had to have performed in opera performances at a state level for 2 years.
- An equal mix of men and women of varying ages from all social classes for both focus groups was preferred.

Purposive sampling was used due to several reasons;

- a. Time – the short time frame given to conduct focus groups and gather appropriate participants; and both event riders and opera singers have specific months of the year when they are actively involved in competitions and performances limiting their available time.
- b. Privacy - finding individuals through associations or companies proved to be difficult due to privacy laws.
- c. Distance - the focus group interviews were scheduled to be held in a particular state in Australia. Distance to the venue was also an issue to consider when selecting participants.

- d. Balance – the method allowed for a balance of ages and gender in each group to give a range of perspectives.

To ensure that the information collected was most pertinent to this study, selecting participants who lived in the same state as the key informants was imperative to successful outcomes - especially in relation to opportunities and constraints. It is acknowledged that one of the key informants was born in another state; however, she trained, lived and worked in the same state as the other key informant at the time that this study was being conducted.

To enable the researcher to support and recognise responses, and to build on conversations and assist in privacy, the focus group interview process was held in a relaxed, quiet atmosphere. All focus group participants were reassured of confidentiality, and advised that there were no right or wrong answers as the study was interested in their personal thoughts and experiences. It was also explained that the researcher was not, and never had been, a high performing athlete or artist, and that the participants could answer questions in their own time.

### **The Survey Method – The Quantitative Phase**

The previous information justified the use of a qualitative phase for deriving rich data from a relatively small number of participants. In this section, the second phase of this study, the quantitative method, is explained. The quantitative data collection method used aimed to increase the overall outcomes, credibility of the study, and establish whether the strategies developed from the initial qualitative study were experienced by other individuals within the same leisure pursuits. As the quantitative phase incorporated event riders and opera singers from around Australia, a survey was chosen as the instrument of choice. Surveys were found to be an efficient and economical way to conduct part of this study and findings from a set population could be generalisable to the whole population (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Sekaran, 1992).

The quantitative phase aimed to see if a larger group of event riders and opera singers also experienced the personal life experiences sourced from the key informants, in relation to developing successful strategies in high performance. An eight page self-completed survey,



containing 10 sections and 38 questions, was sent out to event riders and opera singers throughout Australia in April 2007 (see Appendix F). Quantitative findings are reported in Chapter Five.

### *The survey process.*

As part of the study's data collection process the quantitative survey was developed using information gained from the qualitative data interviews. After receiving ethics approval (see section on ethics for more detail) the survey (see Appendix F) and introductory letter were sent to event riders and opera singers around Australia (see Appendix E).

To ensure wording within the survey related to each activity, two versions were created so that questions within each version were tailored to the specific activity of either horse riding or opera singing. Although survey questions were written with slight word differences depending on the leisure activity, they still allowed comparative analysis to occur between the two activities.

### *Sample selection.*

Finding information, personal contact details and survey response rates for event riders and opera singers proved problematic on four accounts:

1. The distance between capital cities within Australia.
2. The relatively small numbers of appropriate study participants in each field.
3. The lack of publicly available contact details for individuals.
4. Response to the surveys was by individual choice.

Individual involvement was paramount to the success of the survey phase; however, obtaining names and addresses of individuals, and checking if they were over 18 and currently competing or performing at recognised levels, were all issues that needed to be addressed before mail-outs commenced. To make the process easier it was decided to contact the main associations related to the two activities. The National Equestrian Federation of Australia (known as the EFA) for event riders, and the State Opera Companies and Music Conservatoriums for opera singers.

To ensure surveys were sent to individual event riders who best represented the focus of this research, those who were seeking a high performance goal, the EFA database was used for the equestrian group. To ensure individual event riders were serious about their sport and were seeking a high-level of performance, this list was reduced to include only those individuals who were also registered with the Fédération Equestre Internationale (known as the FEI), the International Federation of Equestrian Sports, in the discipline of eventing. Due to confidentiality issues EFA office personnel forwarded the surveys and the introductory letter to relevant members by email. The email requested participants to forward completed surveys direct by email or hard copy to the researcher (as opposed to the Federation). Individuals who were under 18 were required to forward a letter of approval from their parent or guardian. Only one of these was received.

Contacting eventing and opera survey participants occurred concurrently; however, the opera contacts were more difficult to obtain, as there were no overarching association or membership databases available throughout Australia for opera singers. Once the event rider surveys were disseminated, it was necessary to focus on the opera organisations themselves to develop opera contacts.

To ensure surveys were forwarded to individuals that represented the focus of this study, those who had a high performance goal, ten opera organisations were selected. These included National and State Opera Companies and Graduate Music Conservatoriums; organisations that have paid performers or a young artist's programme. The organisations were initially contacted via telephone with a request for opera singer contact details, but due to confidentiality and privacy issues, this information was not forthcoming.

Emails were sent to the CEO, the Head of School, or the Director or Artistic Director of each organisation, with a request to forward a copy of the survey to individual singers in their companies. Only six completed surveys were received through this method.

An advertisement was placed in a recognised nationally distributed opera newsletter requesting survey participants. This was also unsuccessful as only two people emailed requesting copies of the survey and those surveys were not returned.

Discussions held with several opera organisation officials suggested that individuals in the performance arena may not be computer focused and that a direct mail-out may produce a better response rate. It was also noted that the timeframe of the survey coincided with the commencement of a new opera season in Australia, meaning that singers may be busy performing or rehearsing for end of year performances during the survey timeframe.

Although assistance was found within opera organisations, it should also be noted that some of the senior officials contacted did not encourage research that was not specifically focused on their own organisation, and they did not want to disseminate information to other opera companies. A couple of officials also wanted to see the survey and give their opinions on it prior to individuals within their company receiving it. This attitude appeared to be from a political or/and competitive viewpoint but copies were duly sent to them.

To alleviate possible computer literacy issues 200 hardcopies of the surveys and introduction letters were photocopied, and mailed directly to a list of 10 well-known opera organisations with a request that they be given to opera singers within their organisations. Each envelope contained 20 surveys, with stamped, return-addressed envelopes enclosed. This proved to be the most successful dissemination process, with 77 completed surveys returned. Chapter 6 expands on the results found through the quantitative survey.

### *Survey participation.*

There were 13,801 Senior and Junior equestrian members registered to ride at official events in Australia according to the Annual Report of the Equestrian Federation of Australia (EFA, 2007). This number included all equestrian disciplines and riders of all ages. It excluded associate members, such as breeders, owners and horse riding facilities, and those who were required to be an associate member to be eligible for insurance purposes only.

As this study related only to competitive event riders, the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) database linked with the EFA database, was used. There were 600 individuals registered with the FEI, with 353 riders registered in the discipline of eventing. The database was not able to indicate how many of these members were over 18. Three hundred and fifty

three surveys were emailed directly to event riders in Australia through the National Equestrian Federation Association's Fédération Equestre Internationale database.

Singers were harder to identify. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000) 3,946 singers were employed in 379 organisations in the Musical Theatre and Opera fields in Australia. However, only 4% (17) of these organisations were opera specific organisations (ABS, 2000). There were no statistical breakdowns of the number of individuals currently performing solely in opera. Unlike sporting associations, no central databases were available for opera singer details in Australia so a different strategy was required. Opera organisation websites showed that the average number of opera performers listed as working with a single company ranged from 8 to 16, and most companies brought in contract singers, invited artists, and/or volunteers to sing in performances. Therefore, if 17 companies had between 8 and 16 performers that would mean a population of somewhere between 136 and 272 opera singers at the high performance levels in Australia.

#### ***Response rate.***

One hundred and seventy surveys were returned, consisting of 89 event rider and 81 opera surveys. However, 16 surveys were unusable in this study as 12 surveys were incomplete, and 4 surveys were from respondents under the age of 18, with no parental approval. The final usable surveys numbered 154; coincidentally this was split equally between the event riders (77) and opera singers (77). The majority of respondents were aged 18-30, female (68% event riders and 78% opera singers) and unmarried.

#### ***The Survey Sections.***

The survey sections were based on the outcomes from the qualitative phase. They included issues that related to opportunities and constraints, characteristics of a high performer, participation, external support structures, coaches and training, future aspirations, factors affecting performance, winning techniques, personal demographics and perceptions (see Appendix F). The sections were designed to provide substantial data to enhance the qualitative information focusing on answering the research questions.

*Survey section 1: About your sport/art.*

The survey began with a set of specific questions relating to an individual's leisure activity (Questions 1-11). These questions were based on the individual respondents' history in relation to their leisure pursuit and were designed to be quick and easy to answer. Having factual, straightforward questions at the beginning of the survey eased respondents into the survey process (Sekaran, 1992).

Although the questions in this section were closed questions, one question allowed the respondent to explain their answer further. Question 11 asked the respondent to choose which attribute, ability or behaviour, was the most important factor in reaching a high performance level. Due to the confusion of participants in the qualitative phase between the terms ability and talent, it was decided that the term *talent* was to be used in this part of the survey.

Information relating to talent vs. behaviour in high performance can be seen as a paradox; which is the most important? Talent (also recognised as ability) has been thought to be a pre-requisite to becoming world-class, yet how an individual keeps motivated and how they find ways to overcome difficult situations at certain stages in their leisure pursuit may be one of the most important factors to a high performer. Therefore, room was provided in Question 11 so respondents could further explain why they chose their answer.

*Survey section 2: Society and your sport/art.*

The second section of five questions (i.e., Questions 12-16) related to "elite perceptions in society relating to art and sport." Survey respondents were asked to answer questions on perceived elitism in Australia and to describe their personal perceived social class status (i.e., working class, middle class and upper class). This developed a picture of a respondent's background comparable to literature findings on demographic information. In this study, social class was about investigating the notion of elitism from an individual's point of view.

Elitism in leisure was also explored by examining how event riders and opera singers perceived other art or sporting activities. Respondents were asked to tick *yes* or *no* if they thought elitism was in a given selection of popular art or sport activities in Australia (i.e.,

Question 14). They were also asked to name any other countries where they perceived elitism in event riding or opera singing to exist (i.e., Question 15).

Finally, an assorted list of 17 well-known art and sport activities was listed (i.e., Question 16). The listed activities were those that would normally be undertaken or be easily recognisable to the public. Respondents were asked to tick *yes* if they thought the activity was seen to be elitist, or *no* for activities that they thought were not seen as elitist. This question was required for comparative purposes to the qualitative phase of the study and was pivotal to the sixth research objective.

To ensure that survey respondents were not led in any way by the researcher on Question 16, respondents were given the choice to tick none or all boxes, subject to their personal perceptions. Respondents were also given space to write any additional activities that they thought were elite and were not listed on the survey. Any boxes not ticked were taken as being non-elitist.

### *Survey section 3: Characteristics of a high performer.*

Section 3 contained one question (i.e., Question 17) dealing with successful characteristics of a high performer. As individual characteristics were a valuable component to the study's outcomes, respondents were asked to complete a Likert-type table covering 18 assorted individual characteristics using a 5-point scale, with 1 being *not at all important* to 5 being *highly important*.

The Likert-type scale is frequently used in quantitative surveys and has several advantages. It is simple to complete, enables numerous statements to be provided in limited space and, by using a numerical scale respondents are able to rate their personal level of agreement or disagreement to a specific issue (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Individual behaviour characteristics and personality traits are normally associated with psychological studies. However, as Jackson (2000 p. 64) suggested, "to understand how society affects individuals, leisure research should look at contextual issues rather than using

a psychological perspective.” Therefore, in this study, by using a sociological approach and using characteristics previously mentioned in the qualitative interview phase, Section 3 would not only enhance and develop the study outcomes but also support the sociological aspect of this study.

*Survey section 4: Participation.*

Why an individual takes up a certain leisure activity and continues with that activity depends on numerous factors. Section 4 (i.e., Question 18) explored why a person chooses to be an event rider or opera singer. This section gives the study scope and a deeper understanding on how an individual develops a hobby and why they continue to follow it through to a higher level.

To ensure the survey flowed and respondents were not confused by different question methods, Section 4 also used a Likert-type table using a 5-point scale with 1 being *not at all important* to 5 being *highly important*.

*Survey section 5: Aspirations and future plans.*

Section 5 consisted of questions that gave additional information on how respondents learnt from their own personal life experiences (i.e., Questions 19). Straightforward closed questions were used in Section 5, with some questions (i.e., Question 25), having additional space so respondents could expand their answers if they wished.

Questions 19, and 22 to 24, explored the respondents’ leisure status. They were asked how they would classify their involvement in their leisure activity. For example hobbyist, amateur, semi-professional or professional (i.e., Question 19), what their aims were (i.e., Question 22), their activity level (i.e., Question 23), and their future goals (i.e., Question 24).

*Survey section 6: Factors affecting performance.*

The survey listed numerous questions about opportunities and constraints (i.e., Questions 18, 20, 21, 26, 27 and 37). These questions combined the most commonly noted opportunities

and constraints found in literature, with those opportunities and constraints mentioned in the qualitative interviews. Sixteen factors were identified from literature and qualitative interviews relating to specific opportunities and constraints including external and internal support systems.

The constraint and opportunity section of the research survey consisted of two yes/no questions relating to difficulties found in an individual's life (i.e., Question 20), and whether they would do anything differently if given a second chance (i.e., Question 21). These factors were put into two separate Likert-type tables so the survey continued to be uniform in its approach to respondents. From the Likert-type table outcomes a mean score was established for each factor that had *helped to improve* (i.e., Question 26) or had *held back* (i.e., Question 27) an individual's performance. This enabled the mean scores from survey results to be ranked. In Question 27 words that depicted constraint issues specific to that activity were used, for example 'finding the right *horse*' in the event riders survey, was altered to read 'finding the right *agent*' in the opera singers survey as these were considered comparable in influencing success.

The focus of the study was on strategies that promote success. Looking at an individual's personal strategies, their support systems, and increasing knowledge of constraints and opportunities, would lead to the development of a conceptual framework. This makes Section 6 a fundamental part of this study.

#### *Survey section 7: Coach characteristics.*

Coaches were found not only to be influential to individual performance, but were also one of the most stated constraints identified by high performers in this study, supporting the findings of Stebbins (1997) and Ware (2001). Focusing on coaches in Section 7 provided further knowledge on what an individual should look for in a coach to assist in reaching a high performance goal.

A final Likert-type scale was used to establish which coach characteristics were the most important to enable an individual who wanted to reach a high performance level.



Respondents were asked to indicate which characteristic related to a *good coach* on a five-point scale, with 1 being *not at all important* to 5 being *highly important*.

By ranking the outcomes of all respondents towards each characteristic, it would be possible to gain an overall picture of the characteristics a good coach should possess. This would provide substantial information on interpersonal support factors for development of the final conceptual framework.

*Survey section 8: Performance techniques.*

The eighth section related to *individual performance methods*, which aimed to identify personal strategies, used to negotiate constraints encountered throughout their performance.

This section (i.e., Question 29) listed techniques and methods found in literature that are commonly used to improve performance. Respondents were asked to give a simple *yes* or *no* answer if they did or did not use the techniques and methods listed. There was also room for respondents to list other techniques they used if they were not listed on the survey. This section would provide feedback on what methods or techniques are or are not being used by event riders and opera singers.

*Survey section 9: About you.*

This section focused on closed *demographic* questions relating to the respondents' personal situation. As demographic questions are personal in nature and related to gender, age, salary, marital and educational status, it was decided to place these questions close to the end of the survey (i.e., Questions 30 to 36). This strategy allowed respondents time to relax into the survey in the anticipation that when asked personal questions they would be more open about their lives, and therefore more inclined to answer these questions. According to Sekaran (1992 p. 213) moving personal questions to the end can help reduce respondent bias in case the respondent gets irritated by its personal nature. Personal information, for example income or educational status, provided further data to investigate the notion of elitism and perceived social class.

*Survey section 10: Constraints and opportunities experienced.*

Finally, survey respondents were asked to include their own personal *opportunities* and *constraints* (i.e., Question 37). Section 10 asked them to list three opportunities and three constraints that they had personally experienced and were the most relevant to their performance.

It was necessary to address actual personal experiences, such as coping strategies, social influences, support factors [external and internal] and personal constraints and opportunities within this survey, as outcomes from these sections would assist in refining strategies obtained from qualitative information. Using an individual's viewpoint even within a quantitative survey is a pivotal component to this study.

As individuals used their own words in this section, many different words related to the same factor. When words were listed that had similar meaning to a key word, for example, teacher, trainer or instructor, these words were included in the table under the key word *coach* (see Chapter 5). It should also be noted that although each survey related to different leisure activities, associated words were used in the qualitative tables. For example *injury to horse* for event riders, matched with *injury to voice* for opera singers and was therefore tabled together as *Injury to Horse/Voice*.

**Reliability and validity.**

Any instrument used in research processes needs to provide reliability and validity. Zikmund (1994, p. 288) defines reliability as "the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results." Zikmund (1994, p. 290) further stated that "Validity is the ability of a scale or measuring instrument to measure what is intended to be measured."

Whereas both statements express an ideal scenario, in reality it is impossible for this research to be error-free, especially with qualitative methodologies due to individualistic outcomes being unpredictable, and the researcher being the "instrument" within the interview process (Patton, 1990). Carmine and Zeller (1979, p. 11) stated that "the measurement of any phenomenon always contains a certain amount of change error." What was realistic within this study was to try to achieve minimum error. Using dual triangulation and different

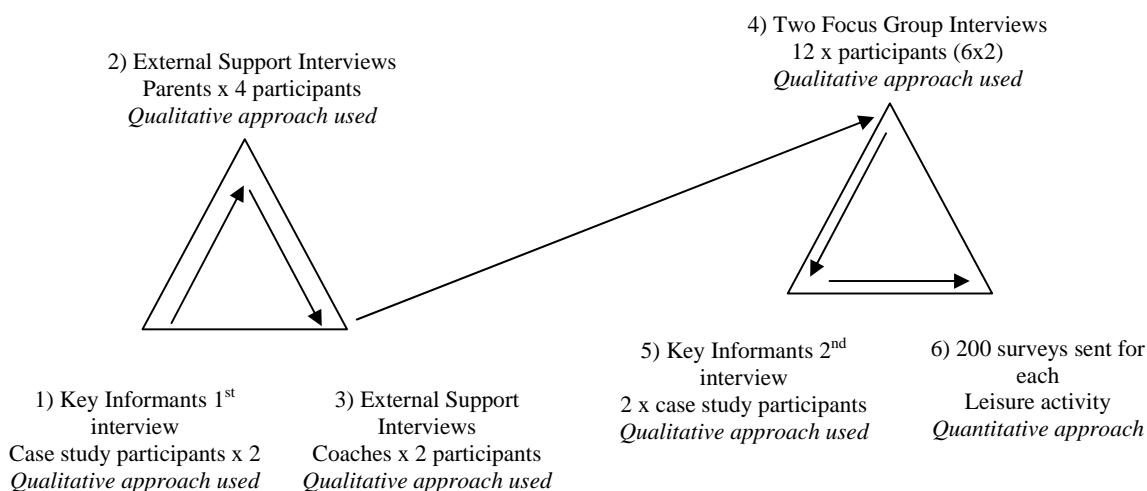
research approaches in this study lead to a reduction of potential bias, and according to Hussey et al., (1997, p. 74) this in turn leads to greater validity and reliability than a single method approach.

### ***Triangulation.***

There were some concerns about the use of case studies in this research, such as their lack of rigor, the length of time collating data, small sample size, too much information and the changeability of outcomes (Henderson, Ainsworth, Stolarczyk, Hootman, & Levin, 1999; Patton, 2002; Yin, 1984). To alleviate some of these concerns triangulation was used as part of this study (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1984, 1994).

*Triangulation* originally emerged in surveying, in which a surveyor pinpoints a location by taking measurements from three different angles (Yin, 1984). In social research, triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomena (Patton, 2002). It can be employed in both quantitative and qualitative studies and assists to reduce weaknesses or intrinsic biases (James, 2000; Patton, 1990). The need for triangulation arose from the need to confirm the validity of the processes used in this study (Yin, 1984). Multiple sources of data (for example case study interviews, external support interviews and focus group interviews), from the major qualitative method, and the survey data source obtained from the secondary quantitative method enabled the use of triangulation to confirm each data set, giving a three dimensional viewpoint of the processes used in this study.

To strengthen and explain the study's process in more detail a dual-triangulation method was developed for this study (Figure 3.1). Using a dual triangulation method incorporating the different data gathering techniques allowed for a fuller and richer picture, and ensured the research process went smoothly.



*Figure 3.1* Research process using dual triangulation method.

As Figure 3.1 shows, there were six steps in total to this study with arrows depicting the flow of processes. These steps incorporated the qualitative interviews conducted with the key informants, the external support participants and the focus groups, and the final quantitative survey, in a methodical and logical way.

Step 1: The research commenced with interviews with both key informants (the case studies). Once information was gained from the individual's viewpoint, further exploration was required.

Step 2: Information from external sources, specifically those who were close to the key informants and had experienced the development of the key informant's leisure pursuit from childhood, was explored further by interviewing the parents of the key informants (the fathers and mothers).

Step 3: To obtain specific details on the key informants' current experiences, directly related to their performance, interviews were conducted with their current coaches. Findings from interviews in the first three steps were analysed and developed to produce guiding questions for the focus groups.

Step 4: A focus group was organised for each leisure pursuit, event riding and opera singing. Answers from the focus groups, along with the external support participants were analysed for the second interview session with the key informants.

Step 5: A second in-depth exploratory interview was conducted with the key informant. Once the second interview session with the key informants was conducted, overall findings assisted in the development of survey questions.

Step 6: A quantitative survey was designed and mailed to event riders and opera singers around Australia as the final component of the study.

### **Data analysis.**

In this study QSRs Nud\*ist 4 software was initially used to co-ordinate data for ease of access via assigned codes or index trees using nodes. However, due to a computer upgrade NVivo 7 replaced Nud\*ist 4 in February 2008. All information entered into Nud\*ist 4 was transferred to NVivo 7.

After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were analysed, and findings entered into the QSR International Software NVivo7. This software can deal with large volumes of rich qualitative information assisting in the development and testing of theories. In this study the software allowed the development of findings by increasing the levels of analysis and coding using the retrieved qualitative data.

After checking interview documents for punctuation and spelling errors, the transcripts containing all the interview findings were downloaded into the software directly from Word. These documents were created as sources and were subsequently analysed. Categories were developed in NVivo7 using the sources as free nodes. When emergent themes, relating to constraints and opportunities, became apparent these nodes were developed further into trees, which could be sub-categorised and explored further. Notes and observations were also linked to sources via memos within the software.

Quantitative data in this study were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Answers from completed surveys were entered directly into SPSS. This type of statistical analysis was seen as being less subjective and allowed the respondents from the two leisure activities to be compared.

### *Limitations and bias.*

Limitations are acknowledged in identifying individual views from the focus group interviews, as well as difficulties in the practical arrangements for conducting focus groups. The researcher conducted all interviews which allowed personal knowledge of group leadership and interpersonal skills to be used in moderating the groups successfully, and alleviated further limitations. As previously mentioned the findings from interviews, specifically the twelve individuals who took part in the focus group interviews, cannot be projected onto the entire population, although the success of the outcomes was solely dependent on the interaction between the participants and the researcher.

It was acknowledged that the length of time allowed for this study did not permit any longitudinal data to be gathered. Although the information received was current at the time of writing, the information collected was historical on completion. Due to the study involving individuals and their personal leisure experiences, this study could be referred to as being reflective and personalised. However, the key informants chosen had been involved with their leisure pursuits for many years, from a hobby level through to an international performance level, and findings are still relevant.

This study focused on the experiences of two women undertaking serious leisure pursuits - those of event riding and opera singing - and how they successfully negotiated constraints. The use of two female key informants as the focus of this study did not automatically make the study gender biased, for both leisure activities are regarded as being gender neutral (Cargher, 1988; Green, 1986). By using women as the key informants, it was acknowledged there may be some constraints specific to women. However, within this study gender constraints such as time, opportunities and money also arose, all of which are relevant to both men and women.

Within this study, the design of the study itself, that of focusing on only two women, was also acknowledged as having a probable limitation on outcomes. However, it is believed that the depth of data compensated for this. As the researcher was a white, middle-class, middle-aged, heterosexual, female, this also would have brought some biases to the study. James (2000, p. 127) had noted that despite the professed objectivity of quantitative research, the reality is that all research can be subject to the conscious or unconscious biases of the researcher, regardless of the age, class or gender of the researcher.

Even though the researcher had previous experience and knowledge with event riders and opera singers, this experience and knowledge was not related to techniques or training within these areas. Population limitations were also recognized as a limitation to this study, as the entire population of high performing event riders and opera singers in Australia could not be surveyed. The participants were also subject to limitations as they were selected from groups who were racially, socially and geographically similar.

With concepts such as measurements of success in leisure performance, findings can change over time, and answers given at the time of interviews could be different if the same question were asked in the future. However, for the purpose of this study, the information gathered was used to answer the study's research questions, and is able to be used as reference points for future research.

#### *Ethical considerations.*

Edith Cowan University Human Ethics Committee, and the Faculty of Business and Law Higher Degrees and Research Committee, approved the undertaking of this study.

As case study research is based on personal experiences, the high profile of the key informants and the low number of women within the equestrian and opera fields in Australia, confidentiality and anonymity were impossible to fully protect. The key informants were advised of this situation, and they acknowledged that they understood possible implications, which may arise as being a part of this study. To assist in alleviating this problem all participants were asked to choose a pseudonym in place of their real names. Their chosen pseudonym was used throughout the study. Specific names and places were also disguised by

the use of pseudonyms. The key informants and all external support participants were fully informed of ethical issues that could arise from being a part of the study. No real names were used.

Prior to the commencement of interviews the key informants were required to give their initial agreement to participate in this study, followed by a signed consent form. A letter of Informed Consent was sent or given to each participant (event riders, opera singer, coaches, parents and focus group participants), for a signature of consent prior to the first face-to-face interview (see Appendix B). Details such as demographic information were for comparative purposes and allowed a general profile of leisure participants and performance paths within the leisure industry in Australia to be built. These points were stated in the consent letter given to each subject. Their approval and signed consent form prior to the commencement of interviews was received.

If a researcher uses human subjects it is important to give them feedback where possible (James, 2000). In this study, all participants were given the opportunity to read transcripts, to add, correct or delete any information that they did not wish to be used in the study. Their right of withdrawal was adhered to. All participants were thanked before and at the end of each interview, and are acknowledged anonymously in this thesis.

Tape cassettes were identified by the chosen pseudonym and date of interviews. These were erased after transcription. Hard copies of all data will be kept in a locked fireproof filing cabinet for a period of five years according to University ethics regulations, and then destroyed.

### **Summary of Chapter Three**

This chapter outlined the methods used in the qualitative and quantitative phase of this study. It described the selection of the interview participants, including key informants, external support participants, focus groups and development of the survey, and outlined the research design, data collection and analysis. Limitations, bias and ethics were also incorporated and discussed in this chapter. Ensuring privacy for key informants was problematic; however, all



precautions to maintain key informant's public anonymity were taken and ethical process in relation to interviewing subjects was upheld according to university protocol. The findings gathered from the qualitative and quantitative phases are presented in the following two chapters; these findings are further explored and analysed in Chapter Six focusing on the study's three research questions.

## Chapter 4

*Whether you are an athlete or not, it is vital to remember that we all have the freewill to determine and direct our own destiny. Think about what you want out of life, and then make choices that lead you in that direction. Give your heart and soul to it, and don't compromise.*

*Australian Olympic skier and gold medallist, Alisa Camplin  
(Interview with Deasey, 2006)*

### Qualitative Findings

This chapter provides a unique source of qualitative information obtained from interviews with the key informants, their external support participants (parents and coaches) and focus groups. The rich, in-depth information is strengthened further by the triangulation method (see Chapter3), giving a deeper understanding of a high performers lived experiences and how they deal with constraints.

Abbreviations are used to denote participant relationships with key informants and their respective leisure activities:

EvF = Eventing Father  
OpF = Opera Father  
EvM = Eventing Mother  
OpM = Opera Mother  
EvC = Eventing Coach  
OpC = Opera Coach  
EvFG = Eventing Focus Group  
OpFG = Opera Focus Group

Pseudonym first names protect participant anonymity (see Appendix A for a list of focus group participant pseudonyms, marital status, gender and social class).

### Introduction

This chapter of qualitative findings is divided into intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types of constraints, followed by a discussion on the participants' perceptions relating to

leisure, work and elitism. Logic might suggest that the approach to this discussion would follow a specific path within each of the types explored, set out in separate sections. For example, to report all of the participants' comments relating to constraints first, (e.g., lack of confidence) then in the next section, all of the opportunities (e.g., ways of building confidence, developing talent, etc.) then the strategies. However, this would become repetitive because so many potential constraints have opposite opportunities that lead to strategies. For example, a poor coach is a constraint but a good coach is an opportunity. A strategy to overcome a constraint is to find a better coach.

Instead, the discussion of these findings is simplified with each constraint type reported in turn. For example, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types will be discussed, with their potential as a constraint and as an opportunity outlined, followed by the strategies for success. Where possible the key informants' views are stated first, followed by any relevant views of their parents and coaches and finally any related comments raised by the focus group participants. Responses used in this chapter are paraphrased or summarised to provide evidence, support and reader clarity. However, in some instances the original quote is used in full to provide a deeper insight into an individual's persona.

The *intrapersonal* findings are categorised into four main characteristic themes: talent, mental attitude and behaviour, determination and self-confidence. The *interpersonal* findings include the family influences, family background, a father's role, a mothers' role, family and sibling advice, and family support. The coaches' appropriate level and experience are also explored, along with the importance of good communication between the coach and the individual; and other relevant coach issues. Additional interpersonal constraints found with agents, the audience, groups and cliques are discussed. The *structural* constraints are identified as influences from: industry, politics, equality, self-image, isolation, travel, time, money and injury.

The second section of this chapter discusses two themes. The first theme, *strategies for creating a career*, explores the terms amateur and professional, followed by the blurring of the work-leisure relationship. The second theme focuses on *strategies for development*, both intrinsic and extrinsic. It expands on personal motivational techniques incorporating

visualisation, meditation or yoga, positive thinking, “butterflies”, the flow, approval motivation and rewards.

The chapter finally explores the perceptions that participants hold for the term *elite* by incorporating topics on class, elite in Australia, perceptions of society, media insight and the changing industry.

### **Perceived constraints and opportunities.**

During discussions on constraints, explanations of what constituted a constraint was seen as consistent with the definition given in this study (see Chapter 1). However, individuals held different perceptions of what were and were not constraints, even in the same leisure activity. Viewpoints varied on situational circumstances and related opportunities when discussing intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints and opportunities. Key informants and individuals in the focus groups (those already active in the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing), played down the seriousness of constraints throughout the interview sessions. It was only when prompted that they actually discussed their perceived constraints and opportunities.

The eventing key informant, Madeleine, spoke of this when she said, “I don’t see them as constraints as such; they are just things that happen that you deal with as you go along.” When she was asked why she did not like speaking about constraints, she said, “constraint isn’t a word I use. I just don’t give in.” Instead, Madeleine saw the need to seek out, or be able to recognise opportunities (aspects that assist individuals in negotiating constraints); opportunities that would enable her to reach her individual high performance goals. She said, “nobody is going to give you any assistance unless you find it.” Madeleine recognised the need to understand how to use opportunities to her advantage, stating, “I think I made a really good job of the opportunities that were made available to me.” For example, she used her networks to find a sponsor to fund her riding activity and to introduce her to good coaches. Having the ability to see what opportunities existed to her personally, made a significant difference for Madeleine in achieving her high performance level.

The opera key informant, Maria, also affirmed that she did not like the word constraints, because they were “just problems you had to overcome.” However, she did concede that “the younger or new singers – those just starting out,” would see some issues as constraints when she, as an experienced performer, did not; issues such as, finding the right vocal coach or organising sufficient time to practice. Maria preferred to see constraints as a normal part of reaching a goal, stating that she did not dwell on problems but “made a situation work.” Like Madeleine, Maria did not rely on others to find opportunities for her, she preferred to find opportunities herself and saw this as being an essential component to her own serious leisure progress.

When discussing constraints and opportunities with event riders and opera singers, focus group participants agreed that there were constraints, issues that limited their freedom to continue their leisure pursuit, such as external work commitments, but they also chose not to see them as constraints. Participants preferred to speak about opportunities that overcame problems stemming from difficult situations or people, rather than speak directly about the constraints themselves. As Susan (age 21, EvFG) said, “... if you keep on about them [constraints] you don’t get anywhere.”

Focus group participants also preferred to discuss opportunities available to them. Steve (age 23, OpFG) echoed focus group views on opportunities, saying, “you should be able to make opportunities happen. [You should] make the most of opportunities when they come up.” Both eventing and opera focus group participants felt that constraints and opportunities were related to individual situations, and the environment in which they found themselves, as Lucy (age 24, OpFG) declared “problems occurred throughout a person’s life in general,” constraints and opportunities occurred both externally and internally to the activity itself.

In this study, all participants preferred to discuss constraints in a positive way and talked openly about opportunities for success. Event riders and opera singers focused on positive aspects rather than negative issues when speaking about personal strategies for their success. Therefore, reporting would seem to be uneven because the key informants mentioned few issues, except for injury, as definite constraints. Their success as high-level performers was

due to their strategic decision-making abilities to turn potential constraints into opportunities, and their interpretation of a constraint by the use of a positive mindset.

*Intrapersonal constraints and opportunities.*

Interview discussions with key informants and focus group participants incorporated intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural outcomes. The most prominent outcomes emerging from the discussion on intrapersonal constraints and opportunities included: talent, mental attitude and behaviour, determination and self-confidence.

*Talent.*

Participants knew from a relatively early stage that they had the potential to do well in their chosen activity, and that by developing their talent they succeeded in reaching their performance goals. Madeleine also acknowledged the need to have an initial talent when she said, “at the end of the day you can’t make yourself a silk purse out of a sow’s ear. There has to be a degree of talent there.” In the course of the interviews, a series of sub-themes developed around the key informants’ attitude to their leisure activity and its relation to talent. Although word usage differed between participants, they all agreed that talent, possessing the right attitude, and having the ability to learn to develop that talent, were fundamental attributes needed to reach a high-level of performance. When speaking about her rise to the top, Madeleine’s self-belief in her talent was apparent. She said, “I was always told I didn’t have any ability, I think that is bullshit. I think in [show] jumping I am very good.”

Parents were aware of their child’s ability from an early age; Maria’s mother recognised her daughter’s talent when Maria was very young:

She had a good sense of rhythm at a very early age. In fact when she was two, in childcare, they noticed she could conduct to the beat. She conducted a piece at one point. So she has always been a singer first I think, she was always musically minded.” (Sue, OpM)

Talent alone was seen to be insufficient to achieve success. A performer required specific behaviours suited to further training and skill development. As Joan the opera coach stated, “Talent must come first, but without good attitudes the students are lost.” Participants saw talent as a crucial quality to reaching a high performance level. However, both key informants and several of the focus group participants suggested that an individual with little talent but the right attitude, who puts in effort, could outperform the individual who has talent alone.

*Mental attitude and behaviour.*

As well as talent and ability, the participants recognised that people with potential needed to have a positive mental attitude and supportive behaviour to approach training correctly. Madeleine’s mother spoke about young riders with no ambition to go higher, and saw this as perfectly acceptable, saying, “not everybody in the world should be trying to be a high performing sports person - the world couldn’t stand that many high performance sports people.” She was convinced that mental attitude and supportive outward behaviour led to success. When speaking about what makes riders successful she said:

Their mental attitude absolutely, I am convinced of that. Ability to enhance talent is necessary. Not all the ability in the world will get anybody to a high performance position in sports without the mental attitude. The right behaviour; I’m convinced. (Elizabeth, EvM)

Maria’s mother had observed in her the ability to improve skills through her inner beliefs and values, measurable outwardly by her behaviour towards others. She had also seen other highly talented individuals fail:

The talent is nothing if the attitude is poor. I have seen people with talent never get anywhere, perhaps they don’t know they have the talent or maybe they don’t have the confidence in themselves to use it! Maria has the drive, the attitude, behaviour and ability to support herself. (Sue, OpM)

Maria's father also pointed this out:

If you don't have the right self-discipline or attitude your talent won't get you far ... seriously, both talent and behaviour are equally important, you need a lot of talent to start off with but your behaviour, how you work yourself, leads to you performing better ... same as singing, you've either got a combination of talent and drive and so forth or you haven't. (Tom, OpF)

The focus group participants discussed aspects of several high performers, speaking about their "positive mental attitudes" and "good behavioural responses" to different situations. Both event riders and opera singers recognised that a successful individual's attitude and behaviour had to suit the activity they were in to allow continuity. Jenny thought behaviour was the most important attribute to reaching leisure goals, especially at a competitive level. She also said that in horse riding, behaviour, that she defined as the way in which someone controls his or her actions, played a definite role in performance:

Talent can get you so far, but if you don't have the behaviour to stay calm with your horse, or you can't control your attitude in the ring, or if you have an outburst or whatever, you're not going to get anywhere. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

Participants felt that when an individual becomes seriously interested in pursuing higher levels in their chosen activity, their attitude to develop that talent drives them forward. This in turn increases their knowledge base and skill development. As Melanie of the eventing focus group revealed, you need:

The right attitude, you have to have patience to get better and you have to be determined, even if you are talented. There are many good coaches out there, if you are willing to learn and if you are willing to put in the effort. From what I have seen, there are a lot of top-level riders and many of them have been created, because they wanted to do well. (Melanie, age 17, EvFG)



When asked what helped them the most in achieving their current performance level, all participants agreed that their talent, their own strength of mind and their disciplined behaviour gave them the confidence to continue and to improve. However, the key informants and the higher-level focus group participants felt that at their current stage in their leisure activity they were now the “driver” of their own leisure goals, “it wasn’t a hobby anymore,” it was up to them to use their personal qualities to continue to perform successfully.

*Determination.*

Personal traits of both event riders and opera singers were similar. The main intrinsic, or internal factor, important to high performance in both pursuits was the individual’s *determination*. Determination, or *pig-headedness*, according to several of the participants, strongly motivated them to succeed. Madeleine attributed her success to, “... pig-headedness. I’m determined, I’m stubborn. Once I get something, I worry it like a rat until I shake what I want out of it. I don’t give in very easily.”

As a high performer, the opera key informant, Maria, concentrated all her attention on successful outcomes, pointing out that she liked “to persevere at something until I am really one hundred per cent sure that it is not going to work.” She also linked determination with being pig-headed when she was asked, “What personal qualities or traits do you have that helps you overcome difficult situations?” She replied:

Because of my determination I don’t want to give up. My determination ... I just want to make the performance work, the outcome needs to be good, I want to make a situation work. I keep in mind that there is a lot of peripheral behaviours that will only hold me back and hold the product, so to speak, back. I try to keep going forward. Oh, I am pig-headed so I do keep trying no matter what. (Maria)

Key informant parents recognised and confirmed the personal trait of determination in both Madeleine and Maria. Elizabeth (EvM), the mother of the eventing key informant, stated that

the main attribute that helped Madeleine past her leisure constraints was her “determination or whatever you would like to call it, pig-headedness if you want to, but yes she is a very definite person, a very determined person.” Madeleine’s father backed these comments up when he said:

She had a natural aptitude to it; she had a determination, which you see when she sticks her chin out! Which says, “I can do anything”, and she believes that she can, and so therefore she’d probably be the same if she would have taken up any other sport, except for the fact that her hand-eye co-ordination would never mean that she could play a ball game. (James, EvF)

Coaches, used the same terminology when asked what they thought gave the key informants the edge over other event riders or opera singers. John replied:

Determination to reach the highest level, dedication in training, and the ability to promote herself.... Personally, Madeleine is very determined, her determination and assertiveness has kept her going when things got tough. (John, EvC)

Joan, the opera coach, said “grim determination, an excellent brain, good training, and potentially, at the beginning, a beautiful voice.” The trait of determination was associated with a strong belief in themselves; their self-confidence.

#### *Self-confidence.*

When speaking about personal traits and qualities that promoted success, participants mentioned *confidence* as the main quality that set apart high-level performers from non-performers. When speaking about her rise to the top, Madeleine’s confidence in herself was very apparent when she answered, “there was no doubt; I just knew that I could do it. I don’t know why it is just something within me; I know that if I put my mind to it there is nothing I

can't do." She also suggested that her lack of modesty and confidence in her riding abilities were "probably part of where I am now."

Both key informants appeared to be self-assured and 'in-charge' of their own self. This was noticeable when they spoke about how they approached problems. Maria, the opera singer, mentioned that her confidence in herself allowed her to take action when required. She was also confident in her singing abilities and was not afraid of taking control, "it is kind of self explanatory; if it needs to be resolved, I deal with it. I don't like confrontations but I won't walk away from it or ignore it."

Belief in themselves and their abilities, gave event riders and opera singers the confidence to continue in their activity to reach a high-level of performance. Parents saw this personal quality as being the most important factor to high performance, along with hard work. As James (EvF) said, "anything is achievable. If you say that you believe that you can do something, you can damn well do it - but it doesn't get handed to you on a platter."

Participants closely associated confidence with the personality trait, *ego*. This trait was often associated with particular behaviour attributes such as arrogance by participants, especially when speaking of inflated pride or a show of superiority. When talking of confidence and ego, having self-confidence but keeping the ego under control was an important factor to consider. The participants noted the negative effects of out-of-control egos. James, the father of the event rider, a non-rider himself, described his experiences with event riders high in confidence but with poor egos:

You see some riders who have ability but I wouldn't invite them to dinner; you know, they are just brash, they're pushing 'I am I am' and promoting themselves. Other riders get to that stage; but they're pleasanter people, they don't expect things to be given to them. They're just normal, if there is such a thing as 'normal'. But there are ones that turn just absolutely awful; they've got to the top, and they're so rude because they're there. You look at some cricket stars and tennis stars, they're at the top but would you want to

have them as a friend? I don't think they are really accepted, except as being an idol, but not as a role model. (James, EvF)

Participants suggested that having negative ego attributes could also limit future prospects. Jenny mentioned team selection:

You know you won't get into a team if you have a pretty bad reputation of having a go at everyone, or yeah, you just can't keep you and your horse calm. Then you are never going to get anywhere. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

The participants all agreed that high performers required confidence, and needed to have a positive ego, although they stated that high performers needed to control their outward behaviours in relation to their egos. An out-of-control ego can be detrimental to high performance goals and career aspirations. As Bob confirmed:

A lot of the opera singers who have been arrogant and thrown tantrums, their careers have failed. Look at Addle and Hughes, they had good careers but then they just went (raspberry noise and thumbs down action). (Bob, age 35, OpFG)

Whereas Jack commented that uncontrollable egos affect future work prospects:

People don't want to work with assholes, so if you get known as someone difficult to work with then I think you're less likely to get the job. Unless you just can't avoid the name. But these days there are more than just one opera singer around. (Jack, age 25, OpFG)

When speaking about confidence in high performers, being strong minded, having confidence and having pride in your own abilities are necessary to success. Too much self-importance, being arrogant and becoming "bigheaded" were not always helpful behaviours to display. However, in some instances these personal behaviours were necessary, to some extent, in high performers. Bob (age 35, OpFG) stated that, "[high performers] tend to be

arrogant because they're determined and a lot are perfectionists, a lot tend to be highly strung. Putting together acting, music, singing and languages tends to do that to you." This was supported by James (age 36, OpFG) who said, "you need arrogance to push yourself forward in this industry," and by Jack (age 29, OpFG) who said, "you hear about these divas [disparagingly] at the top. You do hear about them and their success."

Simone encapsulated the importance of having self-confidence and a positive ego to learn from constructive criticism and counteract a potentially negative high performance environment:

At some point you almost have to have a split personality... you're working in an industry where they tell you "you're not moving right", "you're not singing it the right way", "you haven't said the words the right way", and if you take that on as you do, all the time, it will destroy you. So at some point I think you do have to have another self or an ego. The ego comes out of you. (Simone, age 25, OpFG)

Participants in both event riding and opera singing confirmed that it was important for a high-level performer to have high self-confidence; they agreed that a strong ego was necessary at the top and equally important for them to control it.

A combination of talent, mental attitude and behaviour, determination and self-confidence seemed to be important for success. However, no person exists in isolation and external interpersonal influences, such as parents or coaches, can affect an individual's chance to continue their leisure pursuit and progress to high performance success.

### ***Interpersonal constraints and opportunities.***

As well as *intrapersonal* constraints and opportunities, participants in this study reflected on issues they had experienced that involved *outside* social influences, such as *interpersonal* constraints. Findings in this area showed that interpersonal relationships with people close to the participants, especially parents, and coaches, strongly influenced high performers.

Discussions concerning families involved family influences, family backgrounds, divorce, fathers, mothers, family and sibling advice, and additional family support. Conversations about coaches related to the coaches' level and experience, the importance of good communication and other coach issues. Further interpersonal constraints or opportunities that were mentioned by participants were the agent and audience. This linked directly to groups and cliques that have an effect on high performers.

*Family influences.*

From birth, key informants were surrounded by horses or singing that created an environment in which they could develop their continued interest in their leisure pursuits. Coincidentally, both key informant mothers were teachers, a career choice that allowed these mothers to spend more time with their children:

I have been teaching since Madeleine was two but I've always done some riding ... one thing that kept me teaching while the children were going through secondary school, was that it enabled them to live at home and travel in to the local high school [with me]. (Elizabeth, EvM)

These parents also supported their children's leisure activities at school. This was particularly noticeable with Sue, who was a music teacher at a primary school and introduced her daughter, Maria, to the school choir.

Parents stated that they supported all their children in their endeavours and that the key informants' siblings were also introduced to the same leisure activities of horse riding and singing, respectively, when young. However, they did acknowledge that when the key informants became "serious" in developing their activity, they increased their support for the key informants more than their other children. As James (EvF) admitted when discussing his son, "I suppose to a certain degree our son hasn't had the same support in his sport, he plays golf, but that is very much just a sport to him."

*Family background.*

The key informants in this study came from culturally rich backgrounds. Parents, grandparents and siblings who were interested in similar leisure activities provided the key informants with leisure support early in their life. Maria commented on her grandparents involvement, “Gran and Grandpa had a lot of music around, so it was always there as a kid.” Maria’s mother echoed the family background and ongoing influence in music:

Maria has inherited her musicality from us; the love of music. I have been saying recently that all three of my children are musical, and musicians run in the family ... It’s in the family, I think it is a fairly deep-seated musicality, it’s in our genes, even though some of us are not highly trained, it is there. It is essential to our lives. (Sue, OpM)

Parents often mentioned grandparents, as influential in their grandchildren’s activities at some stage. Sue reminisced about Maria’s grandfather, “even Maria’s great, great grandfather was a piano teacher and pianist of high standard, very high standard”. While Madeleine’s father recalled:

Her mother got her on to a pony as soon as she possibly could, seeing as her grandmother got her mother onto a pony as soon as she could. Her grandmother was always keen on horses and she started Elizabeth on horses. Elizabeth used to ride from their property 16 miles out of the nearest big town through back roads to get to gymkhanas so Elizabeth was hooked on horses. (James, EvF)

With this strong foundation, the key informants developed their interests and adapted them to suit their upbringing and personal lifestyles.

*Divorce.*

Maria's parents had divorced during her childhood. Despite this traumatic event, Maria's interest in singing was easily traceable to her early family life, her parents and her grandparents. "My mother's mother and father also sang..."

Even though her parents knew that Maria loved to sing, perhaps due to the time of family changes, her parents did not immediately notice her desire to go further. As Maria notes:

They didn't lead me specifically to do anything. My parents always thought I was pretty grounded and that whatever I chose to do I'd figure that out myself ... Influence? We all loved music as such, I don't know, but sometimes it seems like a bit of a cop-out that they didn't point me in the right direction. They just genuinely thought I would figure out things for myself and opera was something I figured out for myself. (Maria)

Parental divorce could have caused a temporary halt to Maria's development or had life-long effects on her leisure pursuit. However, she maintained positive relationships with both parents even though they did not live together. Although divorce could have other long-term effects on Maria, the present study solely looked at the context of her continued leisure pursuit and not at issues arising from parent separation; unless it directly affected her leisure activity. In this instance, both parents maintained a good relationship and they both continued to support and encourage their daughter in her endeavours as a singer.

*A father's role.*

Both key informants' fathers felt that they were supporters of their daughters' leisure interests as they became involved, taking the roles of "spectators", "helpers", and "bankers". The key informants understood this and both have deep affections for their fathers. Both women knew that their fathers were there for them, giving them the feeling of security. As Madeleine stated, "Dad is just this rock in the background that [*sic*] is always there."



Even though the fathers themselves were neither horse riders nor opera singers, they still became engaged in the activity in some way. Madeleine's father needed horses on the farm, and explained his relationship with horses by saying:

It wasn't until I met Elizabeth that I developed any respect and knowledge of horses and now I enjoy them. I enjoy watching them. I don't want to play with them; I mean I feed them and I hold them, but I don't like having anything to do with them. (James, EvF)

While the opera singer's father sang for pleasure in a barber's shop quartet:

I suppose that sometimes I did give her more information about music than a 'normal' father would. But she would have been aware I had a singing background. (Tom, OpF)

Tom (OpF) mentioned that he and Maria "both sang around the house" when she was younger. The involvement of fathers in their daughters' activities, and their support 'behind the scenes', made a significant difference to the life choices of the key informants, as father-daughter relationships were further enhanced through their joint leisure activities. As their daughters grew older these activities also became something they could enjoy together. When possible the fathers enjoyed watching their daughters perform, ensuring trusting and long-term father-daughter relationships.

*A mother's role.*

While the key informants identified their fathers as providing continued strong support and assistance, they recognised their mothers as being extremely influential. Madeleine developed a strong bond with her mother acknowledging that bond several times during her interviews, stating:

You know mum and I have a very unique relationship ... it's so hard to describe because my parents are so bloody clever that I don't think that they

have ever put any pressure on me if they ever have! Mum often feels quite embarrassed. I will come out of the competition and I will have done a test and I'll walk out and I'll go to Mum 'well?', and Mum will go, 'well, the halt wasn't quite straight, you didn't get that circle, he didn't stand square, the shouldering lacked three tracks' or whatever, and I'll go 'right, right, OK, yep'. (Madeleine)

Her mother also felt close to Madeleine and supported her in her goals to the point of helping her with 'motherly' advice when needed:

I think my Mum is chief coach, when my 'real' coach isn't around, and she comes and watches the majority of competitions. She is my chief eyes on the ground. Mum has often been really embarrassed; some people claim my mother is really pushy, but I don't think she is. (Madeleine)

Madeleine's mother seemed well aware of the relationship when she said:

She often says I'm her number one coach because I'm a constant coach. I don't have the knowledge that she's got, or the other coaches that she goes to have got, but I am the one that's there the most. Of course, I know she doesn't always listen to me, I'm her mother! [Laughs] (Elizabeth, EvM)

Both key informant mothers also expressed the view that they played a significant role in their daughters' leisure pursuits. They asserted that they were the most influential person in their daughters' growing years, especially as they introduced the girls to their own leisure interests:

I suppose in lots of ways I'm responsible for her interest in horses anyway because I always rode and although from the time that Madeleine was two, I still liked to do a reasonable amount of riding. I would say when she was young, she and I used to ride a lot, which is very good for developing

mother-daughter relationships, and so we did encourage her to ride.

(Elizabeth, EvM)

I call myself the channel. I'm not highly trained but I think that in our family there is a deep musicality, a good understanding and love of music. I have had it all my life and they have as well. (Sue, OpM)

When asked who they thought had the most influence on their daughters' interests, both fathers agreed that it was the mothers. James (EvF) answered, "Oh, her grandmother and her mother were the most influential," and Tom (OpF) said, "I think her mother had much more influence than I did."

Even coaches agreed that mothers had influence. John, Madeleine's coach said:

Madeleine has a very strong partnership with her mother who has depth of knowledge within the sport, not necessarily as a competitive rider. Her mother has encouraged and supported her from childhood; I think she would be her biggest mainstay. (John, EvC)

Through their role as mothers, both women gave their daughters the opportunity to try a leisure pursuit that they found to be enjoyable and worth continuing. With the support received from each key informant family, specifically mothers and fathers, each key informant's childhood leisure pursuits developed into a lifelong activity.

#### *Family and sibling advice.*

While discussing families and childhood experiences, the topic of communication arose. It was agreed that open communication with family and friends was an important aspect to leisure support. Also, support from siblings and friends assisted the key informants in their leisure goals. Madeleine pointed out that when she went away for competitions her brother was "a big help as he takes over the work on the farm for me." Similarly, Maria found that her "entire family and friends had also been supportive of it [opera singing]." Depending on

the situation, family, sibling and friend support had a negative or positive effect on the participants.

*Negative effects* –Participants related situations where family members had commented negatively on their performance and how they reacted to the comment, advice or instruction. When asked how they felt if a family member or friend made a negative comment to them, they said it was difficult, but that they would address it-if relevant they would do something about it, and if irrelevant they would dismiss it. As Maria said:

Oh, being negative would make you feel terrible. Coming from my family I don't know, I mean I very rarely go off and cry about things - in fact I would say I never do that. It depends, from my family? It would upset me because it would be more of a personal upset than a professional upset, because I know more about it than they do basically. Therefore in terms of if it makes me rethink what I should do in my art form, my family is very unlikely to make me do that. Even with clothes, my hair, etcetera, I rarely would take their comments too seriously as I do trust my judgement, my own judgement as to how I am going or as to how I look, or what the audience is going to like. Generally, if something is obviously that bad that my family would criticize it I would know about it. So I would probably agree with them! (Maria)

Some participants had family members who were knowledgeable in the leisure activity; in this situation, the family member sometimes provided advice or constructive criticism that was more technical. Jack (OpFG), an opera singer and professional actor, whose mother was a former theatre director and known actress, often received practical advice or instruction from her. Although he appreciated her advice and understood that she was experienced in her field, he sometimes felt that the mother-son relationship was difficult to handle. During a production where his mother was the director, he explained how he felt when she started to give him technical advice:

It's hard because you are used to support, well I am used to support from my family, but it's something you just have to deal with. I think part of me

initially was like well maybe “stuff you” [said while laughing]. Admittedly, this was in a situation when I was being directed by my mother. (Jack, age 29, OpFG)

Fortunately, due to his mother’s professional knowledge and status, Jack admitted that the experience was beneficial, stating, “she was the director of the production and in the end it was really positive. In the end, it took a bit of consideration. Yes, perhaps she changed me in other ways, like other directors couldn’t.”

Negative comments from siblings, even when they were truthful, could upset participants. Lucy recalled a comment from her sister:

Now you mention it I do remember that my sister made a negative comment about something I’d done. It was very hard. I remember being quite hurt even though what she said made perfect sense. After a while of thinking about it I did actually agree with her in the end, but the initial result was very, very hurtful. (Lucy, age 24, OpFG)

Participants agreed that comments from family members, siblings or friends, good or bad, on performance outcomes affected them in some way. The less experienced participants initially felt hurt or angry at negative comments, while the more experienced participants - who rarely received negative comments, usually due to their high standing - ignored the majority of comments unless they thought it was constructive to their leisure advancement. However, all participants agreed that negative comments made by family and friends were given as support, and never to deliberately hurt or undermine the performer.

*Positive comments* - When asked how they felt about family input the respondents stated that positive comments “were greatly appreciated,” it made them “feel good.” Maria’s brother who is in a contemporary band has a significant effect on her when he gives Maria positive feedback. “It means a lot to me. He’s not in my field but I like the fact that he has been able to take on board what I do and appreciate it.”

Less technical advice or support was usually extremely positive. Alternatively, mothers and fathers would give simple parental suggestions. As Tom said when commenting on advice he sometimes gave his daughter:

I do sometimes comment on things, like ‘don’t wear your boots on stage,’ or ‘stand up straight,’ or you know, just that kind of informal fatherly chit-chat feedback. (Tom, OpF)

Focus group participants found that this type of family feedback was common. It was taken as being “loose” by Steve (age 23, OpFG), and according to Jack (age 29, OpFG) it was the quality of the comment that made the difference when he said, “it’s funny from family. You know it’s going to be positive, but it’s the quality in which it’s delivered that determines whether or not it’s meant.”

How seriously participants took family comments depended on the family members’ knowledge of the particular leisure activity. Karen (age 24, EvFG) suggested that her parents still congratulate her no matter where she comes in a competition, “I come last and my dad says it still looked good [said while laughing]. He may be a little bit biased!” It appeared that family members who were not knowledgeable in the activity tended to give positive feedback - no matter what the outcome - with the majority of feedback relating to areas not necessarily to do with the technicalities of a performance. James could see the humour in this:

My family generally is very, very good, it’s rather funny. My family has no experience with theatre whatsoever so everything is ‘really good’! More often than not, I will come off stage and they will go, ‘didn’t such and such do really well? They were fantastic’... and you’re waiting for them to comment on you and they say, ‘oh, your costumes were really nice!’ [laughs] And you go, ‘ahhhhh.’ [said while smiling and shaking of head]. (James, age 36, OpFG)

Comments made by partners, brothers, sisters and friends had the same effect as parental comments did, whether the comments were good or bad. It depended on the individual's knowledge of the activity as to how seriously the comment was taken.

*Additional family support.*

The effect of family on an individual continuing in their leisure activity encompassed more than just supportive comments. Open communication within the family proved to be helpful and encouraging, so long as the negative comments were: structured appropriately, constructive and said in a supportive way. As Madeleine expressed, “to get to an international level you either have to have serious good luck or a good support base.”

Event riders and opera singers who had partners stated that they had their partners' full support and encouragement. Maria who was engaged at the commencement of this study and married prior to the second interview said, “Tim [her husband] is also a singer – so we have a shared focus in what we're venturing into now – in that we're both going overseas to look for work.” Jack (age 29, OpFG) who was also married said, “my wife is very supportive; she understands my desire to make this my career.”

Parents held active and financial roles, as well as having an emotional investment in the outcomes of their child's activity. This revelation came from some of the comments made by focus group participants in relation to their parental support. If a mother or father made a comment, participants said it usually had a double meaning – their parents were happy for them – because not only had they achieved a goal, but also the parents had additional, usually financial, interests in seeing a successful outcome. As Jenny pointed out:

I think that they are quite relieved that you actually have done it well. They can see all the hard work has paid off as well, and that you're not just out there throwing it all away [money and time] – someone else can see the hard work. It's a relief to see that all the hard work you have done is fruitful.

(Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

Support from family was significant in a high performer's leisure development. From childhood, a father's and mother's support encouraged key informants and focus group participants to continue with their leisure activity. However, technical advice from family, even from knowledgeable family members was not easily accepted; unlike advice from knowledgeable non-family members such as coaches.

#### *Coaches.*

When participants were speaking about interpersonal constraints and opportunities, the coach became an integral part of discussion. Key informants and focus group members spoke at length about their good and bad coaching experiences – with most bad experiences occurring in the lower levels or earlier years of their activity. The higher the participant's performance levels the fewer bad coach experiences they had. Participants spoke about both extremely positive and extremely negative issues when discussing coaches. A coach's appropriate level of experience was extremely important to participants. This theme had three specific sub-themes; coach experience, coach-training level, and how a coach adapts to changing situations. The importance of good communication was also a pre-requisite to a good coach; six sub-themes developed from discussions on the importance of good communication; honest feedback, false hope, good rapport, trust, the impact of negative coaches and coaching confusion. Discussions on coaches covered additional areas and a third theme of "other coach issues" arose, this area related to two key sub-themes: mentors, role models or coaches; and practical help.

#### *Appropriate level and experience.*

When asked 'what they looked for in a good coach,' participants spoke about numerous aspects from their experiences. However, when analysed, their comments revealed three main topics – the coaches' experience [in the specific activity], the coaches' training level, and the coaches' ability to adapt to changing situations.

*Coach experience* – To develop into high-level performers the participants knew that they needed to obtain instruction from, and train with, someone with more experience, skills and



knowledge, than their own. Both key informants agreed that high performance coaches needed personal experience in the respective discipline – eventing and opera.

Someone who is willing to work with what you are doing rather than just telling you what to do. Someone who has a number of years experience, somebody who has had a career in the industry, as in they have had a career singing themselves rather than just a singing teacher. My current coach had a singing career in New Zealand and sang in performances at Covent Garden in England and other international companies. (Maria)

When looking for a suitable coach key informants and focus group participants, from both activities, wanted a coach who had already experienced similar constraints that they might face in the hope that the coach would be able to advise them what to do if such constraints arose.

The coaches interviewed confirmed that experience was an important attribute for a coach. John, the eventing coach, was an international event rider as well as a professional trainer when he said, “I was short listed for two Olympics in Eventing and Dressage, and successfully trained eight horses to international level.” He added, “I have trained numerous high-level performers [both horses and riders] in my time and I’m still doing it.” While Joan, the opera coach, attributed her high standing in the opera industry as proof of her experience, “I have sung internationally, I have been on the world stage ... I have been a voice teacher for 40 years, and I place myself in the top five teachers in Australia.”

Participants acknowledged that the higher the level of training they required, the more qualifications and knowledge the coach needed to have at a recognised higher level of accreditation. Both coaches were high-level performers themselves prior to teaching, and both had travelled overseas to train. As John (EvC) reminisced, “in my days there were very few top coaches in Australia. I was fortunate that I also trained in [Europe].” Coaches from both fields also agreed that there were more high-level coaches to choose from in Australia now than when they were training, and Joan pointed out that, “there are also more performers.”

*Coach training level* – While discussing the experience of coaches, it emerged that coaches were also required to have a specific training level that suited the participant's needs. Therefore, knowing a coach's accreditation – their officially recognised training level – was vital to higher levels of achievement. Participants agreed that it was important to know the level of coach so that they could choose one who would be suitable to their abilities. This knowledge was also useful to participants when reaching a plateau of learning with a particular coach; they needed this information to make a change and find a more suitable coach. As Maria said:

It is a job, and you do get as much out of somebody as you can. If after a while, it falls into the same pattern and you're not getting anything from that person, then yes, you need to change. You are spending money and time, and if you are not getting anything out of it you are not furthering your ability. You are not furthering your career by being there so you need to find somebody who can. (Maria)

When speaking about the level of coaches, Sally (age 19, EvFG) confirmed that she needed a coach to have experience and accreditation by saying, "my coach ... like they're a Level Three – a high-level coach." Participants mentioned that the coach's level needed to suit the level of the individual. Having a high-level coach train a beginner, for example, was a waste of the coach's time and expensive for the beginner, while a low-level coach would be a waste of time and money for an advanced individual.

Coaches became a limiting element when the high performance individual reached a stage of training that superseded their coaches coaching ability, or they found their progress in learning slowing. James reflected that he took less notice of his long time singing coach when the instruction became repetitive:

It's not a matter of how you deal with it, at this stage you should be able to deal with it. But what goes on inside your head about what they say is a different matter. For example my current teacher who has been my coach for the past 5 or 6 years, I have heard a lot of things before and now it comes

across as nagging. Whether it is or not, it comes across as nagging, because I hear it so much, but if I hear the same thing from a stranger of an equal standing, then I go away and think, ok, I think maybe I know what you mean.’ Not intentionally, it’s just the way it happens. (James, age 36, OpFG)

Key informants and focus group participants developed the skill of knowing when to change coaches, consequently promoting their own high performance success. Being able to adapt to situational changes was not only essential for the individuals to further their performance level, but also for the coaches themselves.

*Adapting to changing situations* – Participants suggested that coaches had to be adaptable; they needed to be situational teachers who altered their style of training for each individual. This adaptability was evident with both event riders and opera singers. Event riders required a coach who could relate to them as the rider, and help them train their horse, at the same time. Jenny commented on this when discussing her horses:

I think that the biggest thing, is finding a coach who can change for each individual horse. Like they don’t make every horse go the same way because not every horse can go in that way. So they need to treat each horse differently, they need to understand that. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

Opera singers required coaches who could adapt their coaching style to suit the singer and voice. A coach had to be able to develop their pupil’s vocal type (for example tenor, mezzo-soprano or baritone) and their vocal range (the notes a singer’s voice could produce from a high pitch to low) plus give them advice on facial expressions or body posture. Jack remembered the time a new coach advised him that he was not using his voice to its greatest ability:

I went into the lesson as a baritone, but after listening to me sing [my coach] said ‘no, no I think you would be a much better tenor’ – and you know I am [said while laughing] he was right – and I had been singing for several years by then. (Jack, age 29, OpFG)

To be able to train effectively, and advise performers in such a way that they continued to develop and improve, required coaches to have excellent communication skills.

*Importance of good communication.*

The requirement of coaches to have good communication skills provided an insight into both constraints and opportunities. Not only did the key informants and the focus groups discuss coaches and their communication skills at length, but the coaches and parents specifically gave examples. In this section, *honest feedback* was a priority to coach/student relationships and a high performer's success. However, feedback that gave *false hope* was a regular negative occurrence. Following on from feedback, and relating to good communication, was *good rapport* and developing *trust* with coaches. A further aspect was the impact of *negative coaches* and *coaching confusion* between a coach and a performer; this was particularly noticeable in the interview with the event riding key informant and a member of the opera singing focus group.

*Honest feedback* – Coaches expressed the need to give continual feedback and that constructive criticism, was paramount to good coaching. They claimed that a good coach should always use feedback, both good and bad, to improve a student's performance. John said:

I also let her know when she is doing something wrong – that's what a coach does – if I didn't let her know when she did things brilliantly or when she did things badly on a continual basis a student wouldn't improve. My only expectation is to try to do the best that they [the students] can. If they can do more, I expect more until they get to their level of ability. (John, EvC)

Participants stated that good coaches should guide and push their students further to achieve better results. Joan (OpC) reflected this approach, saying, "I have high expectations for my students and expect them to produce work of a professional standard. Yes, I push when the situation required plenty of discipline from me, but never to the point of destroying the student's confidence." Both coaches felt that praise and encouragement was essential to

developing an individual's performance “especially from the start,” and that “sometimes you have to be tough.” Both coaches felt strongly that giving incorrect or misleading feedback was not the way to train.

*False hope* – One particular negative coaching trait relating to communication was observed and experienced by the key informants, parents and several focus group participants. This was manifested in coach who continually praises his or her students, or tells them they can get to a higher level than they can realistically go – giving their students *false hope*. Madeleine had personally experienced false hope coaching:

There are coaches and coaches. There is one coach that I worked with, I only ever had one lesson from him, because I thought he was an idiot. He was telling everyone that they are going to be the next World Champion. I go along because you know I like to try something different. I take along a horse that I know is cute but isn't going to be international. I'd been competing at pretty high-levels and I knew a little bit of where I am in the scheme of things. I listened to this guy coaching young kids, I thought he was an amazing motivator, but he was spinning them the biggest story. He would have inspired them so much that they now think that they can take on the world. Then I go out to my lesson and he starts telling me the same stuff. I told him I didn't think this horse was that good, but he said, yes, he's amazing yes, he will make the next World Championship. I thought what a, 'dropkick.' To me he has no credibility and I have no respect for him. Actually, he is great fun as a person, but as a coach I don't trust him.  
(Madeleine)

Maria had a similar story to tell. She also emphasised her experiences incorporating doubt about the impact a “false hope” coach would have on a performer's success:

There are a lot of people in the industry who will just say 'lovely, that was lovely, darling. Sweetheart, you're doing so well.' [With] people like that; I generally don't pay attention to them when they say I'm good. They just say

that to everybody who sings, and really, who knows what that means?

(Maria)

High-level coaches also knew that this type of false hope coaching was not acceptable. Madeleine explains a conversation she had with a new coach prior to her lesson commencing:

So he watched me ride around and he said, “So tell me what the story is.” I told him I was an event rider and my story and he says, “I have watched you and basically you are doing a good job but I am not going to tell you you are going to be the next World Champion.” I said without even thinking, “oh so your name’s not [name suppressed] then” he looked at me and I remember thinking, ‘oh no what have I said?’ He then cracked up laughing grabbed me around my neck gave me a big kiss on my cheek and said, “thank you Madeleine thank you.” We just became the best of mates and it has become really, really, good, not just for me but for Australia as well. Yeah, there have been some wonderful times with coaches. I have had some great coaches in my life. (Madeleine)

Ranked as one of Australia’s top riders on the Australian Eventing Leaderboard (the national list of top event riders) Madeleine experienced many different coaches throughout her rise to success. Her parents, who follow her achievements closely, also observed different coaching techniques. As her father said:

No coach really says to one of his pupils ‘look you are going to make it to the top’; the odd coach that does, and I can think of one in particular, tells every one of his pupils they are going to ride for Australia in the Olympics. That raises false expectations, which are quite appalling and really damaging when they find they don’t. Nobody has really told Madeleine ‘you will do this’. It has always been a case ‘you may do this’, but you’ve got to work, you’ve got to work hard; I will help you get there but you are not going to just get there; it’s not a right. (James, EvF)

A coach who provided false feedback did not encourage participants to return. Participants did not respect them as they identified them as a “false hope coach” and consequently as a poor high performance coach.

*Good rapport* – At such a high-level, participants need a connection with their coach to enable skill development. Madeleine, the eventing key informant, needed to develop a bond with her coach; he had to understand what her goals were. In the second interview when speaking of a new coach, Madeleine said, “I have one of those wonderful relationships where you just find someone who you click with, and you work really well with them.” However, a coach’s experience of performing in the respective activity was more important than friendship at the top level. Both key informants stated that coaches do not need to be “personal friends,” although friendliness does play an important part in enhancing the experience and developing relationships.

At higher levels of training, excellent coaches with poor personalities are acceptable – more readily for the knowledge they impart, than for the friendship gained outside of the training sphere. Maria was pragmatic about her choice of coaches:

I don’t have any issues but there is always that aspect that you don’t get along personally with a particular coach and you may get on famously with another one. The trick is not to bring that into it either way. It’s like a job. You are with that person and you are paying that person because they have something that they can teach you and if you are too worried about getting on well with that person that can often get in the way. (Maria)

A good coach was someone who supported the individual’s goal. It was important in their relationship that both parties worked towards the high performer’s goal, and not the coach’s personal goal. As James (EvF) said, “a coach is someone who can appreciate you for what you are, and they are prepared to go along with your dream.” These factors, in turn, allow a trusting relationship to develop.

*Trust* – A coach should be trustworthy in relation to what type of feedback they gave to individuals. As Maria explained, “my current coaches, they don’t hand out compliments freely. You know the coaches who don’t hand out compliments often, but when they do it means a great deal, because you know that they really mean it.”

Jack further amplified this association of trust:

I think it has a lot to do with the trust level of a person. Because if it’s some stranger who comes up and says their opinion negatively, which I had at a recital recently [and] who I ignored. But if it was, for example [name suppressed], who is a respected trusted teacher of mine, and she was to come back and say exactly the same thing, then I would really take it on board – because we have a relationship where I trust her opinion. (Jack, age 29, OpFG)

Participants needed to trust a coach to guide and advise them. As Melanie, the youngest focus group participant emphasised:

I think that if you’re going to them, then obviously you trust their guidance and opinion, so if they say it you believe it, more likely. You need a coach who is truthful. Because like, they say, you did well in that class and you say ‘OK thank you’. You believe them and like, it’s really goooood. (Melanie, age 17, EvFG)

According to the participants, developing trust also developed their confidence in their coach. It was important to the key informants as well as to the youngest focus group member that a coach had a responsibility to the performers – they held a position of trust and they relied on the coaching feedback to improve their own performance.

*Impact of negative coaches* – Participants wanted coaches to be capable and understanding. Not, as Melanie (age 17, EvFG) stated, “blunt and rude.” Event riding and opera singing participants had all experienced negative coaching at some level, “it happens to heaps of people” said Melanie, “if you pay around \$50 an hour for a coach to speak to you like you



are useless, then, you don't do it, because it should be a pleasurable activity." Karen reiterated Melanie's comment about payment when she said: "if you're getting non-constructive criticism from your coach you need a new one! You know you pay money for lessons."

Serious performers recognised and discarded coaches with poor communication and lacking skills in teaching, as John explained:

I had a couple of lessons with somebody who tried to drum into me a certain way of doing something, which just didn't work for me and my horse. I tried to convey that it just wasn't working. Speaking to people after the lessons, I found that they had had the same experience, and I thought that was interesting. We all tried to tell this person, but he still tried to drum it into you. It didn't seem to make any difference – he didn't listen – that wasn't a very good experience. I didn't go back. (John, age 31, EvFG).

John was an experienced rider when this experience occurred, his confidence in his own abilities and knowledge of other high-level coaches in his area allowed him to seek a new coach. Opera singer Bob experienced a bad coach at the commencement of his leisure activity, which affected him deeply:

I shouldn't say who it was because he's now a head of department, but I think it was a certain arrogance and self conceit about their own self importance and opinion. I was 17 and I know you can't judge a male voice at 17, because they are not physically mature, their voices haven't settled, [but] for him to say at 17 I had limited vocal potential – which is what he actually wrote down – almost borders, actually it does border, on professional incompetence. To say such an outrageous thing to someone at 17 – to someone who can sing in tune, is intelligent and musical [shaking of head, looks unhappy, others nod in agreement]. (Bob, age 35, M, OpFG)

Because of this incident, and his lack of self-confidence at this young age, Bob left singing for a number of years:

Yes, well I quit singing because he wouldn't let me into the next year of the degree, so I tried composition and I tried to do music in other things, but I wasn't interested. So yes I quit singing, I travelled the world a bit. (Bob, age 35, OpFG)

During his time away from singing Bob said he “still loved singing and I knew I was good. I still wanted to do it.” He regained his confidence in himself and his singing abilities, and finally went to another singing coach, independent of his university. His new coach knew that Bob had talent and was able to show him the techniques to use to develop his voice even further. Bob felt deep emotion about this incident and felt bitter about the years he wasted by listening to one person. “It took so long to believe that I was any good after that,” he said. Bob has since sung on the National stage and plans to travel internationally. He now looks back on this experience and uses it as a motivational tool; it encourages him to persevere harder to get to an even higher level of performance.

*Coaching confusion* – Both event riding and opera singing require several different types of coaches to develop skills specific to these leisure activities. Having multi-coaches, or changing coaches, provided a further coaching constraint – it caused *coaching confusion* – when participants did not understand, or relate, to coaches using different coaching techniques. This situation occurred when high performers needed to changing coaches for a higher-level coach, or when undertaking training by several coaches, in different techniques. For example, a high performance event rider needs coaching in dressage, cross-country and show jumping; while the opera singer requires assistance in stagecraft, vocals and language. If an individual listens to several people, who have their own style or methods, on a particular subject, it sometimes causes confusion. Madeleine's mother recognised this:

Often my assistance [to Madeleine] is trying to get what the other coaches say into one picture, for example one coach will say ‘ride forward to get more impulsion’ and the next coach will say ‘go slower’, so trying to help

her balance those two things; that they are not exactly saying the opposite – that can be quite difficult. (Elizabeth, EvM)

New coaches also found this transition phase difficult. John (EvC) identified coaching confusion when Madeleine first came to him, remarking that, “the majority of [her] coaches have been positive and encouraging but this often led to confusion due to differences in training methods. One coach in a position of authority caused considerable anxiety.” Madeleine was using a riding technique that, although correct under different circumstances, did not work for her or her horse. John had to re-teach Madeleine to ensure that she progressed in her dressage.

Although performers experienced coaching confusion during their transitional stages, the more advanced participants stated that their skills of communicating with coaches also improved. This skill development allowed them to be more open and discuss misunderstandings [with coaches] without embarrassment.

*Other coach issues.*

Several links developed from the discussions on coaches – specifically the relationships that aligned participants closer to their coaches. These links included other high performers who became mentors, role models or coaches. It also included the practical help participants sometimes received from their coaches outside of their normal coaching tasks.

*Performers as mentors, role-models or coaches* – Event riders and opera singers who are at a high-level of performance, are seen as *mentors* and *role models* or advisors for younger or lower level performers. Some high performers also become coaches because of their high-level. Madeleine, who was an accredited coach, found she was a mentor and role model as well:

Apart from getting ‘feel goods’ out of my coaching, I am mentoring a lot of really good young people coming through. Where they go we have to see but I am having a ball doing it. I’ve eventually realized that I do coach really

well. That came home to me when I went to coach in another state because I was really nervous about coaching along with the big guns, and then I just got this amazing email afterwards [from the organisers] that was really positive. (Madeleine)

Even if the performers do not coach, they can assist younger performers coming on behind them. Few of the focus group participants were accredited coaches as they were focused on improving their own skills, although most of the focus group participants assisted up-and-coming performers. Steve (age 23, OpFG) enjoyed the feeling this type of experience gave him, “one of the chorus came to me to ask how a specific note should be sung. After a while, he got it. I felt pretty good.”

After spending many years developing their own skills and knowledge, and having had many coaching experiences since childhood, these high-level performers developed the ability to recognise good and bad coaching. Consequently, other riders or singers often ask them for advice. A young rider who was having problems with his coach approached Karen (age 24, EvFG), she advised him to speak to his coach at his next lesson, “... [name suppressed] broke down in tears and came to me to tell me all about it. I said, ‘at the next lesson, talk to him’,” the young rider followed Karen’s advice and the accredited coach replied, “oh yeah, whatever.” With Karen’s help, this young rider decided to find a new coach, which Karen thought was a “good decision!”

*Practical help* – In an effort to assist their students, coaches of high performers helped in matters external to the normal realm of coaching. For example, eventing and opera coaches gave their students more than technical advice; they provided international contacts or introduced them to prominent individuals or agents who could help or promote their careers. This was the case for Madeleine when an Australian coach introduced her to a prominent European rider. This introduction enabled her to stable and train her horse on his property in Europe when she competed at a World Cup. Maria, who also found practical help from her coaches, said, “I’ve been introduced to some great people by my coaches; so I can go to Europe with a few contacts up my sleeve.”

Likewise, the coaches of the key informants recalled times when they had given more than just ‘normal’ coaching. John assisted with horses if Madeleine was injured or out of the country:

I go well beyond the “norm” in training her horses, including personally riding and training her horses when needed, especially if she finds something difficult. I helped ride and continued training her horses when she was injured and out of action for some time. (John, EvC)

Joan stated that she had given Maria “extra advice or information, such as what opera houses to contact first or people who may help her in Europe.”

Focus group participants from both groups also commented on coaching help they had received from their coaches that was outside of normal coaching duties. For example, the event riders mentioned that their coaches would let them borrow their horses or look after their horses while they were away; and opera singer coaches would let students borrow books or outfits, and would introduce them to reputable agents.

#### *Agents.*

Opera singers mentioned that their agents had an effect on career opportunities but could also be a constraint. However, as no event riders had agents and only the opera singer key informant and two opera focus group participants had an agent at the time of this study, exploration of this dimension was minimal.

Maria, who was leaving Australia to establish her singing career in Europe, spoke about finding a new agent. She suggested that “... my husband and I will find an agent or two in Europe, probably Germany and England – someone who will take us on and introduce us to the opera houses directly.” Her coach said that without an agent, the international opera stage [due to the competitive environment] “could be hard to break into” (Joan, OpC).

Agents received a fee or commission similar to fees for coaching. However, unlike coaches who had long lasting effects on individuals; agents were a changeable commodity. Bad agents, those who did not find individuals work or conducted themselves unprofessionally, developed poor relationships with participants. In these cases, participants dismissed the bad agents and found a better one. James (age 36, OpFG) remarked that, “there are good agents and bad agents – but you know, bad agents don’t stay around, they go broke.” He also mentioned that to alleviate having a bad agent, it was good practice that opera singers and coaches in Australia share agent contact details. He suggested that it was the responsibility of the individual to choose the right one, “you check them out first, you ask around.”

Further into the discussion on agents, the opera focus group stated that agents were not necessary in Australia. Three of the opera singers interviewed stated that they did not have agents even though they had already performed with their state opera company. Lucy (age 24, OpFG) said, “we haven’t really experienced the big money factor, so agents are something in the future – maybe.” Jack (age 29, OpFG) who found employment in his early years without the help of agents, supported Lucy’s statement and said, “You just go to auditions or contact the companies direct.” However, once an opera singer became focused on making opera singing their career, at a national or international level, agents became an important asset. Jack (age 29, OpFG), who was now seeking international roles and had an agent, said that once you became known, agents actively looked for singers, “to put on their books.” He said, “... it’s like movie stars – when you get to a certain level, you’re being hired because of your reputation and because of your name – you’re a draw card to everyone.”

Good agents not only found participants suitable opera roles to perform, but supported the opera singer with additional contacts. Agents promoted and found additional opportunities to assist the singer to reach a specific audience – dependent on whether the singer wanted to perform in their own state, nationally or internationally.

*The Audience.*

An additional interpersonal constraint or opportunity for high performing event riders and opera singers is the audience. Event riders and opera singers said that audience behaviour could affect them, both positively and negatively, during an event. A specific incident that involved both positive and negative spectator involvement occurred to Madeleine at a large international event. Half way through a very successful course, with the crowd cheering her on, she had a nasty fall when her horse stumbled in a hole. Her conscientiousness as a team member, determination and training enabled her to get back on her horse and continue, even though she was concussed, and had several broken bones. At the next jump, her horse, sensing that something was wrong, refused to jump, Madeleine forced him around and tried to make him jump, at this stage the spectators were very loud, they had stopped cheering and started to heckle, shouting for her to stop:

I suppose when the crowd booed me I stopped and I thought. Then my team members sort of got me off and I shook my head, I patted and gave my horse a big hug and at that stage the crowd clapped me. So in actual fact the crowd's reaction made me do the right thing. I never held it against them. They were not only doing what they did for my horse's welfare but also mine. So yes the audience does have an effect on you, absolutely.  
(Madeleine)

In this instance, the audience's reaction was a type of external support system – one that prevented further injury to Madeleine and her horse. In the terms of awareness, an audience, according to Maria, “affects a performer's thinking, but doesn't affect their performance.”

Performing in front of an audience can bring satisfaction to an individual and play a vital part to their ongoing success. Audiences gave Melanie (age 17, EvFG) the incentive to progress, “It is really nice to hear the crowd cheer you on. It makes you try a bit harder.” Jenny (age 25, EvFG) agreed, “... when you have an audience you automatically know that people are watching. You automatically naturally want to do better.” However, she added that although some people do better, “... some think it's too much pressure, so sometimes they [audiences] can work and sometimes not.”

Simone (age 25, OpFG) spoke of the additional pressure of knowing when an agent is in the audience, saying, “If you think that in any way shape or form you’re not going to be able to do one particular thing and an agent is watching – you’re going to start failing more.” Agents often sat in audiences, not only to watch the performance, but also to evaluate and make contact with new singers.

In a full opera performance, lighting usually blocks out the audience so opera singers judge the audience reactions by listening to them, this was one skill opera singer participants, depending on their current level, said they had or were developing. Jack (age 29, OpFG) said, “Yes it’s a funny balance listening to the audience, the response that you have with the audience with regard to the quality of silence, or laughter or the amount of coughing that’s going on.”

The participants interviewed agreed that they knew the audience singled them out when it was their time to ride or sing. Whether for their showjumping round or their song – they were the centre of attention – even within a team event or group performance. When this occurred, it was easy to react to the audience on a personal level. This was noticeable with opera singers; if the audience response is not what an individual expected, or an individual’s personal feelings take over from the role they are playing, it caused problems. As Steve (age 23, OpFG) said, “I have seen performers respond [to the audience] and made performances worse because the audience laughed and so did they.”

High performing participants understood that the specific roles they played instigated audience behaviour. For example, if they rode well internationally and beat the home country team, this could lead to lower audience appreciation, or if they were playing an evil character in an opera, the audience would react to that character and not to the individual personally. People, participants pointed out, were opinionated, and audiences consisted of different character types. Knowing this allowed participants to view audiences with an open mind. Lucy understood she had no control over an audience in relation to her performances and did not allow herself to be distracted:



I have no control about what any individual in the audience is going to think about me personally, whether they like my face, hate my face, love my voice, hate my voice, like the characterization, don't like the characterization. I might think someone hates it and they could love it. You're never going to be in the character in the moment, if you're worried about what they think. (Lucy, age 24, OpFG)

The performers from both leisure activities concentrated on the task at hand and performed as well as they could. They tried not to think about what the audience may or may not think about them. Simone passed on some interesting advice:

Someone told me once that you have two different types of people in the audience. Those who want you to do well; and those who want you not to do well, depending on the nature of the person for whatever reason. Therefore, if you do a perfect performance those who wanted you to do well are happy, and if you do a bum note during your performance those who didn't want you to do well are happy – then the whole audience will go home happy! And I thought that was great! Ha ha ha. (Simone, age 25, OpFG)

Participants spoke about audience behaviours, good and bad. They believed that people in audiences reacted differently – not only to the specific roles participants played, but also to how other audience members reacted. An audience, which reacted negatively to a particular performer, for example heckled or booed the individual, caused doubt and lowered self-confidence, while a receptive audience, one that applauded or cheered gave encouragement and increased self-confidence. Key informants and focus groups, from both leisure activities, reviewed all their performances, good or bad, to gauge the consistency and development of their talent. Participants welcomed positive audience reactions, and saw negative reactions as a training session – it was an opportunity for them to improve. If the performers or their coaches agreed with the audience, that a particular area of their performance was poor, they would increase work and focus on that particular issue in future training sessions.

*Groups.*

While discussing interpersonal constraints, the interrelationships between participants and other individuals or groups involved power, influence, support and sometimes conflict. Madeleine experienced both positive and negative relationships in various ways throughout her rise, but it was the negative comments from spectators and officials within the sport that caused her the most problems throughout her leisure life. She elaborated: “I mean I’m not talking about little fish in a big pond, I’m talking about piranha in a puddle here in this state. People whine and bitch and they want me to go down to others’ levels.” Madeleine simply called it bitching, “All that bitching ... People that think that they are better than *you* are, you know, those that think *they* know it all.”

Madeleine explained that it still gets her down, but her approach keeps her focused:

You can let the bitching get you down or you can spin it.....and that’s exactly what I do with those people bitching. I came up with the wonderful conclusion that the people who are bitching at me are jealous, and they are jealous for a reason, such as, I win! So the day that they stop bitching about me, they will no longer think I’m better than them, so therefore as long as they bitch about me it means I am better than them! (Madeleine)

With Madeleine this type of ego-bashing (or as she also called it “back-stabbing”) began when she started to climb the ladder to high performance. She spoke passionately about it as she felt it was a stupid and unnecessary type of abuse, especially from such a small number of people: “Yeah, few of them actually don’t want to see how many more people we can make fly. Which is what I want to do – I want to make *everyone* fly!” One of Madeleine’s aims is to help others reach high-level goals, so she became especially emotional about it. Ego-bashing, backstabbing and bitching was something that she felt would easily stop young people from achieving goals, because the younger, inexperienced riders could not handle the negativity.

Madeleine developed her own way of dealing with this type of constraint, although she admitted it took time and energy, and she experienced it more “at home [in Australia] than

overseas”. Using her personal achievements and powerful self-belief, she formed a resistance to ego-bashing, whether by an individual or group of people:

I think as a result of success and being pleasant to other people and everything like that, you become known, and then when you’ve made your mark people start taking notice of you...Certainly it all comes back to - you’ve got to have succeeded before you get to know anyone or be able to help others. (Madeleine)

Maria had also experienced ego-bashing and initially needed external support and advice from her family on how to cope with the “tall poppy syndrome.” Although her experiences did not seem as extreme as Madeleine’s, Maria clearly held strong views about such critics and stated that she now ignores those “silly comments.”

Both key informants recognised that this negative type of reaction is typical from some people in society towards high performers and viewed it to be a major constraint to novice event riders and opera singers. Having self-belief and ignoring “silly comments” was a strategy that key informants personally used successfully to overcome ego-bashers.

### *Cliques.*

Event riders and opera singers recognised that *cliques* in their activity, those people with similar interests or goals, such as other event riders and opera singers, influenced the way they performed. Event riders stated that, as well as cliques between people in the same activity, there were also cliques between different equestrian disciplines. These cliques could cause interpersonal constraints due to rider competitiveness within specific disciplines. Event riders undertake three different disciplines in their sport and therefore need to gain experience through other individual discipline competitions. Karen, (age 24, EvFG) explained: “You go to a showjumping competition and they would say ‘You’re eventers why are you coming to our shows?’.”

Event riders felt that their discipline was the ‘friendliest’ of all equestrian disciplines. Focus group participants commented on how they actively encouraged other discipline riders to enter their events.

We would include them [other equestrian disciplines] and would make them welcome, it could be quite a good thing, to encourage them to come and do it. They don’t like to include us though, the other way around, it doesn’t seem to work – they don’t like to include us. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

They also thought that the friendliness of eventers was Australia-wide, and that this friendliness was due to the isolation and distances that riders have to travel between horse trial events.

With interstate competitions, I find other eventers do actually include you when we go over. They do like to help you out and try to do a lot of things for you. They realize how hard it is to come over. They tend to support us. I don’t know if that is what everyone finds, but that’s what I found. (Sally, age 19, EvFG)

As these comments were associated directly to the participants’ own leisure choice, bias was possible. However, confirmation of this statement came from another event rider who started in another equestrian discipline but changed to eventing – because of the friendly people he had met at eventing competitions. He explained:

I started riding two years ago competitively. Eventers would be the friendliest bunch that I have spoken to without a doubt...I took part in a few of their activities on leased horses or riding someone’s ponies or something like that. At other [discipline] competitions, you could never get any advice or talk freely, whereas the eventers were fantastic. They were good. (John, age 31, EvFG)

Opera singers found comfort and a common interest in being with other opera singers. However, because of the comparatively small numbers of opera singers, social activities generally included non-opera singers, as Simone (age 25, OpFG) stated, “I generally don’t hang around with singers.” Although lacking the closeness found with family and coaches, specific groups associated with the participant’s leisure activity or form cliques within the activity itself, could hinder a performer or provide him or her with the strength to continue. For example, group influence and how groups interacted with performers at different levels, was apparent.

Throughout discussions relating to interpersonal constraints, a high performing event rider or opera singer faced multiple constraints, although various opportunities often offset these constraints. For example, key informants and focus group participants relied on close family members or friends to provide them with encouragement and assistance, especially in the beginning of their leisure activity. Participants also identified strongly with a good coach, recognising trust, good communication skills and the ability to give constructive criticism as attributes to their success. However, no matter how friendly or close the student-coach relationship was, when training plateaued a new more experienced coach was required. This also related to agents – participants found a new agent if a current agent was not productive. Event riders and opera singers had similar experiences with audience members, groups and cliques within their leisure activity, their intrapersonal attributes and interpersonal supporters gave them confidence to deal positively with difficult interpersonal situations.

### ***Structural constraints and opportunities.***

As well as intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints, the third type of constraint a high profile performer must negotiate is structural. Structural constraints result from external environmental circumstances (Chick & Dong, 2003). Outcomes from discussions with participants in this study have been categorised as: *industry constraints, politics, equality, self-image, the horse and voice, isolation, travel, lack of money, time and injury*. Several structural constraints also interlinked with other types of constraints, such as, intrapersonal or interpersonal constraints.

A blurring of constraint types occurred when discussing self-image, first perceived as an intrapersonal or interpersonal constraint, it had deeper structural implications. For example, an opera singer was required to sing well and look good to fit certain societal criteria as a high performer. Further exploration found that some initially perceived interpersonal constraints related indirectly to structural constraints; for example, a coaching change related to political issues embedded in the structure of the industry. The ways in which a high performer recognises and deals with politics when it appears in the form of preferential treatment, power-plays, hidden agendas or biases are further explored in this section.

*Industry constraints.*

Leisure produced different outcomes for participants, dependent on the participant's structural connections in society. This was evident in the relationships the participants had with their industry organisations. For example, the key informants had more recognition and held a higher status within their leisure organisation than lower ranked performers. Like business organisations, event riding and opera singing are activities that have many people involved, at various organisational levels, including members, performers, officials, administration and management. Due to the similarities in administration, standardisation and commercialisation, participants identified similar types of industrial constraints.

At an international level, Madeleine received more industry assistance. She said that the support from the industry is there once a performer has achieved a high standing: "Once you are good enough then people jump on the bandwagon." However, while they climbed the high performance ladder, participants received encouragement and support through their industry, by way of grants or competitions that were normally organised by affiliated organisations such as equestrian clubs or theatre groups. Participants stated that the majority of grants in riding and opera were only available to those people classed as being disadvantaged or from a minority group. In Australia, disadvantaged and minority groups are classified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait islanders, people with disabilities, women, low-income earners, the aged or isolated individuals.

Madeleine came from a rural area and was able to receive some rural community government funding because of her isolation. “Because we are country and because of a business advisor who helped me find funds and handle sponsor money, I am fairly good at sourcing funds through government departments...so I could bring a coach down.” The funding Madeleine spoke about provided financial assistance to fly a high-level coach to her area. However, the grant was to run a clinic for riders in the community at a reduced cost, and not just for her benefit.

Participants commented that if a high-ranking official, from the equestrian or opera fields noticed a particularly good rider or singer, the official’s standing [in the field] influenced the industry and in-turn assisted industry decision-making in relation to future team/role selection or grant attainment. In opera, Maria found that assistance could also come indirectly through high-ranking performers who knew the system or had influence, rather than from the industry directly:

I would say the most influence in the industry per se, I think in terms of career and career advice, would be an international opera singer I know. He has been the main influence in that respect, he has good industry knowledge, he pointed me in the right direction to go, what agents to see, not the industry itself. (Maria)

Industry assistance by way of financial or performance support for individuals was not readily available for either event riders or opera singers. Maria’s mother, Sue, added, “Industry help? Oh, no – except for the scholarship she received from the studio.” When asked if the industry assisted his daughter in her goals as a high performer, James (EvF) summed up the overall feelings expressed by both event riders and opera singers towards industry support when he said, “They don’t actually go out and look for people and say ‘alright, you’re pretty good, so we will take you’. The individuals have to know that and then look for the support.”

For event riders, industry support usually commenced when individuals reached a state or national level of performance. Their support usually came as coaching support rather than

monetary support until the individual reached an international level. Until then individuals were required to fund their own activities. As Elizabeth (EvM) said:

She has been getting more support since she reached her [international] level. To be quite honest, really, she has basically had to do it on her own to get to a high-level, but now there is more support coming. (Elizabeth, EvM)

This support according to Madeleine's father involved self-funding, community sponsors and industry:

In the early stages she didn't get a lot, but as she's got to a higher level the Equestrian Federation has been extremely supportive, particularly with coaching. With financial support, you know, going to the World Cup in Europe. I mean when they said that she'd qualified and we knew that she could go, her mother and I were looking at a \$40,000 bill for that, but the Equestrian Federation came to the party with about a quarter, with that and the community they were marvelous. And The Stock Horse Society, were also terribly supportive. (James, EvF)

It was even more difficult for individual opera singers to obtain funding or grant support no matter what level they were, as Maria's father mused:

The industry I don't think had a lot of input at any level. The people at university, the teachers who organised mini operas, and so forth, they gave support to the students. But opera associations or organisations like that in the industry, I don't know, I don't think so. (Tom, OpF)

It became apparent that both leisure activities are reliant on membership fees and ticket sales, supported in part by government grants or sponsorships for industry growth and development. Participants from both leisure activities knew that their sport or art activity required increased support and believed that financial or in-kind support from private companies or government departments would encourage organisations to assist the



performers more. Until then they were reliant on finding alternative funding and support opportunities themselves.

*Politics.*

Interpersonal issues cited earlier included the denigration of high performers for achieving success [by groups or individuals]. When this occurred at official and industry levels it became political, and interpersonal constraints became associated with deeper structural constraints. Event rider and opera singer perceptions on politics linked to the interrelationships of people or groups, especially those involving control or authority where the root of political constraints evolved from the organisation's internal structure. For example, participants found that officials and individuals closely linked to the internal decision making processes within their leisure organisation developed similar views and attitudes. When asked if there were politics in eventing or opera, the answer was unanimously, yes. Madeleine put it bluntly when she answered: "We all know that politics is there and it *is* crap."

In event riding and opera singing, politics involves those individuals who are in positions of power or influence, such as coaches, judges, industry officials, leading athletes or artists, and selectors. Participants saw power-play and influential types of behaviour as being politically competitive, especially with some senior officials and competitors within their organisations. Examples given by participants were a judge's personal preference for a particular rider or singer, and competitors using their personal relationships with senior officials or coaches to their advantage. For example, individuals of authority who had different standards of morals and ethics, according to participants, picked their *favourites* to receive certain performance accolades, such as team selection or funding.

The key informants had experienced this type of political constraint – favouritism. Both key informants had several close family friends or acquaintances that were extremely highly placed in the equestrian and operatic world, but neither one personally used these contacts to get to higher levels. Having friends in high places could sometimes work against a high performer. One particular high-ranking personal family friend of Madeleine felt he had to

alter his behaviour professionally because of his friendship with Madeleine's family. Madeleine thought that, due to his high standing in the equestrian world, if he personally supported her, even if she deserved it from an athletic point of view, accusations of bias towards her were probable. As Madeleine explained:

The only person I have ever had contact with that has ever had any offers for an international career was someone who was very high on the selection committee. Now I've known him since I was a little kid; he was a national selector; as a matter of fact, at national meetings he had to abstain on decisions about me because I knew him personally. (Madeleine)

Madeleine knew he would not use his position to her advantage – it was the perceptions of others that would cause problems. Although Madeleine was confident that her contact “played fair”, all participants agreed that some judges and selectors had favourites. “Politics, yes there sure are politics; but it comes back to favourites really. I put the two hand in hand,” said Madeleine.

Knowing that coaches could be judges and that different judges judged events or competitions had a strong impact on both event riders and opera singers. Their main concern was the lack of control over who would judge them. Maria spoke about the frustration of having one or two people who, because of their position, slowed her progress, simply because of their personal likes and dislikes:

A major disappointment I had last year was not getting through to the finals of one competition because in all the other competitions I had got through to the finals. But at that particular competition I know that I did sing well, I performed well, I got a lot of good feedback, but I still didn't do well in the eyes of the judges. Which is disappointing because I'm not sure what I did that they didn't like – that's frustrating...It's good that every competition is judged by somebody different. (Maria)

Participants asserted that when groups of people interact politics becomes a natural by-product of human behaviour. Maria explained that politics is a natural part of serious leisure pursuits:

It's like life in general. Everyone has their own likes and dislikes and their own personal bigotries could I say. In anything you are doing people may treat you differently because you are a woman or because you are young or because of your ethnicity, and opera is no exception. There is absolutely politics in opera. You don't have to be political as such, but it does pay to know who is who, and who is in with whoever. Basically there is the low level of who likes who, and who won't work with whom, you know personal issues...Then of course at the higher level incorporating those people who are hiring and firing. It makes you get on with different people. (Maria)

Even the key informants suggested that they used politics to advance or just to enjoy the activity more. As Maria said "There are people you have to work with, and there are people you want to work with... You need to know who they are."

Rural and Western Australian participants felt that politics affected them more than those who lived closer to the larger cities in Australia, for example Sydney and Melbourne. The perception of 'city politics' by participants was summed up by Elizabeth, the event rider's mother, when she said, "if you live somewhere else other than the big cities, it's another nation." In both event riding and opera singing, politics crossed state lines. Participants mentioned that in some instances selection preferences were primarily going to big city state competitors, or known large company performers. When talking about being selected for world class competitions, James said:

You've got to get on the team and sometimes politics comes into that and all sorts of things; and I don't mean politics as party politics, but you know, politics based on just where people come from and things like that. (James, EvF)

The view that in some cases individual talents were not the main priority became apparent through coach comments. As John (EvC) pointed out, “in my personal opinion the ability of the combination [of horse and rider] should be foremost. However, in practice it appears that persistence and playing politics have a stronger influence...politics are problematic.” The key informants did utilise their knowledge of the key players, and their own experiences of who likes them and who does not, to help them progress. As the event rider’s coach said, “they [high performers] are prepared to play politics.”

The way in which an individual deals with politicking can strongly affect their personal goals. Sally (age 19, EvFG), one of the younger focus group participants, agreed that politics was present in her leisure field when she said, “of course politics is a huge factor, especially in such a small state.” Focus groups also substantiated the key informant’s perceptions on politics. Through an increased knowledge of who’s who, the focus groups also ascertained that the industry officials, people who undertook selection roles, had leeway to select their own personal preferences. This was evident in the eventing arena: “Yeah, I think that someone may have lessons with a certain judge or they might be friends with that judge, then it can get difficult” (Jenny, age 25, EvFG). Similar circumstances existed in an opera company: “It’s not a democracy, you get a director of a production, and you have one person in charge – an autocracy – they will choose who they want according to their views” (Jack, age 29, OpFG).

Focus group participants recognised that industry officials were responsible for specific selection tasks, such as selecting team members or performers for roles. Coaches often played dual roles as trainers, judges or selectors. Political inferences by participants about politics prevailing over an individual’s genuine ability and the decisions made for a national team by selectors, or for a certain opera, sometimes reflected on who they knew. Steve (age 23, OpFG) bemoaned the fact that “there are a lot who were in the right place at the right time or who knew the right people and got in.” Opera focus group participants nodded their heads in agreement to Steve’s comment.

This dual role had specific consequences if the decisions made were on personal favouritisms alone. Although this was noticeable in eventing and opera, Sally expressed that in eventing it was only prominent in one phase of the event – dressage:

I think favouritism happens more in dressage than the cross-country and show jumping. They are quite straightforward – you either jump them or you don't. Whereas it's more of an opinion in dressage... a judge might know them and you get a little bit of favouritism, a better score than you really should. (Sally, age 19, EvFG)

Participants accepted that personal preferences, along with performance and professional judgements would occur. Participants saw this as the *norm* as there were so few high-level judges in Australia – so long as the performance outcomes outweighed the personal preferences.

While speaking about politics, the key informants and focus group participants collectively showed that they did not approve of using favouritism to gain high performance goals. However, they did use politics in other ways, mainly to find opportunities that would assist them, or ease their progress up the high performance ladder. The main political opportunities were to know how their competition or colleagues behaved and what a judge's preferences were. High performing event riders and opera singers would use this knowledge strategically during a competition or audition.

#### *A coaching change.*

A difficult transition phase occurred when an important coach left one of the key informants during this study. This occurred between the first and second interviews with the event rider and was based on internal politicking. During the first interview Madeleine and her coach John, were very much a team, with equally strong goal expectations. This could be expected after five years of constantly working together and success in winning competitions. At the commencement of the second interview, Madeleine said, "... well do I have news for you ...". She then explained what had happened to her in relation to her coach.

At the time of the first interview, they both viewed each other's relationship as more than just coach and student and more like close friends with the same goal. Madeleine described John as, "the person who is probably my biggest supporter in backing me up – not just in a riding way. He has become like an uncle or a big brother."

Due to national politics, the coaching relationship was not to last and by the second interview John was no longer Madeleine's coach. When he informed Madeleine, she was not prepared:

'cause as I said this official hates my coach, and so I said to John, in fact he said to me, 'we cannot work together at major competitions' and I went 'no we can't.' So I went to WEG [World Equestrian Games] and came home and then John tells me he's not working with me anymore. (Madeleine)

The parting distressed both participants. She reflected:

There were a couple of ways I could've dealt with it. One was accepting it with grace; one was don't talk to him. The one I went for was a bit back to mum's theory of 'be nice to people 'cause it annoys them' ha ha. You know there is so much bloody hoity-ness and stupidity in this sport and people not talking to each other that I can't be bothered, and so I have actually thought, 'oh well I'll save on petrol.' I miss him and well ... but it's for the better [shrugged shoulders]. (Madeleine)

Madeleine is strongly against negative politics stating, "They railroaded John – he let the bastards win." She said she was very angry about the situation. On parting, Madeleine said that John still wanted to "be friends," to which she replied, "might as well I suppose." Although this comment seemed to lack concern, her voice was emotional as she acknowledged that he had, "done a hell of a lot for me."

During the second interview Madeleine recollected that, perhaps it was for the best that the split occurred at this time, as she was more concerned in pleasing her coach, ignoring the

political influences surrounding her, than focusing on her own goal – riding for Australia at the Olympics.

You know I was working with my coach John and there is politics with John and management ... there is a high-level official who hates him. I knew it was difficult for him ... all I can work out is my coach was working his pupil and this high ranking official, as far as I can gather, was jealous. (Madeleine)

Madeleine said that after a while she realised John could be right in his decision, “[John] was causing major ructions from a selection point of view.” She realised later that John was worried politics would get in the way of his training and hamper her Olympic dream. She said, “ ... he didn’t need the bullshit.”

Before they met, Madeleine received advice from an industry official to contact John to help her develop her skills further. John (EvC) supported this when he said, “State selectors suggested she had lessons from me to improve her dressage. She was pretty good at the other disciplines of eventing, but her dressage wasn’t high enough to get her further – so in I came.” John said Madeleine filled his criteria of being “passionate about the sport” and she wanted to “learn the right thing the right way,” so he took her on. In their partnership, politics brought them together, and politics, in part separated them.

During the first interview, John stated that he “encouraged and influenced” her and was prepared to give more than an average coach so Madeleine could achieve her goal:

I go well beyond the “norm” in training her horses. I know she can do well so I need to be there for her to ensure she reaches her goal – of going to the Olympics – I’ve been in a similar situation of being shortlisted for the Olympics and know the feelings she has about being selected. (John, EvC)

John knew from his own experience that for Madeleine to reach her goal of getting to the top it was necessary for him to leave because of certain political issues within the industry – issues that indirectly affected her.

Although disappointed at losing her coach, and disappointed in her own self-realisation that perhaps this was for the best, Madeleine handled this situation in a way where she could still achieve the attention of the high-ranking official, keep her coach as a friend, and continue with her own personal goal.

*Equality and equity.*

Event rider and opera singer participants unanimously agreed that their activity was gender neutral. Madeleine stated, “No definitely. There are no gender problems in this sport because it is the only sport in the world – equestrian – where men and women compete on an equal footing.” Equality, dependent on the role, also occurs in opera. Maria stated that “opera is fairly level in relation to gender,” she stated that men and women get paid equally for the role that they play, and that “singers get better paid than other singers only because they are better known.” According to Maria, it was the part performed in a particular opera that alters the gender balance, “... only because there is a lot of specific gender roles in the characters needed for specific operas.” Lucy (age 24, OpFG) explained, “... in some operas, even in male roles, women are chosen to play young men – look at the Marriage of Figaro.”

The leisure activities were also seen as being race neutral by participants “I don’t think gender or race is actually an issue at all – well not as far as I come from” (Sally, age 19, EvFG). Focus groups agreed that in equestrian and operatic pursuits, leisure patterns of the participants were related more to the performance in the activity than to their gender or race.

*Image and self-image.*

*Image*, initially downplayed by key informants, became an important issue in relation to self-promotion and confidence. According to the participants, self-confidence is the differentiating factor between an average performer and a high performer. The self-perceptions individual event riders and opera singers had of themselves impacted on how others perceived them. Participants suggested that the more self-confidence you had, the more likely it was that you would succeed. Participants agreed that the better their *self-image*,



the more confident they felt and the easier it was for them to promote themselves to employers, clients, audience, media and sponsors.

Although image was not highly regarded as a constraint by event riders, compared to their self-image – their belief in themselves, the outward appearance of the rider also had to be professional. For example, the rider changes outfits three times during one event: top hat and tails for dressage; coloured athletic tops for cross country; and shirt, tie and jacket for showjumping. With this fashion component in their leisure activity, and the need to present the right image, riders wanted to *look good*. Madeleine, who is blonde, fit and often photographed, did not think image was a major factor to her success. However, awareness of her looks became apparent when she inadvertently mentioned her choice of underwear:

Um, good looks? [laughs], I never consider I've got good looks ... I'm sure I am the only person in the world who can turn an under wire bra into an instrument of danger, 'cause I broke several ribs along the under wire of my bra – I suppose I shouldn't have been so vain as to want boobs while riding cross country ha ha! I now make a point of removing the wire from my bra before comps. (Madeline)

Once she reached a high-level, Madeleine became increasingly confident in her abilities, which in-turn increased her self-image. She used her increased confidence to find a business coach who could assist her in finding sponsors. She said, “I had a business advisor, a success coach, that showed me how to attract funding. I'm lucky because I'm now good at promoting myself.” Similarly, Maria used professional portrait photographs and a portfolio of media shots of various opera roles to assist in self-promotion. Having a good image, confidence in yourself and the ability to self-promote was a clear advantage over competitors.

During a discussion on emerging opera singers, Maria said she needed to be the “whole package” to be competitive; she recalled one of her coaches saying, “opera singers need to learn all their craft, not just sing. It's no longer enough to sing.” By being the whole package, Maria had an added advantage over her competition. Maria suggested it was personal opinion:

There is the aspect that in any performance-based thing once you get to a certain level, it can be very shallow in terms of people just don't like the look of you compared to someone else. It doesn't mean you don't know any less than the other person or your technique is any worse than the other person – it is purely the preference of whoever is hiring you. (Maria)

Both event riders and opera singers thought that although a person's physical appearance could be an issue, especially in opera, maintaining good health, staying physically active, and promoting a good self-image were more important. Maria explained:

I would say that in terms of the physicality of singing, an opera singer is like an athlete, in that they need to be physically fit to be able to do what they do. I don't mean physically fit in a body sense, but physically fit in the larynx, physically fit within the muscles that control the airflow and support the voice eventually. Of course, there are a number of overweight singers but they still have a very strong structure inside that has been trained over years to do what they do. (Maria)

Maria's current coach, Joan, supported this observation when she said what Maria needed to achieve success: "Great training, good figure and looks, good discipline, good brain and a lovely voice, which she uses with intelligence."

Body image issues, although not personally experienced by participants, are a recognised problem for some people in each leisure industry. When asked what an opera company looks for in a singer, Joan, Maria's coach agreed that looks do play a part in gaining a singing contract: "It's hard today ... They have to be very good vocally, and look wonderful." Lucy (age 24, OpFG) said, "Recently I guess, I have heard stories about weight and height things, those types of factors as well as appearance and stuff like that – that's discrimination." She supported this by suggesting that, "If you are good at singing and look good you will probably do better."

A recent discriminating factor that could affect a rider's success emerged in relation to event riding. This was *horse discrimination*. Sally (age 19, EvFG) spoke about the looks of the horse. She said, "in a group situation, if your horse isn't a flash horse, but it could do the job but wasn't 'up there' looking flash, they sort of ignore that horse and the rider gets left out. That's horse discrimination!"

All participants stated that they presented themselves as best as possible. As Simone (age 25, OpFG) stated, "You have to look the part. You don't have to be a top model, but you have to be presentable, you know look professional." However, to achieve international status, an individual needed to be the "whole package." High performing participants had the self-confidence to know their abilities and appreciated their bodies for what they could *do*, instead of what society perceived a person should look *like*. Participants also agreed that the horse and the voice was part of the whole package and played an important role in their activities.

#### *The horse and the voice.*

The horse and the voice were the most significant components clearly identifiable to each leisure activity. Without these components to his or her persona, an individual would not be able to pursue their leisure activity. While speaking about the horse or voice the key informants and focus groups participants, became very animated. The interviewer's notes stated of the riders: "Participants started to really talk and get involved when I mentioned their horses," and of the singers, "they were pretty quiet until we started to talk specifically about singing opera – then they just carried the conversation."

Madeleine expressed confidence in her horse when she said, "I am running around with a brilliant horse, I think one of the best in the world – he's pretty amazing." Horses were often referred to as friends, and the anthropomorphism further extended to include gender, as Madeleine spoke of her horses and their personalities; "I've had horses in the past that have been really talented but there's been a personality clash, I don't get on very well with mares [female horses]."

The opera key informant knew she had a good voice. “I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t have a good voice,” said Maria, “so it is just a matter on improving what is already there.” In some instances, participants viewed the horse and the voice as inanimate objects you could manipulate. In terms of the singer, Maria declared:

I find it exciting that I can manipulate the voice to suit different styles of music. I also find it exciting to see how my voice changes as my techniques get better. Yeah it’s not too bad, I’m lucky because opera is a career, you can start a bit later because the voice doesn’t fully mature until around about 30. There is the danger that if you start too young you form a technique with the voice that you have at that age, and by the time it is fully matured you have a different voice – and you may have to re-train – a new voice so to speak.  
(Maria)

The focus group participants also changed terminology during discussions, along with their attitude towards their horse or their voice, giving anthropomorphic, human characteristics, or viewing them as instruments. Event riders were especially prone to anthropomorphism:

I think it’s the relationship you have with your horse as well. You just feel him go out there and he’ll go “Oh oh I don’t think so” and you just say it’s alright just jump it and he jumps it – and you can feel him go “Ohhhh” and it feels great and he goes on! It’s anytime. Like when you see him race across the paddock [towards you] and he gives you a kiss on the face. (Karen, age 24, EvFG).

During a conversation Steve (age 23, OpFG) referred to his voice as a male person saying, “he sometimes just doesn’t come out.” Some participants also viewed the horse and voice as a piece of *equipment*. Karen (age 26, EvFG) said her horse was the “most important piece of equipment you have – so you need to keep it running well.” Steve (age 23, OpFG) also extended this mechanical influence to his voice when he said, “your body is the instrument and the music comes from within.”

Event riders and opera singers stated that the horse and the voice were specific to their activity. Participants relied on their horse and voice to help them reach their desired goals – whether it was to reach the Olympics or to sing on the international stage. A poor or injured horse or voice was a constraint to performance ability. However, if riders and singers were confident about their horse and voice abilities, they were able to focus on their own personal activity demands, strengthen their own self-efficacy, and contribute to overall performance ability.

*Isolation, travel, money, time and injury.*

During the interviews, five further themes relating to structural constraints were mentioned by event riders and opera singers when asked the question, “what do you see as constraints in your leisure activity?” The themes were *isolation* and *travel, money, time and injury*. These constraints became more apparent as the leisure activity of event riding and opera singing became serious. Participants from both leisure activities also agreed that all of these structural constraints were gender neutral, as they equally affected both men and women.

*Isolation and travel.*

Because of Australia’s isolation from the rest of the world, and the need to travel vast distances between capital cities, a number of participants stated that isolation and travel constraints were “a necessary evil” (Simone, aged 25, F, OpFG). While discussing isolation and travel, three sub-themes emerged – isolation, travel, and perceptions of isolation and travel.

*Isolation* – Both event riders and opera singers identified several types of isolation that they had experienced. Maria found she was isolated in her choice of leisure activity due to low student numbers, “I did a lot of it in isolation. I must say there weren’t many [opera] students at my first uni.” Isolation in Australia occurred even within a particular state. As James (EvF) pointed out, “more challenges arise as you get better, and you are competing on a higher level, you are not just doing it 50kms away, in Australia you are doing it 150 – 5000 kms away!” Normally isolation relates to individuals who live in rural areas, but Susan (age 21,

EvFG) found that she was isolated from other riders because she lived in the city, “Where I live you can’t ride around much or you’ll get run over...And I’m not close to anyone who rides. So you are kind of isolated.” Closely linked to isolation was travel.

*Travel* – Support and encouragement from family, coaches and friends was vital when travel became an issue. In particular, parents altered their lifestyles to accommodate and transport their children to their leisure activity – until the child could transport themselves. As Madeleine confirmed:

Mum and dad took me everywhere when I was younger... The day after I got my driver’s licence I jumped in the car and drove to the city for clinics or lessons. That is just what you did and there was absolutely no alternative, coaches didn’t come to you. (Madeleine)

The logistics of travelling to events around Australia and getting to international events were definite constraints recognised by riders, singers, parents and coaches. Once an individual advanced, and developed a serious interest in their leisure activity, changes in their lifestyles, specifically travelling, became increasingly significant. Madeleine mentioned that she would travel around 15,000kms in a year to attend competitions, whereas Maria moved 4,000kms away from her family and friends to develop her singing further:

I was very happy but wanted to pursue opera and with a month’s notice packed up, moved here and it was very difficult...it was a big shock to the system...I hadn’t really worked with such, I guess, internationally acclaimed coaches and singing teachers before...it was a big challenge giving up the control I had over my life. (Maria)

The coaches interviewed had experienced the excessive travel problems of living in Australia, and the need to travel to improve their position in the equestrian or operatic world. John (EvC) stated that, “the major difficulty is the distance from major events especially in Madeleine’s case.” While Joan (OpC) commented on the necessity to travel internationally to

succeed on the operatic stage, “the other problem is they need to be prepared to travel the world constantly for auditions and work.”

*Perceptions of isolation and travel* – Having the opportunity to participate in a leisure activity, and believing that isolation and travel constraints are solvable, was a positive learning stage in the participant’s earlier leisure pursuit. As Madeleine said, “There is a problem with the amount of time we spend on the road... But the problem is only as big as you let it be...you only focus on the positives.” It was evident when discussing isolation and travel that parental opinions affected event riders and opera singers. Madeleine, brought up on a farm in rural Australia 50kms from the nearest small event, learnt this through her parents. As her father said:

So you just make every effort to make sure that distance was no problem. I mean it is a problem, but we always made it so that it wasn’t anything that affected her. If she wanted to do these things and she was good enough, and she proved she was, we would go ‘alright.’ Well you just overcome the challenge, you don’t say, ‘I can’t do it’. (James, EvF)

This mindset was an advantage to high performers; especially as they progressed and travel increased.

An additional benefit to key informants and focus group participants was to know that others experienced similar problems. Several mentioned that they took the “if *they* can – I can” approach. Without knowing the key informants involved in this study, the focus group participants named them both as examples of high-level performers who had overcome constraints similar to those they faced. The key informants saw internationally renowned Australian event riders and opera singers, as their role models. These high performing role models had dealt with similar constraint issues that the key informants were experiencing. Madeleine spoke of an Australian Olympic gold medal winner who said, “just do it girl.” She said, “he really understood my situation and he inspired me.” Maria, who was travelling to Europe for work with her husband, said, “Lauren did it last year [succeeded internationally]

and Peter the year before that, so we know we can do it. Getting the roles will be the hard part – that’s up to us.”

The key informants and focus group participants agreed that to succeed they needed to see the distance between events or performances as integral to their leisure activity, and not a constraint. The advanced riders and singers thought the necessity of travel was minor compared to finding the funds for the travel itself.

### *Money.*

Within this study, the experiences of monetary constraints varied among individuals as some of the participants were working, and others were studying. Participants all agreed that money could make the road easier, but lack of it did not stop someone from taking part in the activity. At the same time, they said money could not buy ability – it was the event rider or opera singer who became a high performer, not how much money the individual had.

Something I find really interesting about the sport of eventing is that people can go out and they can spend millions of dollars liberally buying event horses, expensive saddles, etc., but not do well. I think that is the difference in eventing and the other Olympic disciplines, no matter how much money you’ve got you can’t buy that ability. (Madeleine)

Australian event riders and opera singers saw money as an issue in their leisure activity. However, while it was necessary to have money to develop and continue in both leisure pursuits, not having enough money was their least constraint.

In this study, there were four main stages in an individual’s leisure activity when money became a constraint. Specifically when they were financially dependent on parents, became self-supporting, started to perform at a high-level competitively and when they reached an international level. Although, money became a constraint when they first became involved in their leisure activity, it was increasingly noticeable when their skills improved and they



showed a dedication to their pastime. This was due to the need to pay for higher-level coaches and increasing performance costs.

*The first stage* – The majority of participants started their leisure activity at school age, with some, like the key informants, commencing their leisure activities as young as three. As they were young, participants had no income and could not travel by themselves; they had to rely on parents for both transportation and financial support. Sally (age 19, EvFG) remembered her early years saying, “I relied on mum and dad to take me and my horse places.” Although participants stated that parents were most important during stage one, it was apparent that parents played an important role throughout the four stages.

*The second stage* – Money started to be a serious issue at the age when participants became young adults and had to support themselves. During the second stage, participants began to use pocket money and/or find part-time work to support their leisure activity. As Jenny (age 25, EvFG) explained, “I think that when you go from when mum and dad pay for everything to when you have to pay for everything off your own back, then it starts to get hard.” Steve (age 23, OpFG) said, “at some stage you had to take responsibility for your expenses. After all you are the one enjoying yourself.”

*The third stage* – Participants needed to find more funding for their leisure activity to develop their skills. This stage was reached as participants made a commitment to become a serious leisure participant and they had to find funds to pay for higher level coaching (both event riders and opera singers stated that an hour’s coaching could range from \$50 up to \$150 per hour, depending on the coaches). They had to purchase equipment, such as saddles for the event riders or music for the opera singers, with money required for entry fees, and additional travel to competitions and auditions. As Jack explained (age 29, OpFG): “It costs money for singing lessons, it costs money to learn a language or to act, it costs money to travel around to auditions.”

As well as emotional support, parents contributed, or had initially contributed, financial backing for participants at this stage. They knew that their children were required to give more, and work harder to achieve their dream goals at this serious level. When the focus

group participants, not at a level to attract sponsorships, spoke about successfully negotiating money issues, especially training fees, they often included parents. Melanie (age 17, EvFG), a young developing rider and a full-time student said, “I’m at uni and it’s hard, I do pay for a lot of things but my parents do help still.”

*The fourth stage* – In the fourth stage, participants were at a level that required them to go to other countries to compete, or to gain international exposure, such as event riding at the Olympics, or singing with a German operatic company. Participants tailored funding solutions to suit their needs, sometimes relying on parents, or using savings to enable them to continue at this high performance level. Even those who had a job and received a salary relied on additional funding to assist them at the more expensive national and international levels. As Madeleine stated, “I supported my riding by working on the farm and training ... Until recently I just had mum, and dad and me, now I have some financial help from the industry and from private sponsors.”

Although income came through work and sponsorships, the key informants, because they were at an international level, still required parental assistance at times. Tom, the opera singer’s father, acknowledged that he still assists his daughter when she has financial problems “Oh, there are always financial difficulties. I have been supportive when I’ve had the right moments.” This was mainly due to the time spent away from paid work by high performers to meet increased training commitments.

The parents of the key informants rarely spoke about any constraints negatively. However, they acknowledged that their daughters were working ‘normal jobs’ to provide funds for their serious leisure goals. During the transition from a hobby leisure participant to a high-level performer, the increased commitments required from the individual were emotionally difficult for the parents. The knowledge that her daughter was experiencing some monetary constraints prior to her trip to Europe was not the main thing that worried Sue, the opera singer’s mother. Sue was more worried about her daughter losing her motivation because of the extra work she was doing:

Only this year at the beginning of the year – when she finished the course and was looking for work – I did have this fear that in trying to earn enough money to live she might lose her drive or lose her direction. (Sue, OpM)

The high-level focus group performers spoke about additional expenses that they had to cover. The expense of travelling from Australia to Europe according to James, who was planning to continue his career overseas, could rise dramatically:

Because of the international exchange rates, etc., it's much, much harder here for us to get onto the international stage. It's expensive. Also because we live in Australia we don't have a European passport. That's also another constraint as we have to get [travel] visas plus working visas. (James, age 36, OpFG)

Visas not only incurred more expense but also took a long time to organise. Without visas, the participants could not enter or work in certain countries outside of Australia (this was an increased cost factor especially to the event riders, as their horses also had to have visas). Participants specifically linked living in Australia to their money and isolation issues. James (age 36, OpFG) explained, "... the biggest constraint to achieving international achievements in Australasia is the financial factor."

Participants spoke about the importance of raising funds to achieve goals in their leisure activity. However, they did not mention money as a specific constraint. Each of the key informants, their parents, coaches and the focus group participants commented on the lack of available time to find funding or undertake income-producing work while aiming for that high performance goal.

#### *Time.*

Organising time on a day-to-day basis was important to a high performer as could be seen in Madeleine, also a full-time farmer, when she described her working week:

This is when I have to be a very skilled juggler. Next week is the start of shearing. I do all the wool classing. If I don't do the classing the value of the wool will go down to half. No-one [else] is allowed to class our adult sheep. On Tuesday we start shearing, I have a competition to do on the Saturday and Sunday, so we are talking 8 hours drive each way to get to this competition ... I mean I get exhausted. I have been starting at around 5.30 to work horses then I'm in the shearing shed for 8 hours. In fact I calculated that I shift three and a half tonnes of wool physically in those 8 hours, and that doesn't include moving the sheep themselves. So basically every day I will be shifting about 5 tonnes of stuff a day in the 8 hours ... I spend 7 days a week ... 3-4 hours training or looking after the horses .... It's pretty full on. (Madeleine)

Event riders and opera singers recognised the important of finding time to practice or train. They need to plan their lifestyle around the activity of prolonged and essential practice. John (age 31, EvFG) worked full-time outside the equestrian industry to support his serious leisure pursuit. He suggested that having the ability to remain focused, and developing life's activities around the leisure activity, enabled time to be found. He said, "horses are a way of life, it affects your social life, affairs, everything. It takes so much time out of your life to work and to train a horse."

Although participants often mentioned time constraints, they expressed that it was more of a hindrance to their lifestyle rather than a real constraint to their leisure activity. Participants suggested that their use of time was adaptable, and their personal circumstances made it possible for them to pursue their leisure interest. They could alter their routines if it became necessary. As Susan (age 21, EvFG) said, "with us it may not be money but it's time; you have to get up early."

One focus group participant, who had to fit her training time in with her full-time career as a racehorse trainer and riding instructor, expressed the complex balancing required:

I would love to go out in the morning and work mine first and get them done and then do my work, but I can't as I work racehorses, so I have to come home in the heat of the day and work them. Then teach in the afternoon and then maybe go for a lesson. You've got to do it when you have time. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

High performers in the study did not view their leisure time as being *free time*. During discussions, a blurring of boundaries occurred; they viewed their leisure activity as a more work-like activity, necessary to reach their high-level performance goals. It was the individuals themselves who planned to use time effectively as they were in control. Time became a serious issue when participants lost control through illness or injury.

#### *Injury.*

Event riders and opera singers agreed that injury was the one factor that could stop their goal attainment. Although one leisure activity was an active outdoor sport, and the other was executed in a relatively safe environment, they were equally at risk of injury. While discussing injuries both groups stated that their physical condition was the only control, they had over injury. Tiredness, obtaining an injury outside the activity, and the lack of control participants had over injury were their three major concerns.

*Physical condition* – Health constraints played an important role in the two leisure fields explored. Not only did individuals have their own general health and fitness to consider, especially when performing at a high-level, but they also had the horses' health and fitness to take care of in the case of the event rider; and the health and fitness of the vocal cords in the case of the opera singer. Keeping fit and healthy was a major part of the event rider and opera singer's everyday life as Maria said, "there are physical benefits from keeping fit in relation to my voice. I play sport now through my involvement with opera – to keep fit!" Despite maintaining *fitness*, injuries could still occur to constrain participants. Key informants and focus groups mentioned that no matter how much experience and knowledge performers have in their activity or how fit they are; the intensive training, competitive environment and complex lifestyles can still result in injury.

*Tiredness* – When striving for a high performance level, being physically tired indirectly caused injury. The parents of Madeleine, the event rider, supported this statement when they described her physical condition that resulted in an injury, “she was tired, she had just got home from an international competition when she had the accident.” Focus group participants agreed that when they were tired they usually injured themselves. James (age 36, OpFG) said, “if you’re physically tired and strained, it affects what happens to your voice and that can cause damage.” There were several periods in a high performer’s daily life when injury occurred because of *tiredness*. These were: training, routine leisure tasks, travelling, performing and work.

*Injury outside the activity* – Injury not only occurred while active in the leisure pursuit, but also outside of the pursuit as well. The participants recalled that injury was less common within the leisure activity than outside of the activity, mainly due to the strict safety regulations and the fact that coaches, or high ranking performers, were usually on hand to give advice. Madeleine spoke about a serious injury she received while she was working on the farm. She worried more about her performance goal than the actual injury, “yeah, I was shitting myself until I got hold of John, and he goes ‘yes we can do this and this as long as you don’t end up stiff, we’ll be fine’.”

Although Madeleine downplayed this traumatic injury, it did cause psychological and physiological issues. Her parents remember her being very down and depressed because she thought she would not be able to continue her goal of riding in the next Olympics. Her mother said:

Doctors gave her a few options but she asked them what was the quickest to recuperation and they told her. So she chose the least cosmetic/ less aesthetic option. She just wanted to get back into training as soon as possible.

(Elizabeth, EvM)

Her mother also mentioned other injuries when talking about Madeleine on the farm:

There have been physical injuries to overcome, most of which have not actually been at competitions. She dislocated her shoulder, it was riding but it was at home; a simple fall that caused her considerable problems.

(Elizabeth EvM)

Opera singers expressed more worries than event riders about the possibility of being injured. Simply talking could affect their vocal cords, and opera participants were unanimous that catching 'a cold' was an everyday concern.

*Lack of control* – Injury was the only constraint that the participants could not control, as Madeleine stated: “Constraints are only those things if you are *not injured* that you allow yourself to have. You can do whatever you want to otherwise.” Unlike other structural constraints considered negotiable by participants, such as time and money, injury was the one constraint factor that participants had little or no control over. Injury could affect not only the rider or the singer; it could also affect the horse or the voice.

Serious injury was the one constraint that participants stated would stop high performers from continuing in their serious leisure activity. Participants believed that personal strategies and utilising available opportunities, could overcome all other structural constraints.

### **Strategies for Creating a Career**

The previous sections in this chapter described the perceived constraints and opportunities high-level performers experienced. To expand on lived experiences discussions arose relating to constraints revolving around high performer status and career development. Two themes evolved from these discussions relating to high performer status and career pathways. The first theme discussed the terms amateur and professional along with the work-leisure relationship from a personal perspective, and the second theme focused on career pathways and career perceptions relevant to high performance success.

### **Amateur to professional.**

The performers reported a blurring between the two terms of *amateur* and *professional* once an individual reaches a high performance level in their activity. The uncertainty about the meaning of serious leisure, and the ambiguity of perceptions of leisure, confused participants who had views of what their own status was. These individuals felt that serious leisure did not apply to professionals, but was more associated with hobbyists and amateurs. Amateurs described by participants had less skills, training and knowledge than a professional. Therefore, they felt that to denote their involvement in serious leisure – as amateurs – “put them in the wrong category” or “belittled their achievements.” Discussions relating to leisure status evolved into two sub-themes – the perception of status and the blurring of status in a work-leisure relationship.

### ***The perception of status.***

All participants thought that the use of the word amateur denigrated a performer who had a high standing in a leisure activity. “The word amateur when used alone is too degrading,” said Madeleine, who used a different definition when she classed herself as a “professional amateur – that is a good term for me at the moment.” Madeleine announced that she was a professional with no salary attached. Other event riders named Madeleine, who works as a farmer, without knowing who the key informant was, as an example of a professional. Madeleine explained how she sees herself as both an amateur and a professional at the same time. She said:

I am of a professional level in that I ride well enough to be a professional. I am an amateur in that I am a farmer through and through. I am very lucky that it's a family farm and that I have the most amazing family who say “oh you're off to the world championships, well can you please make sure all the sheep are in before you go.” To me farming supports the horses, not the other way around, and I have been very lucky, I have never had to make a choice between the two. So I consider myself to be an amateur who is good enough to be a professional. (Madeleine)



Initially, participants defined a professional as an athlete or artist who makes their living from their activity or profession. Both groups commented that this definition was “a double edged sword,” stating that, a professional is still a professional, even if they may not make a living from the activity. Participants also suggested that spectators and audience members classed high performing event riders and opera singers as professionals, not amateurs. Event riders and opera singers agreed that performers could be professional whether they performed for money or not. They gave three reasons that distinguished a professional from an amateur – the influence high performers had on young performers as role models, the peer recognition received by other performers and their national or international performance level. Classification as a professional or amateur for these participants relied more on quality of performance and level in the activity which they performed, than on social class or generating an income from that activity.

***Work-leisure relationship.***

Initially when the key informants, at their first interview session, spoke about their leisure activity both stated, in an annoyed voice, that the word *leisure* was not suitable for their level of activity. Madeleine said, “Many people, I am absolutely positive, see eventing as their leisure, but once you do it at this level it’s not leisure.” Maria had similar views, “I see [singing] as work not leisure. Oh, I suppose it can be leisure to some, but to me it is work.” However, when the interviewer introduced the term *serious* leisure the key informants were more accepting of referrals to their activities as ‘serious leisure activities.’ Madeleine had not heard the term serious leisure used to describe her activity, and Maria did not relate it to opera.

As this study focused on the participant as a whole, leisure was viewed as a dimension of their *ordinary life*. The paradox of, “could work be leisure and could leisure be work?”, was brought up by Elizabeth (EvM), the parent of the event rider, when she said, “horses can be her pleasure rather than just her work, whereas if going to work is horses, then what do you do for pleasure?”

In this study, the participants interviewed found that their *free time* was not free time. For example, Susan (age 21, EvFG), who did not work with horses, found her leisure activity to be closely related to a work-like activity, “you have to be there 7 days a week, 365 days a year.”

More evidence of the work-leisure dichotomy occurred as participants described their training and practice regimes. The majority of practice in event riding and opera singing is solitary, and involves personal discipline, attention, self-motivation and effort. Achieving success and finding stability for the high performer in their work-leisure life was through planning and willpower. Karen said that her lifestyle revolved around her leisure activity:

I study as well, and try and work. Trying to find the balance between study, work, riding and social life is hard. You ride in the dark sometimes before work and after work, or its Friday night and you want to go out with friends, but then you have to get up at 5am to drive to a competition or event. (Karen, age 24, EvFG)

Other participants also reported their leisure to be work-like, for example, the opera key informant, while others described their work to be more like leisure, for example the event rider key informant. Jenny established this blending of work and leisure as she worked with racehorses full-time. She associated her work with her leisure activity as she also found her work to be leisure-like:

I would class it as work because I work with horses, I don't do anything else. I class it as work but it is enjoyable work, like I don't find it as hard work, I enjoy it more. It is hard work but I don't really see it as work. Do you know what I mean? (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

Both leisure pursuits had an obligatory side to them; participants had to undertake certain tasks that they did not necessarily enjoy, such as mucking out stables or learning languages. Therefore, the performers' perception of leisure was dependent on the enjoyment they experienced by doing certain tasks. As James verified:

It depends on what aspect you're looking at, and whether you treat it as a hobby or as enjoyment or whatever. Your reaction and enjoyment, what you get out of it, will be different possibly, than if you treat it as a job. (James, age 36, OpFG)

The discussion of the work-leisure relationship with the event riders and opera singers revealed opinions about career choices available to them. It also clarified the terminology that they preferred to use. For example, participants suggested that the term leisure-life when explaining their leisure progress, presupposes that the activity is and always would be a hobby.

Participants agreed that event riding and opera singing were activities associated with the leisure fields, and they were all striving to be high performers, in a leisure pursuit, yet they disagreed that they had a leisure-life. Participants differed in their perception of a leisure activity, with some finding their leisure work-like and others finding their work leisure-like. It was the perception of the individual and not the activity itself that determined what was and was not leisure.

### **Careers.**

Making a career out of their leisure activity was the goal of many of the participants, especially for the opera singers. The working life, or career, of an event rider or opera singer required the performer to have significant knowledge, training and skills for their specific activity. In this section, two sub-themes emerged; career pathways and career perceptions. It was an individual decision to take a leisure activity and turn it into a career depending on how the individual perceived their activity – as a pathway to employment or as their leisure pursuit.

### ***Career pathways.***

Working irregular hours, travelling, performing, competing, training or coaching, were all constraints participants needed to negotiate to develop a career or perform at a high-level.

The key informants in this study worked in jobs closely linked to their leisure activity. Madeleine rode horses on the farm and felt that breeding sheep, “ties in a bit with eventing – you have to be good at more than one thing.” While Maria worked at a theatre, she said, “it is good because I can see how a theatre works, behind the scenes, front of house works, who to be nice to and who you would likely be in contact with. It’s good to see it from the other side.” By working in a related field, the key informants were able to negotiate constraints using the experience as an opportunity to further their leisure skill base.

Maria dealt with work-leisure constraints by making decisions based around what is important to the development of her career, seen as her leisure activity. She incorporated her decisions with those of her husband, also an opera singer, as both knew that to break into an international opera career means dealing with certain constraints. Maria, who was recently married about the time of this study, did not think that her marriage would cause any new constraints to her career advancement. She recalled that her parents, coach and a couple of friends had also raised this question. She said:

It will make it difficult in various situations such as if I get work in England and he gets work in Germany or anywhere else really. Even if we do get work in the same country it may mean [living] a few hours travel apart.  
(Maria)

Participants, who did not see their leisure pursuit as a career and had other *non-leisure* careers, also had constraints in relation to the non-leisure careers versus the leisure activity. For example, Madeleine a farmer had similar constraint issues such as time, money and travel as Maria, although Madeleine considered her event riding as her leisure pursuit not a career path, unlike Maria who saw her opera singing as a pathway to a full-time career not her leisure activity. To overcome her work-leisure constraint issues, Madeleine adjusts her time and makes decisions about her leisure pursuit in accordance with her non-leisure career. Elizabeth her mother pointed out this compromise when she said:

[Eventing] does have to fit around work; work has to sometimes fit around her horses too, for example she wanted to go to an event and she decided

against that so that she could be home for the shearing, so it's a balance of work. (Elizabeth, EvM)

Key informants and focus group participants agreed that they had to work to make money to support their leisure interests, although focusing on improving a serious leisure activity and juggling work commitments was another constraint to high performance. Bob commented on an article he had read about this issue:

In the opera magazine two months ago, a well-known soprano wrote an article about that exact issue. She said, that when she went to Germany 20 to 30 years ago, she did work in a bank part-time – but she looks at the young singers now and feels it is totally impossible. You need to be so good you need to be able to commit all your daytime hours to perfecting your craft and she doesn't think that people who work as well get the results needed. (Bob, age 35, OpFG)

All participants who wanted full-time careers in their chosen leisure activity knew that working while pursuing a leisure career was not an ideal position to be in, even if closely related.

Yes, it's hard, you have to work to pay for it and you can't work full time too. I tried and it doesn't work. I really found myself struggling and tired. No, it doesn't work – and I was working for an opera company! (James, age 36, OpFG)

Most of the participants needed a job to pay for coach and travel fees that they needed to improve their leisure skills. Key informants and focus group participants stated that finding a job that closely related to their activity could assist them in their serious leisure activity, although receiving an income, from any type of work, helped to develop their leisure pursuits further.

*Career perceptions.*

Another issue that arose from the work-leisure paradigm was determining the participant's clarification and their perception of the leisure activity. For example, Madeleine made it clear that event riding was not going to become her full time career – even if she did win an Olympic Medal, it was her leisure, not her work. “My next goal is to produce the finest Merino wool,” she explained. Whereas, Maria, the opera singer, was definite that she would make an international career from singing – it was not her leisure. Focus group participants from both groups varied in how they perceived their activity. Their life goals determined whether it was a leisure or career activity.

Participant perceptions of event riding and opera singing as recognised careers varied. Several participants described situations where individuals not in the activity had commented that their activity was “not a real job.” Maria elaborated on the *it's not a real job* perception as she described how she felt when talking to a fellow student during her university years:

Sometimes when you tell people what you are doing, they belittle it. Like I once spoke to an engineering student at uni, he said, “gosh I would like to be able to just get up and sing in front of people, and pass, and just do that as a degree” – as if there was nothing much to it. (Maria)

Jack retold a story of a friend who took up a career in opera against his father's wishes – because his father did not think it was a suitable career:

I know a friend in another situation who was very strongly discouraged from opera; he did it as an act of rebellion. I think it primarily came from his father, who I have heard say time and time again “it's not a real job.” (Jack, age 29, OpFG)

The participants were in agreement that developing a career in event riding or opera singing is achievable through an individual's desire or ambition and not based on the remuneration or security commonly associated with a career. Steve elaborated this aspect when he discussed why people follow a career in opera, he said:

Yeah, you're not going to be a bloody lawyer, you're not going to make \$120,000 your first year out, and you're not a doctor. Performers and performing industries – apparently the unemployment is 99%. So it's that bad and you're not going in because you're waiting for a big pay cheque, if that's why you want to do it, go and do something else. In singing, there's no job security whatsoever. (Steve, age 23, OpFG)

Participants explained that in event riding and opera singing, careers can be developed and continued successfully until retirement. Joan, the opera coach, continues to coach forty years after she left the performance stage, and John, the event coach, is a national champion who continues to ride and coach in his sixties. Reconciliation of the differing views on what constitutes work in a leisure activity was once again dependent on an individual's perception or a high performer's mindset. Strategies that participants used to develop those mindsets related to motivation.

### **Strategies for performance development**

Exploring constraints and opportunities developed a clearer picture of strategies successfully used by event riders and opera singers to reach high performance. In this section, participants discuss numerous strategies that they used to overcome constraints and achieve their goals. All strategies discussed stimulated motivation and led to actions that achieved goals. Key informants and focus group participants understood and purposely devised and developed intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies. Through personal experience, they found techniques that worked best for them, giving them an edge in performance outcomes.

Key informants and focus group participants described motivation as anything in life that caused them to do something or made them feel enthused to continue in their activity. All participants agreed that developing motivational strategies is through trial and error, stating that not all techniques work for every person in the same way. Two themes emerged in this section. The first theme incorporated the sub-themes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, while discussions on motivational techniques, the second theme, identified seven sub-themes.

### **Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.**

In the increasingly competitive environments of event riding, and opera singing, motivational techniques gave high performers an edge over competitors. There were two types of motivation described by participants, intrinsic and extrinsic – both reliant on the individual’s situation.

#### ***Intrinsic motivation.***

Participants explained that intrinsic motivational factors are motivations that occur within the person. Examples given were a rider who rides horses for the pleasure of riding, or a singer who sings for the enjoyment they get from that activity. Maria described her interpretation of intrinsic motivation:

Intrinsic [motivation] is knowing that I am singing well at the moment.

Knowing that I am gaining knowledge from what I am doing. The sound is good, that I am singing effortlessly – as in my technique is good – so that it doesn’t feel like hard work physically. (Maria)

While Susan (age 21, EvFG) explained, “there is just something about training a horse and knowing it’s all your work – your piece – maybe like art – it’s your piece – it feels good.”

#### ***Extrinsic motivation.***

Unlike intrinsic factors, participants explained that extrinsic motivational factors are those that come from outside the activity itself. An example would be a rider who rides only to become a champion, or a singer who sings only to win a place in an opera company. Event riders and opera singers stated that an external motivational factor, such as, winning a rosette at a competition or a role in an opera, would also increase intrinsic motivations, such as, self-confidence, pride and determination. Susan (age 21, EvFG) related her training outcomes as being a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for her, “you train the horse, it finally comes off, you get a big win, and you think, ‘wow! I did that’ [a big smile].”



Winning was not the only motivational drive - skill development and improving techniques were also seen by participants as strategies for high performance. Increasing pressures found by high performers, and the tough competition in event riding and opera singing, led participants to train in a disciplined way. Participants understood which technique worked best for them. Knowledge of intrinsic and extrinsic techniques can provide a competitive advantage for an individual; understanding the competitive environment necessitated participants to improve or embrace alternative motivational techniques.

### **Motivational techniques.**

Key informants and focus group participants mentioned several alternative techniques they used that linked with intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. These motivational factors helped participants deal with constraints, and successfully advanced their high performance goals. The seven concepts or techniques used included visualisation, meditation or yoga, positive thinking and butterflies. Other techniques suggested included being “in the zone” and rewards. Some motivational prompters such as butterflies, adrenaline rushes or being in the zone are a physiological response to an external experience. Often motivational techniques such as yoga or visualisation are improved through physiological motivational strategies. According to participants, the following techniques allowed them to perform consistently at elevated levels, although not all participants used the same techniques within their strategy. *Visualisation* – Imagining successful outcomes led participants to real successful outcomes and were simple to do. As Simone (age 25, F, OpFG) said, “I do visualisation before I go on. I just generally stay in a corner, going through stuff in my head trying not to talk – thinking, focusing.”

### ***Visualisation.***

Participants used visualisation or imagery as a substitute for training sessions or when injury occurred. They also used it to reduce the risk of overtraining. Event riders used this technique immediately before an event, to enhance their focus and improve their performance. Karen regarded imagery as part of her *game plan*:

Visualisation? Yeah, it helps you know what you're doing. You get it all planned out and if it doesn't go according to plan in your head you've got time to change what you're going to do....It's having a game plan. Knowing where my weak points are and knowing where my horse's weak points are. So [it's] knowing that it can maybe give an inch but I can take an inch back there. (Karen, age 24, EvFG)

Visualisation was a strategy used by event riders when they were injured. It was also used by opera singers as a practice technique when they rested their vocal cords prior to, or between performances.

### *Meditation or yoga.*

When speaking about motivation, several focus group participants from both leisure activities suggested that meditation and yoga techniques assisted in motivating them. Although meditation and yoga are often associated with relaxation, event riders and opera singers used these techniques to tune into their “inner self” which attuned them to their external objectives – performing well. These exercises made them focus and to some extent, improved their performance. As Jack stated:

Personally, on opening night the yoga helps to settle myself so I am able to focus. I know I have rehearsed this way and I will perform in the same vein and do the best, knowing the potential is there, but then just before going on, I utilize this sense of ‘right here we are’ – the liveliness of the moment.

(Jack, age 29, OpFG)

Deep breathing, a result of meditation or yoga, alleviated stage fright, which is a common constraint that especially affects individuals who perform in front of an audience. The participants stated that they felt excited and nervous at the same time prior to entering an arena or stage which caused them to take shorter, faster breaths. Event riders needed to use relaxation techniques such as meditation to help them calm themselves, and in turn keep their horses calm. Opera singers calmed themselves prior to their entrance onto the stage so that

their breathing slowed and they could take more oxygen into their lungs, assisting in a more powerful voice:

It happens naturally I think, it's just getting the jitters, no not jitters, but getting excited about going on. That happens naturally, but there is a risk because your breath starts to get shallower and as soon as you go on to sing your note you have this shallow breath, so in a way yoga is a big help.

(Steve, age 23, OpFG)

Some participants found that meditation or yoga calmed them down too much. They suggested that it depended what horse they were riding or what role they were performing as to how deeply they meditated. These motivational techniques caused mental and physical changes to occur relevant to the needs of a high performer's preparation. The techniques of meditation and yoga allowed participants to have total concentration, a harmony of mind and body and a sense of personal fulfilment that they were going to perform well. Meditation and yoga also assisted with the technique of visualisation and positive thinking.

### *Positive thinking.*

A technique mentioned by high-level performers was to create a change in their negative thinking, using positive thinking techniques. Using positive thinking maintains and increases competitive behaviour by focusing mindsets away from negative emotions. Negative emotions, such as, frustration, impatience, anger, fear, resentment or sadness can cause constraints to a high performer. Participants said that they could effectively transform inner experiences into ones of challenge. As Maria exemplified:

I keep going simply because you are judged subjectively. Somebody different judges every competition or audition. It is good to think forward, use your experience and not dwell on negatives. Of course that helps ... I don't dwell on it. (Maria)

Participants from both the event riders and opera singers also found that in certain situations they needed to get themselves *hyped up* before their performance. Susan (age 21, EvFG) said that she, “had to get the adrenalin going so both she, and her horse, were ready to take on close competitors,” especially if she or her horse “felt flat.” This was similar for Simone (age 25, OpFG) as she needed to feel *on edge* before she entered the stage. Opera singers said that it depended on the character they were playing at the time as to how they engaged their energies, linking positive thinking with visualisation. As James said:

If you’re playing a character who is depressed or is a party to be murdered or something, you might decide that your preparation is x, whereas if you’re playing someone who is about to go into battle or war, or someone who is happy, the preparation might be different. (James, age 36, OpFG)

### ***Butterflies.***

Key informants said that they felt nervous, to some degree, prior to their performance. Focus group participants supported this comment when they said that they always had butterflies, a nervous flutter in their stomachs. Even experienced performers experience butterflies:

Well butterflies are nerves yeah ... If I don’t have them I try and make them!  
You cannot perform without them. I have now learnt that you cannot ride cross-country properly unless you go out with a heightened adrenalin level – it doesn’t work. The reason you use adrenalin is to sharpen your reaction times. When you are galloping down to a six-foot fence on half a ton of horse at about 40 kilometres an hour you had better have fast reactions boy!  
(Madeleine)

The key informants stated that no matter how experienced they were, they felt that this *feeling* would always stay with them. They also stated that experiencing butterflies or being nervous could be devastating to those who were inexperienced. Nevertheless, used positively these feelings could improve performances:

Butterflies, oh absolutely, I think I will probably always get nervous. I use to get very nervous and I would shake – my legs would shake or my whole body would shake. That was when I was performing in the early days; it would affect my voice, as my technique wasn't very good. These days all it does is that my hands shake but that's about all ... Opening night is always a buzz, nerves are always higher ... Rather than let the anxiety and the energy of the fear overtake my body now I use that energy in my voice and therefore can harness the energy. (Maria)

The more advanced participants knew that there was a physiological response to performing well. Both key informants mentioned the release of endorphins, suggesting that it acts like a drug making the high performer try to recapture the euphoria they felt from the effort.

### *The flow.*

Experiencing flow was an additional motivator for event riders and opera singers. Both leisure groups stated that they had feelings of enjoyment; they felt good, during and after their performance. Discussions ranged from not remembering what they did, to finishing their activity and feeling a sense of achievement – real joy. Both leisure groups also referred to this as being *in the zone*. Sally (age 19, EvFG), for example, felt a “great sense of euphoria” when competing. Being *in the flow* lessens mental activity, leading individuals to become immersed in what they are doing, allowing them to forget about other problems through intrinsic motivation. Steve encapsulated the experience of flow or being in the zone:

Oh yes you definitely experience it, being in the zone. If you do in rehearsals exactly what you do on stage, then on stage you come up a level and feel awesome. You feel the energy of the audience and that is really good. You're not necessarily reacting to them but you can feel them, all eyes are on you and they're watching your every move and if you've rehearsed it to death and you know exactly what you're doing, I will generally come off stage going WOO HOO! (Steve, age 23, OpFG)

A number of participants commented that at their level they needed to be focused, and as Lucy stated (Lucy, age 24, OpFG), “it’s too important not to remember what you are doing.” However, on thinking about their experiences, these performers did acknowledge that there were times when they could have had a flow experience, or found themselves in the zone, without realising it.

### *Approval motivation.*

Participants who had performed in front of an audience reported that they had experienced a response to the audience’s reaction to their performance. As individual behaviour responds to different needs, external stimuli can have an effect on a high performer. Participants experienced approval motivation at different stages of their leisure progression. Starting at the hobby level an individual sought constant peer approval, to a high performance level where the individual required positive audience or media attention.

Even individuals with high self-esteem needed approval motivation to help them during difficult situations. An incident that occurred to Madeleine after she fell at an international event enforces this need for approval motivation. Madeleine said that her self-esteem is usually very high and her positive attitude always gets her over difficult situations, yet this one time she could not pull herself out of feeling *down*, approval of an audience was the opportunity that helped her *get herself together*:

We were in a very old hotel and the owner of this gorgeous little place pulled out a newspaper and in her lapsed English, said “look” and there was a photo of me splattered all over the front page. And I went “err yes that’s me,” she said, “oh my god you guys won a medal,” and of course I had the medal on me. So I produced the medal and all the locals came and congratulated me, etcetera, and suddenly very, very dimly, it started to dawn on me that I hadn’t received the result I wanted personally and that was why I was so upset. But it took a complete stranger who wasn’t even at the event to make me see that I had still done something pretty amazing, even after the fall – getting a medal! (Madeleine)

Participants in both leisure activities acknowledged that spectators and audiences provided external support through approval motivation. Jenny said she felt the audience gave her *vibes* when she said:

I don't know what it is, I think it's just you get these positive vibes – you just want to do well or something. Obviously if you make a mistake – then you are like – shame! But it's cool to have someone who recognizes your achievement. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

The participants reported that leisure experiences differed regarding audience approval. Jack experienced a negative side when an audience member approached him after a performance:

A complete stranger, someone who I hardly knew, came up to me and gave me criticism and said, "I thought you did this and essentially I think you shouldn't have done that." I said "thank you for your opinion," very politely and all that, but essentially I thought, "stuff you." That's one person and who do they think they are? I know I don't have that problem. (Jack, age 29, OpFG)

The effect generated by audience members on participants either initiated or intensified their behaviour. For example, participants knew when they had performed well; an additional bonus was the increased happiness they experienced when an energetic and cheering crowd show their appreciation. Lucy described this as an experience she feels immediately after the closing song, what she termed the *nothing period*:

Yes. To me it's like that moment. I know this sounds "arty farty," but when someone has a newborn kid, and they are holding that kid and it's in that moment when you're just waiting for it to breathe. When you're given a new focus and there's just that nothing period, and then all of a sudden the audience will react. (Lucy, age 24, OpFG)

A positive audience provided social recognition and additional motivation to participants. Receiving audience approval became an additional extrinsic reward encouraging participants to continue in their leisure pursuit.

### ***Rewards.***

In the exploration of external and internal rewards, the concept of integration between rewards emerged. Madeleine illustrated this experience when she said she responded intrinsically to feelings of pride and accomplishment, after she received the extrinsic reward of wearing the Australian flag and had audience applause:

Here I was riding for Australia, and I rode into the arena and I felt that I should have been really, really nervous with so many people watching from another country and I wasn't. The reason I wasn't nervous was because I looked down on my left I saw the emblem for the Olympics and for WEG and I thought that is what I am going to do. As I entered the arena at the World [competition], I just remembered thinking – I've done it – I'm riding with the Australian Flag on my left pocket and I am going to ride into the arena to start competing. I went into the arena, people were clapping, and I thought this is what I am going to do and I did it. I don't know if that makes sense but it's what I can remember feeling. (Madeleine)

An example of rewards having an intrinsic effect was the long training and rehearsal hours experienced by participants. Training was a task that both leisure groups endured, yet all the participants stated that when they achieved their training, or rehearsal goals, it felt very rewarding. Jack (age 29, OpFG) summed this up by saying, "If the rehearsal has come to a climax of really finding the moment, and really getting the text and music together, I find there's a real power and charge in that definitely." Participants acknowledged that receiving external rewards also increased their motivational drive and confidence.



When things aren't going how you want them to go, that's when it becomes a bit of a chore, but then you just think it will get better...a young horse does something good and that makes you feel better. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

High performers developed their own successful strategies by utilising motivational techniques and methods. However, participants acknowledged that they developed their own strategies by watching other high performers, during training and talking to peers. They stated that success does not depend on one technique or another, but a combination of what works best for each individual.

### **Elite**

To provide an understanding of participant backgrounds and their own perceptions of *elitism*, its association to the leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing, social class perceptions and the effects this had on the participants in relation to opportunities and constraints, required exploration. It was also necessary to view the participants lived experiences from an individual social viewpoint. While discussing elitism in event riding and opera singing five areas became apparent: class, elite in Australia, learnt perceptions, perceptions of society, income and the changing industry.

### **Class.**

Participants were given the opportunity to define social class themselves and they defined it as either socio-economic (i.e. how much wealth a person had), or societal (how society perceives an individual, through birthright, image or occupation). Participants discussed their backgrounds and the social class (upper, middle or working) to which they thought they belonged. Both key informants felt they belonged to the *middle class*. Madeleine said she had a mixed background. She identified her father, brother and herself, all farmers, as engaged in a *working class* occupation, whereas her mother, a teacher, she identified as *middle class*. Although Madeleine did not personally believe in a class system, she classified herself as middle class with an upper class approach to life. She said:

I suppose I have never thought of myself as working class, there is too much of a snob in me for that! And um, I don't know I definitely don't consider myself as upper-class 'cause we don't have that much money. Well I always thought I had the most charmed life in the world. So I must have been decidedly upper-class as my life was charmed. But then I think my parents were very good at creating that illusion because I now know that there were times when my mum and dad didn't know how the hell to put anything else on the table except a sheep! 'Cause they could shoot one of those in the paddock and eat it! But I never lacked for anything, so therefore I must have been brought up in the poorest of upper-class houses. Ha ha! (Madeleine)

Maria identified her background as middle class due to both her parents being in education, said she was happy where she was:

What class do I belong in now? Just above the line of poverty ha ha ha! No, I think although I don't have that much money, I would still be in the same class as always middle-class. I'm happy with the class I'm in now. (Maria)

Historically horse riding and opera singing for pleasure were only available to the privileged social elite, those who had the time to undertake leisurely pursuits. Tom, the father of the key opera informant, said he felt that society in general had negative perceptions about members of the aristocracy, which in turn gave negative perceptions of any pursuits seen to be enjoyed by them – such as event riding and opera singing. He said:

Australia was founded predominantly as a working class settlement with an endemic suspicion of those coming from the old country. The aristocracy, and the culture that went with the aristocracy, as was always seen as elitist a nasty term, and I think that type of attitude still survives. (Tom, OpF)

Participants commented that individuals who had successful businesses, were usually professional, and/or made a lot of money were commonly associated with the elite. As James, the father of the key eventing informant pointed out:

It used to be by birth, then it became by profession or business, one or the other. Now to a certain degree, and I think for the worst, it's sports stars and film stars and rock stars. I disapprove of that quite frankly but I'm very old fashioned. (James, EvF)

Sally (age 21, EvFG) spoke of “people’s perceptions of riding as a sport being done by people of privilege.” John (age 31, EvFG) endorsed this sentiment as he felt that event riding was often associated with royalty, “most of the English Royal Family rode and several had ridden at an Olympic level.”

In this study, participants decided that building networks was more important within a leisure activity irrespective of the social class to which an individual ascribed. However, they agreed that social groupings did occur within the leisure activity, dependent on individual performance level. For example, high-level performers tended to socialise with other high-level performers. They also pointed out that this had nothing to do with elitism but social needs as they had something in common. Due to the diversity of occupations, changing roles of society and individual perceptions, event riders and opera singers agreed that the term elite in Australia was a conundrum.

### **Elite in Australia.**

Class distinction was not as clear as in other countries, such as England or Germany, and although some participants suggested that Australia was a class-less society, event riders and opera singers agreed that there were distinctions within groups in society. Participants also felt that in Australia, event riding and opera singing were seen to be less elite and any constraints arising from class perceptions (i.e. if you were an event rider or opera singer you had money) could be overcome, compared to other countries, such as America, England and Europe.

Madeleine commented on society and the elite class culture in England. She had personally experienced class differentiation when she went to a social engagement with one of Australia’s leading event riders stationed in England:

He was riding for a lot of people who gave him good horses so he would be invited to exclusive parties. I remember he would introduce me to them and they'd go, "Oh hello" [said in an upper-class English accent] and turn away uninterested, to continue to speak with him. Within 30 seconds he would manage to change their interest in me when he told them I was winning the Australian Leader board for 'Eventing', and my family had 10,000 acres in Australia. Once they heard that, their whole attitude changed in 30 seconds, from treating me like, um, the stable hand, to treating me as a, "Oh we actually have a glass of wine; would you care to join us?" But I just thought, "oh you bastards." But yes, that is the other side of elitist. And so I think in Europe it does have a very definite elitist image. (Madeleine)

When Madeleine was in an event, this prevailing English cultural attitude towards individuals changed, and class differentiation did not stand out. She stated that, "if you go to large events you ride along [side] royalty at the same event, so I think that the wonderful thing about equestrianism is that you can cross boundaries – so long as you are all on horses!"

Tom, the opera key informant's father, supported Madeleine's comments. In opera, as Tom suggested, Australia is, in some respects, a class-conscious society:

Australians' pride themselves on being a classless society, which is a load of rubbish. Relative to England I think there is a certain truth in it. There is a greater degree of commonality; I expect a greater degree of levelling down to acceptances, mediocrity for want of a better term. I think the class environment in England can be seen and it is more embedded in social cultural structures than it has been in Australia. (Tom, OpF)

Elizabeth (EvM) did not feel that event riding itself was elite in Australia, as anyone could do it – even struggling farmers. She emphasised this when she said, "it's got plebs [slang for plebeian or common people] like us doing it; and pony club is open to a wide economic range of people in Australia." She felt perceptions were wrong in Australia about elite leisure

activities, often speaking about the high costs, and lack of opportunities an individual active in eventing had to overcome in countries such as Hong Kong, England or Singapore.

Elizabeth also added that the expense to get to a high performance level in England, compared to costs and opportunities in Australia, were extremely different, “although some people think they are the same.” She gave some of the current Olympic Selection Team horses as examples, “of the horses in the current [Australian] Olympic Selection Squad; there is one that was literally taken off a meat wagon, and another one that only cost a couple of hundred dollars.”

Madeleine also agreed that event riding was not elitist in Australia. Yet both key informants and their parents felt that if you were not active in, or you did not understand the activity itself, the general perception was of elitism. Participants acknowledged that Australian society generally perceived event riders and opera singers as having money or being “well connected” socially.

### *Perceptions of society.*

In this study, social backgrounds did not appear to affect or constrain participants in any way. Notwithstanding, the degree of impact these societal perceptions had on individuals could constrain a participant’s goal. Two specific issues that directly affect society arose when discussing perceptions – learnt behaviour and media insight.

### *Learnt behaviour.*

Participating parents in this study viewed elite perceptions of leisure activities in Australia as an educational issue, and a parental responsibility. They observed that in Australia, because many activities are not available through the school system, it was a responsibility of parents to give their children a range of experiences, and change perceptions of their children. According to Sue, the opera mother, and schoolteacher:

It is a choice for parents to support their child in certain pursuits because they are not available in schools. So it is not the education system that is doing it, it is the parents who are required to pay [for extra curriculum activities]. It's a parent's decision. It can be seen as elitist as not everyone is prepared to do it. I would argue though, that more people could do it, because it's not something that is prohibited in our society. If they did, perceptions would change. (Sue, OpM)

The parents felt that the education systems in European countries do make a difference to children's perceptions of leisure activities; they give a more rounded view, and a less elitist attitude. This was noticeable in opera as Sue, a music teacher in Australia, said:

Well, in Europe, I would say that the term elitist may not apply so much, because opera is much more wide-spread. And music, music tuition, is more part of the culture, so children in Hungary, for example, do singing in school, listen to opera or play a musical instrument, and so it is more acceptable to the population. Therefore, more money is given by the government to provide for it. It isn't a concept for the individual to choose. (Sue, OpM)

Education was closely linked to another perception that hinders participation, the perception that if an individual enjoys a certain sport or art activity they have to be intelligent – they had to have the intellectual capacity to succeed. As Elizabeth (EvM) said, “a lot of people won't do it because it's an ‘intellectual thing’ to do, to go to an art gallery for example...it's the intellect rather than the education, and that's coming from someone who should be supporting education!”

James (EvF), who had farmed all his life and had no educational qualifications, agreed that there was a perception that you “had to be an intellect to enjoy the good things in life.” However, he pointed out that, although he did not have a high-level of schooling, being intelligent had nothing to do with what an individual liked:

Oh, I don't think it's intelligent people; I mean people who are not very bright can still enjoy good music. I mean, for goodness sake, if you can't enjoy something like Mozart or Haydn or those sort of things, you don't have to be intelligent to enjoy that. Up-bringing to a certain extent definitely...Most people think it's better to actually go to the football and go to the pub; and I don't like going to pubs at all. My father was working class, my mother liked music... those sort of things all had a factor in where I am or what I am... I love going to museums; I like music; I love opera. I don't know much about them, but it is what I like; and unfortunately those are the things that people consider as being a bit posh. (James, EvF)

Tom (OpF) agreed, “some people believe that you need to be sophisticated to enjoy some activities, and that the average ‘yob’ [an uncouth person] would not be able to cope.” However, he said to change this perception in Australia, “emphasis on learning systems of teaching appreciation [about sport and art] was required.”

Discussions about intellect and perceptions of event riding and opera singing continually returned to education. Intellect was seen as an important factor for an individual to possess, to appreciate the activity they were watching; but having a high IQ was not. Whether the education occurred at school, at home, or both, participants decided that a child's environmental upbringing could facilitate, or hinder, their perceptions of leisure.

#### *Media insight.*

The participants also made a point of explaining that perceptions about event riding and opera singing, such as having to be rich to ride or be high class to go to the opera, are incorrect, and needed to change. However, they believed that these perceptions would not change if the government, industry, and media perceptions did not assist with that change. As Susan said:

Television and magazines are promoting the Royals in that way – riding I mean. Whereas football is seen as a working class sport, because it's the

mums and kids eating pies and scarves around their necks – and it’s on TV all the time. Equestrian is seldom seen except for the Melbourne Cup or if a movie star rides. (Susan, age 21, F, EvFG)

James (age 36, OpFG) and Bob (age 35, OpFG) said Australians had a culturally male dominated, working class view of leisure, when they commented that Australians were a “football, racing and beer society.”

The study participants from eventing and opera showed frustration when discussing perceptions of other sport and art activities – specifically relating to the elitist tag. They all stated that some leisure activities were equally, if not more, expensive to participate in compared to event riding and opera singing. As Sally stated:

I think basically the public always see [horse] racing, they know about it, it’s always on TV. Like Melbourne Cup day, winners get more than a million dollars if they win. They hear about the huge prices these horses get sold for and they must think there’s a lot of money in it. And it still gets more government support [than eventing]! But there isn’t a lot of money in eventing. (Sally, age 19, EvFG)

Participants mentioned musical theatre and circus performances as being perceived by society as non-elite, but were similar to opera performances. They suggested that the cost of purchasing a ticket for a musical theatre show, or similar event, was equal to, or in some instances more, than a ticket to the opera.

### **Income.**

Participants from both groups made the point that horse riding and opera singing are no longer restricted to the upper classes. The costs of expensive goods and services, attributed to eventing and opera activities, thought to be problematic to participation, varied between individuals. For example, another party owns Madeleine’s top horse – proof that it is possible to continue riding at a high performance level without being a horse owner. Maria was also



an example of a high performer who had found a way to develop her love of singing opera – she initially sang in a youth choir that covered all costs.

Having money was not an issue to commencing or continuing either of the leisure activities and the majority of participants did not see making money as an end goal. Madeleine, who sometimes struggled to find funding, confirmed this. She spoke of an opportunity to make money when she was approached after successfully competing at a top international event to sell her horse for a six-figure sum; Madeleine and the owners of the horse declined the sale. Her motivation was to ride at the Olympics and the horse owners wanted to see one of their homebred horses reach an Olympic standing. “I didn’t want to make millions – although that would be nice!” Madeleine stated, “like riders, there are only a few horses that can make it that high, and he is one of them.”

Although making money from their leisure activity, especially those wanting to make a career from it, was encouraged - getting rich was not the end goal. As Maria stated:

I want to make money from it, but I don’t have aspirations of becoming rich and rubbing shoulders with the aristocracy. That’s not the focus of my life. I am not working to give up my social life I have, I’m doing it because I enjoy doing it and it’s what I love. (Maria)

Both key informants mentioned the lack of money, and freely laughed about their situations. To them, and other participants, money was not everything, but money was necessary to support themselves and reach their high performance goals.

When discussing the financial costs of the two leisure activities, participants varied in their responses dependent on their current financial status. Commodities played an important role in event riding and opera singing, as the participants must have specific equipment. The cost variation was evident in relation to event riders, during the discussion about horses and equestrian equipment. The focus group discussions developed into who could afford what brand, and best brands. John explained that there were two sides to costs when entering eventing:

That side where you can go out and buy a really expensive horse and then get some really expensive gear and all that sort of stuff, but there is also the cheaper horse off the track and you get your cheaper saddle and you go eventing. Anyone can get into this sport. (John, age 31, EvFG)

Both event riders and opera singers agreed that although it was preferable to have the money to purchase top class products, top equipment did not necessarily make a champion or hinder a person from getting into, and continuing with, the activity.

### **The changing industry.**

Participants thought that changing the public's perceptions of event riding and opera singing would make it easier for high-level performers to seek funding or sponsorship. Funding was also difficult to obtain from within the industry due to in-house perceptions. In eventing, the confusion and perception of the term elite occurred as high as the Olympic level, as Elizabeth explained:

I've even heard that the ruling bodies of equestrian are concerned that the Olympic International Committee considered that equestrian sport is an elite sport; meaning that it's only available to affluent countries and more affluent people. Therefore, the Olympic International Committee has some reservations about equestrianism as an Olympic sport. Which to me as an equestrian seems a little strange when you consider that yachting is still an Olympic sport; and I'm sure that's just as elitist as equestrian, and really the whole Olympic Games is elitist – they're looking for elite sportsmen aren't they? (Elizabeth, EvM)

Industry decisions, such as, grant funding or team selection are developed and made through boards, committees and other influential contacts. Part of the reasons, according to the participants, that both leisure industries were having internal and external perception issues, were due to perceptions of the decision-makers themselves within the organisations. For

example, participants had met officials or board members who only socialised with high performers or individuals with a high social standing.

Both riders and singers recognised that when people attend or see an event first hand, they usually enjoy what they see, as their knowledge and understanding about the activity increases. At a recent operatic performance that had a number of *non-opera goers* in attendance, Maria observed that the majority tended to like what they saw:

A lot of people who have little performance experience come and it is their first opera ever. They have been completely amazed that it is nothing like they thought it was. I guess they thought they would not enjoy it as much as they did, they wouldn't understand it as much as they did; they wouldn't be able to follow the plot or the story. You know the usual perception that opera has with people who don't know. Anyway these people found that it was understandable, affordable and an enjoyable experience. (Maria)

A solution suggested by both focus groups, for industry to increase their reputations, correct perceptions, and increase understanding of event riding and opera singing was through media interaction. Study participants felt that visual media was the best way to alter negative bias perceptions. As Melanie (age 17, EvFG) said, “if people saw the real sport the way we do it, they would understand it more.” James (age 36, OpFG) suggested “good marketing”, while Sally (age 19, EvFG) and Melanie (age 17, EvFG) said, “more local or state events should be televised.” Jenny (age 25, EvFG) agreed that what was on TV or in the papers gave the wrong impression about eventing as a sport – giving the perception of unavailability. She said:

I think basically because the royals ride, and there's that connection, and no-one else gets a mention, for example Joe Blow farmer going out and doing well. The one I saw they had interviews with the rider, they explained things after they did something and they actually looked like normal people. When it is occasionally on TV you only see the glorified things, you don't see normal people getting out there and doing it. (Jenny, age 25, EvFG)

The elite perception of eventing and opera is emphasised by the social pages in main stream newspapers and magazines, according to participants. As Melanie (age 17, EvFG) pointed out, “if a rider is well known or there is a celebrity in the audience the photographers love it.” Lucy (age 24, OpFG) agreed with the event rider and said, “opera receives very little media attention really, unless a prominent person is involved or someone is wearing Versace.”

During discussions, participants named sport and art activities, such as, soccer, Australian Football, horseracing, musical theatre, circuses, as well as individual athletes and artists who had increased their popularity, and income, using media technology. Attracting positive media attention to the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing, they suggested, would increase the public’s knowledge about the activities and in turn develop industry growth.

#### **Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews with key informants, parents, coaches and focus groups, exploring strong similarities between event rider and opera singer views on constraints and opportunities. On examination of findings, intrapersonal issues such as talent, mental attitudes, behaviours, determination and self-confidence were the major qualities that allowed an event rider or opera singer to reach a high-level of performance. It was necessary for participants to receive encouragement and support during their early leisure years, and to help them negotiate constraints to achieve their goals. Both the key informants and focus group participants recognised the importance of interpersonal influences, specifically from their family, parents, siblings and coaches. They also recognised the positive attributes of additional interpersonal relationships such as agents and audience members.

Over time external supportive roles changed from needing parental support, both emotionally and financially, to needing coaching support to develop skills and performance advancement. Parents focused on their child’s happiness, providing support when needed, and this parental support continued throughout childhood and adulthood. Coaches focused on the individual’s skill enhancement, with coach changes occurring through childhood and adulthood to suit the

ability of the individual or due to unforeseen circumstances, such as the political issues that caused Madeleine to part from her coach.

Although respondents acknowledged that the majority of riders in past World Cup and Olympic teams were males, respondents did not recognise gender as a constraint to high performance in either activity. Outcomes in this study found both event riding and opera singing as being “gender neutral”. However, discussions specifically focusing on gender within these two leisure pursuits especially at the high team levels will be recommended for possible future research.

Participants reflected similar outcomes when they spoke about structural constraints within their activities, with industry, politics, equality, self-image, isolation, travel, time, money and injury recognised as the most significant constraints within their environment. Both leisure groups agreed that injury was the only structural constraint that could stop them from continuing in their leisure activity.

Two specific areas emerged in the exploration of high performance strategies: Strategies for creating a career and strategies for development. Strategies for creating a career included the understanding of the terms amateur and professional. This progressed into a blurring of the work-leisure relationship and career availability in the fields of event riding and opera singing. Strategies for development incorporated motivational techniques – both intrinsic and extrinsic – and included visualisation, meditation, positive thinking, butterflies, flow and rewards.

The chapter’s final section related to elitism and participant perceptions of the term elite within the Australian society. According to participants, perceptions held of class, society and income related to media exposure and industry marketing. Societal and industry perceptions of elitism were viewed as supplementary constraints or opportunities to progress in the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing.

Overall, this chapter showed that opportunities and constraints, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural, influenced participants. Conditioning in their early years allowed participants

in this study to view constraints in a positive way. They made choices to change constraints into opportunities and improve their performance level, controlling their leisure pathway. Constraints were not constant but changed according to an individual's determination, circumstances or social environment. By successfully overcoming or negotiating the constraints, participants said they would continue to perform well to achieve individual goals.

The responses from this qualitative phase of the study were utilised to develop an extensive survey. This survey was distributed nationally to participants in both event riding and opera singing and is described in the following quantitative phase.

## Chapter 5

*The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.*

*Dolly Parton, American singer and songwriter, (1946 - )*

### Quantitative Survey Results

This chapter presents results from completed questionnaires from the second phase of this study – the quantitative phase. A leisure history and personal demographic profiles of the survey respondents are described. Survey responses and outcomes directly related to the research questions are analysed within this chapter. The survey questions in this chapter are not in numerical order; instead questions and responses are grouped under sub-headings, which allowed for initial responses to be checked for *each group*, ensuring specific areas of focus, such as constraints and opportunities, are fully covered. The number of usable responses totalled 77 *per group* (event riders 77 and opera singers 77). Responses from the event riders are discussed first in each section followed by responses from the opera singers. The results are supported by tables and graphs where appropriate.

### **Profiles of respondents – life/personal history and demographics.**

#### *Age and gender of respondents.*

Section 1 (i.e. Questions 1 to 11) and 9 (i.e. Questions 30 to 36) asked questions relating to the respondent's leisure history and demographics. It should be noted that Question 9, *are any of your family members involved in eventing/singing?* did not specify a type of singing, and the level or type of family member involvement was not included within the survey question.

Respondents varied in age and gender. Event riders ranged from 18 to 65 (47 year range), with the majority (31.2%) aged 18-20 years. Most event riders were aged under 26 (49.4%) (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1  
*Event rider age range*

Age Range	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-20	24	31.2	31.2
21-25	14	18.2	49.4
26-30	12	15.6	64.9
31-35	11	14.3	79.2
Valid 36-40	8	10.4	89.6
41-45	3	3.9	93.5
46-50	3	3.9	97.4
51-65	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

There were substantially more responses from females (88.3%) than males (11.7%) in this group (see Table 5.2). There is a greater participation of women in the sport nationally, as national statistics report 0.4% of males and 1.2% of females participate in horse riding in Australia (ABS, 2007).

Table 5.2  
*Event rider gender*

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	9	11.7	11.7
Valid Female	68	88.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Opera singers presented a smaller age range 18 to 50 years (32-year range) with the majority of respondents (33.8%) aged 26-30 years (Table 5.3). The average age of opera singer respondents was higher, with the majority aged 26-30 years (33.8%). Within this group only 20.8% were in the lower age group of 18-25 years (Table 5.3).

The majority of opera singers (53.3%) who responded were aged 21 to 30. This older age range for opera singers could be attributed to the need for vocal cord maturity in performing opera singers.



Table 5.3  
*Opera singer age range*

Age Range	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-20	1	1.3	1.3
21-25	15	19.5	20.8
26-30	26	33.8	54.5
31-35	14	18.2	72.7
36-40	12	15.6	88.3
41-45	7	9.1	97.4
46-50	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

More female opera singers (77.9%) are represented than their male counterparts (22.1%) (Table 5.4). National statistics report that females (24.1%), undertaking paid or unpaid activities, were more likely to participate in performing arts in Australia than their male counterparts (19.2%) (ABS, 2008a).

Table 5.4  
*Opera singer gender*

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	17	22.1	22.1
Valid Female	60	77.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

It was acknowledged that the responses to questions exploring issues such as education, income and marital status could be affected due to the significant differences in the gender and age of event rider and opera singer respondents.

#### ***Demographics of the event riders.***

The event riders tended to commence horse riding at an early age, between 4 and 9 years, 60% of event rider respondents (Table 5.5).

Over 72% of event riders commenced riding under the age of 10 years, and 40% of those were 5 years or younger (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5  
*At what age did you start to ride horses?*

	Age	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	2.00	3	3.9	3.9
	3.00	7	9.1	13.0
	4.00	10	13.0	26.0
Valid	4.50	1	1.3	27.3
	5.00	10	13.0	40.3
	6.00	8	10.4	50.6
	7.00	6	7.8	58.4
	8.00	3	3.9	62.3
	9.00	8	10.4	72.7
	10.00	2	2.6	75.3
	11.00	4	5.2	80.5
	12.00	1	1.3	81.8
	13.00	3	3.9	85.7
	15.00	2	2.6	88.3
	17.00	2	2.6	90.9
	18.00	1	1.3	92.2
	19.00	1	1.3	93.5
	20.00	1	1.3	94.8
	21.00	2	2.6	97.4
	22.00	2	2.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Over 20% were actively competing in events at the young age of 12, with 62.3% riding competitively by the age of 13 (Table 5.6).

The majority of interest in event riding stemmed from mothers (31.2%), while 26% of respondents stated that the excitement of the activity itself attracted them (Table 5.7).

Table 5.6

*At what age did you start to compete in the sport of Eventing?*

	Age	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	8.00	4	5.2	5.2
	9.00	3	3.9	9.1
	10.00	4	5.2	14.3
	11.00	9	11.7	26.0
	12.00	16	20.8	46.8
	13.00	12	15.6	62.3
	14.00	1	1.3	63.6
	15.00	5	6.5	70.1
	16.00	2	2.6	72.7
	17.00	3	3.9	76.6
Valid	20.00	1	1.3	77.9
	21.00	5	6.5	84.4
	22.00	2	2.6	87.0
	23.00	1	1.3	88.3
	24.00	2	2.6	90.9
	28.00	1	1.3	92.2
	30.00	1	1.3	93.5
	31.00	1	1.3	94.8
	32.00	2	2.6	97.4
	35.00	2	2.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.7

*Why did you start eventing?*

	Influence	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Mother	24	31.2	31.2
	Sibling	2	2.6	33.8
	Pony Club	8	10.4	44.2
Valid	Friend	7	9.1	53.2
	Excitement	20	26.0	79.2
	Instructors/horses	11	14.3	93.5
	Work	5	6.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

When asked if any members of their family were currently event riders, the event rider respondents reported that 40.3% had brothers and sisters who enjoyed the sport of eventing. Only 15.6% of mothers, the initial influencers, were currently involved in event riding at the time of the survey and 2.6% of fathers and 15.6% of partners (husbands/wives or de-facto

relationships) were interested in horse riding but were not specifically event riders (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8  
*Are any of your family members involved in eventing?*

	Family Member	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Spouse/partner	12	15.6	15.6
	Children	9	11.7	27.3
	Mother	12	15.6	42.9
	Friend	11	14.3	57.1
	Siblings	31	40.3	97.4
	Father	2	2.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

The event rider respondents were chosen from the Federation Equestrian Internationale (FEI) database and registered to compete at official internationally recognised events. However, only 5.2% classed themselves as professionals, and over half (68.8%) classed themselves as a hobbyist or at an amateur level (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9  
*How would you classify yourself as an Eventer?*

	Classification	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hobbyist/Amateur	53	68.8	68.8
	Semi-professional	20	26.0	94.8
	Professional	4	5.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

When respondents were asked *would you like eventing to become your full time profession* 68.8% said, “no” (Question 8). Event riders were not required to have a professional standing to compete at an international level in eventing.

The highest level of eventing competition is the Olympic qualifying four-star level, the CIC\*\*\*\* (see Chapter 1 for definition). Only 11.7% of respondents rode at this level; all other respondents (88.3%) rode at three star or under (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10  
*Your level at the moment is?*

	Level	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	CIC****	9	11.7	11.7
	CIC***	4	5.2	16.9
	CIC**	7	9.1	26.0
	CIC*	21	27.3	53.2
Valid	Pre-Novice	19	24.7	77.9
	Preliminary	12	15.6	93.5
	Other level	5	6.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

*Note : CIC = Concours Internationale Complet*

Table 5.11  
*Your aim for the future is?*

	Aim for the Future	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Compete at a World Cup or Olympics	22	28.6	28.6
	National level	21	27.3	55.8
Valid	Compete at a State level	17	22.1	77.9
	Content with current level	17	22.1	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

When asked what future aims they had in event riding, 28.6% wanted to ride at the highest possible level, that of World Cup or Olympic. Over 27% stated they wanted to reach a national level, 22.1% a state level and 22.1% were happy with their current level (Table 5.11). Over half of event riders (51.9%) lived in a rural or semi-rural area (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12  
*What type of area do you live in?*

	Area	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Rural/Semi-Rural	40	51.9	51.9
Valid	Suburbs	25	32.5	84.4
	Inner City	12	15.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

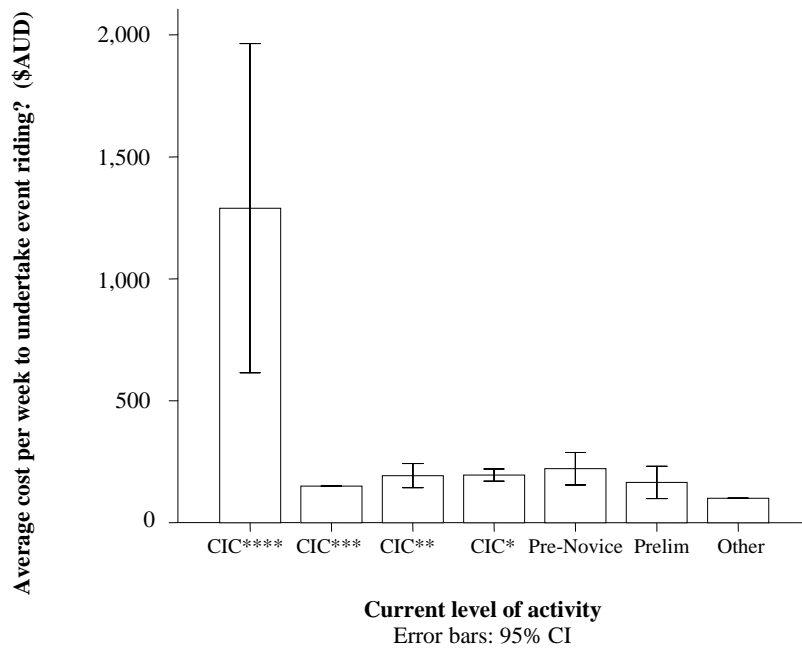


Figure 5.1 Riding level vs. cost of activity per week

Over 62% of event riders owned one or two horses with the majority owning two horses (37.7%) (Table 5.13). Those respondents who classed themselves as *professionals* (5.2%) or *semi-professional* (26%) in event riding (Table 5.9) had more than one horse in work.

Table 5.13  
How many horses do you own?

No. Horses	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	19	24.7	24.7
2	29	37.6	62.3
3	10	13.0	75.3
4	7	9.1	84.4
5	3	3.9	88.3
6	4	5.2	93.5
8	1	1.3	94.8
10	1	1.3	96.1
12	3	3.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Event riders responded that they spent on average \$100 per week per horse owned; with a wide (\$100 - \$2,500) variance between respondents (Figure 5.1). This variance relates to the number of horses kept, with respondents owning from one horse (24.7%) up to 12 horses (3.9%) (Table 5.13).

Table 5.14  
*Event rider level vs. cost of activity per week*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9467802.924	5	1893560.585	18.627	.000
Within Groups	6709308.187	66	101656.185		
Total	16177111.111	71			

Using the ANOVA (analysis of variance) statistical test, 11.7% of event riders at the Olympic qualifying level of C\*\*\*\* (4 star) had substantially greater leisure activity costs per week with a 95% confidence interval (Table 5.14).

All other levels statistically spent similar amounts on their activity per week. The majority of event riders (80.5%) reported that eventing was not their *primary source of income*, with 80% receiving alternative income (Question 7).

Table 5.15  
*Event rider income*

	Income	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	\$10,000 or less	19	24.7	24.7
	\$11,000 - 20,000	13	16.9	41.6
	\$21,000-30,000	10	13.0	54.6
Valid	\$31,000-40,000	11	14.3	68.9
	\$41,000-50,000	14	18.2	87.1
	\$51,000-60,000	4	5.2	92.3
	\$61,000-70,000	2	2.6	94.9
	\$71,000-80,000	2	2.6	97.5
	Over \$101,000	1	1.3	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

There was a wide variance in income of event riders, with 24.7% of respondents receiving an income of \$10,000 or less. Only 11.7% of respondents received over \$51,000 per annum including 1.3% over \$101,000. No respondents in this survey had income in the \$81,000-100,000 range. This income distribution could be related to the age of event rider respondents, as 49.4% were aged 18-25 years (Table 5.1).

Costs of undertaking the activity of event riding were \$100-\$2,500 per week. A greater number of event riders (68.8%) spent \$100-\$200 per week on their sport (Table 5.16). This correlates with the majority of event riders (62.3%) who own one or two horses (Table 5.13).

Table 5.16

*How much on average does it cost you per week to undertake this sport?*

\$ on Activity	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
100	16	<b>20.8</b>	20.8
120	7	9.1	29.9
150	13	16.9	46.8
200	17	<b>22.1</b>	68.8
Valid 250	10	13.0	81.8
300	5	6.5	88.3
450	1	1.3	89.6
500	1	1.3	90.9
600	1	1.3	92.2
1,500	3	3.9	96.1
2,000	2	2.6	98.7
2,500	1	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

It was noticeable that the more horses an individual owned (Table 5.13), or the higher their performance level (Table 5.10), the higher their weekly leisure costs were (Table 5.16).



Table 5.17  
*At what age did you start singing?*

	Age	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	3.00	1	1.3	1.3
	4.00	2	2.6	3.9
	5.00	1	1.3	5.2
	6.00	2	2.6	7.8
	7.00	6	7.8	15.6
	8.00	3	3.9	19.5
	9.00	3	3.9	23.4
	10.00	6	7.8	31.2
	11.00	4	5.2	36.4
Valid	12.00	4	5.2	41.6
	13.00	3	3.9	45.5
	14.00	4	5.2	50.6
	16.00	10	13.0	63.6
	17.00	8	10.4	74.0
	18.00	7	9.1	83.1
	22.00	2	2.6	85.7
	23.00	1	1.3	87.0
	28.00	4	5.2	92.2
	30.00	6	7.8	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

***Demographics of the opera singers.***

The majority of opera singer respondents (74.0%) were singing by the age of 17 (Table 5.17) with 23.4% commencing between 16 and 17 years (Table 5.18).

Opera singers commenced their performance life aged 15-38 years. The respondents indicated that they commenced their performance life at either 18 (16.9%) or 31 years (10.4%). These two ages could be aligned to university music conservatorium leavers who would be aged around 18 years and professional employment due to experience at 21 years (Table 5.18).

Table 5.18

*What age did you start performing opera?*

	Age	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	15.00	4	5.2	5.2
	16.00	1	1.3	6.5
	17.00	3	3.9	10.4
	18.00	13	16.9	27.3
	19.00	2	2.6	29.9
	20.00	2	2.6	32.5
	21.00	6	7.8	40.3
	22.00	5	6.5	46.8
	23.00	5	6.5	53.2
Valid	24.00	7	9.1	62.3
	25.00	1	1.3	63.6
	26.00	3	3.9	67.5
	27.00	5	6.5	74.0
	30.00	1	1.3	75.3
	31.00	8	10.4	85.7
	32.00	1	1.3	87.0
	33.00	2	2.6	89.6
	35.00	1	1.3	90.9
	37.00	1	1.3	92.2
	38.00	6	7.8	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Opera singers reported that an interest in singing (31.2%) was the main reason for becoming involved in opera. However, 28.6% were encouraged by friends to enter this pursuit and over 33% were influenced by family members (Table 5.19)..

Table 5.19

*Why did you start singing opera?*

	Influence	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Mother	17	22.1	22.1
	Father	1	1.3	23.4
	Sibling	8	10.4	33.8
Valid	Interest in singing	24	31.2	64.9
	Friend	22	28.6	93.5
	Work	5	6.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Mothers had the most influence (22.1%), with siblings also reported as encouragers (10.4%), but fathers rated as having less of an influence on respondents during their early years (Table 5.19).

A small number of spouse/de-facto partners (9.1%) were involved with singing, but of the 26% of respondents with dependents, only 1.3% of these had children actively involved with some type of singing (Table 5.20).

Table 5.20

*Is any of your family involved in opera or singing?*

	Family	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Spouse/partner	7	9.1	9.1
	Children	1	1.3	10.4
	Father	15	19.5	29.9
Valid	Mother	21	27.3	57.1
	None	24	31.2	88.3
	Other	9	11.7	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.21

*How would you classify yourself as an opera singer?*

	Classification	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Hobbist/Amateur	24	31.2	31.2
Valid	Semi-professional	13	16.9	48.1
	Professional	40	51.9	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Over 42% of the singers reported that opera singing was their *primary source of income* (Question 7). They also described the level of their leisure performance as *professional* (51.9%), *semi-professional* (51.9%), and *hobbyist* or *amateur* level (31.2%) (Table 5.21).

Respondents who classified themselves at a professional status also corresponded with the 51.9% of respondents who stated that their level was advanced (Table 5.22).

Table 5.22  
*Your level at the moment is?*

Level	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Novice	24	31.2	31.2
Intermediate	11	14.3	45.5
Valid Advanced	40	51.9	97.4
Other level	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

When asked what future aims they had in opera singing, 35.1% wanted to sing with an international company. More than 15% stated they wanted to sing with a national opera company, 7.8% a state opera company and 41.6% were happy with their current level (Table 5.23).

Table 5.23  
*Your aim for the future is?*

Aim	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sing with an international company	27	35.1	35.1
Sing with a national company	12	15.6	50.6
Valid Sing with a state company	6	7.8	58.4
Content with current level	32	41.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Over 70% of opera respondents agreed that they would like to make opera singing their full-time profession (Question 8).

An opera singer's leisure activity costs on average \$50 per week (41.6%) with a variance between respondents of \$0-\$150 (see Figure 5.2). There was a wide income variance amongst the opera singer respondents, although a substantial number, 44.2%, were employed at the time of participating in the survey.

Opera singer incomes could be as high as \$101,000, but 5.2% received less than \$10,000, and 67.6% earned less than \$50,000 per annum. Of 77 opera singer respondents, 29.8% received an income of over \$51,000, and 2.6% received over \$101,000 (Table 5.24).

Table 5.24  
 What is your average income?

Income	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
\$10,000 or less	4	5.2	5.2
\$11,000 - 20,000	9	11.7	16.9
\$21,000-30,000	15	19.5	36.4
\$31,000-40,000	8	10.4	46.8
Valid \$41,000-50,000	16	20.8	67.6
\$51,000-60,000	9	11.7	79.3
\$61,000-70,000	11	14.3	93.6
\$71,000-80,000	1	1.3	94.9
\$81,000-90,000	1	1.3	96.2
\$91,000-100,000	1	1.2	97.4
Over \$101,000	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

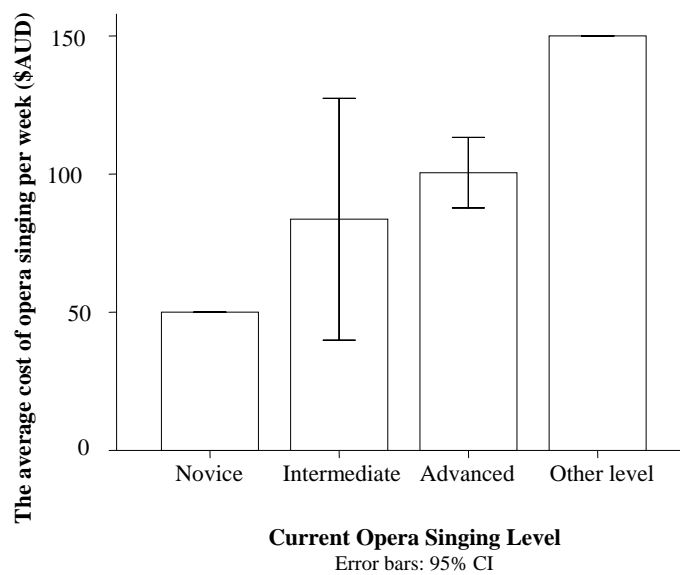


Figure 5.2 Opera level vs. cost of activity per week

Using a multiple variable test, ANOVA (analysis of variance) it was found that the *amateur* opera singers spend substantially less money on their activity than *professional* opera singers. No significant relationship was found between the cost per week and income of opera singers (Table 5.25).

Table 5.25  
*Opera singer level vs. cost of activity per week*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47337.273	3	15779.091	10.986	.000
Within Groups	104844.545	73	1436.227		
Total	152181.818	76			

No other statistically significant difference was found between amateur and professional opera singers.

*Summary of event rider and opera singer demographics.*

A higher number of females than males from both activities responded to the survey. It is acknowledged that no gender specific questions were included in this part of the survey, therefore no specific analysis of gender were conducted that distinguished either female or male respondents.

Event riders started their leisure activity at an earlier age compared to the opera singer respondents. The difference can be attributed to two factors; the age at which individuals were introduced to the particular leisure activity; and the time it takes for maturity of vocal cord development in opera singing.

The strongest influence on riding and singing careers came from parents, specifically mothers in both groups. Compared to event riders, more opera singers classed themselves as professional. However, this variance relates directly to event riders not requiring a professional standing to compete at international levels. This status may also relate to the non-equestrian career aspirations of the majority of event rider respondents compared to the opera singer respondents, who wanted to make a career out of singing.

Financially, event riders on average spent more money on their leisure activity per week, than their opera singer counterparts. In both pursuits, only a small percentage of all respondents achieved a high income from their activities. It was noticeable that in both event

riding and opera singing the higher the performance level the individual achieved, the more the leisure activity cost them.

### **Ranking of opportunities for success.**

The opportunities for success are grouped into two main types of characteristics: internal qualities and external influences. This section presents the responses to opportunities found in Question 26. Respondents ranked statements dealing with perceived opportunities in their respective activities. The five highest ranking opportunities to gaining a high-level of performance success by event riders were: the right attitude to training (1), self-determination (2), positiveness (3), the ability to seek opportunities (4) and family support (5). The least important opportunities were: personality (12), early participation (13), association support (14), government funding support (15) and gender (16) (Table 5.26).

Opera singers gave similar responses: talent (1), attitude (2), determination (3), positiveness (4) and coach support (5). These were seen as the five most important opportunities to success in opera singing. Negative feedback (12), money (13), government funding (14), early participation (15) and gender (16) were the five least important opportunities to success to opera singing (Table 5.26).

Both event rider and opera singers reported that overall four of the five highest ranking opportunities were primarily internal qualities, including: having the right attitude towards training (1), personal determination (2), having a positive mindset (3) and talent (4), with the exception of coach support (5), which related to an external influence.

These responses revealed that the least important opportunities in improving or assisting event riders and opera singers reach a high performance level were mainly external influences, such as: negative feedback (12), association support (13), government funding support (14) and early participation (15), with gender (16), seen as the least important to success (Table 5.26). The greatest difference between the two groups was in relation to the importance of talent, an internal quality, which was ranked eighth by event riders and first by opera singers.

Table 5.26

*Ranking of opportunities for success perceived by event riders and opera singers*

Opportunities for Success	Overall Rank	Overall Mean	Eventing Mean Score	Eventing Rank	Opera Mean Score	Opera Rank
Right attitude	<b>1</b>	4.53	4.82	<b>1</b>	4.25	<b>2</b>
My determination	<b>2</b>	4.42	4.65	<b>2</b>	4.19	<b>3</b>
Positiveness	<b>3</b>	4.36	4.55	<b>3</b>	4.17	<b>4</b>
My talent	<b>4</b>	4.24	4.23	8	4.25	<b>1</b>
Coach support	<b>5</b>	4.20	4.26	6	4.14	<b>5</b>
Seek opportunities	6	4.17	4.39	<b>4</b>	3.95	6
Positive feedback	7	4.08	4.25	7	3.91	7
Family support	8	4.06	4.30	<b>5</b>	3.82	8
Friend support	9	3.78	3.82	10	3.74	9
My personality	10	3.56	3.65	12	3.48	10
Money	11	3.37	4.17	9	2.57	13
Negative feedback	12	3.34	3.66	11	3.03	12
Industry support	13	2.87	2.71	14	3.04	11
Govt funding support	14	2.51	2.65	15	2.38	14
My early participation	15	2.47	3.29	13	1.66	15
My gender	16	1.29	1.27	16	1.32	16

Note:

- n=154
- Ranking from 1 being the highest opportunity factor to 16 being the lowest.
- The means show how a factor impacts performance. The higher the mean, the more that factor is considered to be an opportunity to performance.
- The top 5 opportunities that were most agreed on within a survey are in bold.

*Summary of opportunities.*

Both event riders and opera singers identified similar opportunities that promoted success. Overall, event riders and opera singers ranked the right attitude towards training, personal determination, having a positive mindset, talent and coach support as the five highest opportunities available to them that can promote individual success. Both groups ranked internal qualities rather than external influences as the main opportunities to individual success.

**Ranking of constraints.**

The respondents ranked statements associated with impediments to success. The responses revealed that event riders found: having a poor horse (1), lack of time (2), poor coach (3),



lack of funding (4), and lack of self-confidence (5) were top ranked constraints to high performance. Lack of competitions (12), lack of support from friends (13), class discrimination (14), gender discrimination (15) and perceptions of the activity (16) were classed as the least constraining issues (Table 5.27).

Opera singers identified: lack of money (1), poor coach (2), lack of self-confidence (3), lack of funding (4) and lack of time (5) as the most detrimental constraints in opera singing. Perceptions of activity (12), family or partner conflict (13), discrimination (14), lack of support from friends (15) and gender discrimination (16) were the least important constraining issues to opera singers (Table 5.27).

The overall five highest ranking constraints that affected high performers in reaching performance goals were: a poor horse or poor agent (1), poor coach (2), lack of time (3), lack of money (4), and lack of self-confidence (5) (Table 5.27). Except for lack of self-confidence, all of these constraints were associated with external influences. The use of horse/agent reflected the two most important agents on which riders and singers were directly dependent for performance outcomes. It could be argued that poor horse and poor agent cannot be combined, however, in this study both the horse and the agent were critical factors to consider to the success of the individual high performer.

The least important constraints from all respondent answers were externally influenced: family or partner conflict (12), perceptions of activity (13), lack of support from friends (14), class discrimination (15) and gender discrimination (16) (Table 5.27). Unlike opportunities to success, constraints to success were least associated with internal qualities.

The major difference between the two groups is in relation to the constraints of lack of money that was ranked 7 by event riders and 1 by opera singers, and having a poor horse/agent that was ranked 1 by event riders and 7 by opera singers, all external influences. Interestingly, gender discrimination ranked 15 and 16 respectively. Discrimination of any kind did not rate as important to event riders or opera singers either as an opportunity, or as a constraint within this section.

Table 5.27  
*Ranking of constraints perceived by event riders and opera singers*

Constraints to Success	Overall Rank	Overall Mean	Eventing Mean Score	Eventing Rank	Opera Mean Score	Opera Rank
Poor horse / agent	<b>1</b>	3.66	4.43	<b>1</b>	2.90	7
Poor coach	<b>2</b>	3.46	3.32	<b>3</b>	3.60	<b>2</b>
Lack of time	<b>3</b>	3.44	3.49	<b>2</b>	3.39	<b>5</b>
Lack of money	<b>4</b>	3.39	3.13	7	3.66	<b>1</b>
Lack of self-confidence	<b>5</b>	3.34	3.17	<b>5</b>	3.51	<b>3</b>
Lack of funding	6	3.31	3.18	<b>4</b>	3.44	<b>4</b>
Lack of competitions	7	2.92	2.64	12	3.21	6
Family commitments	8	2.86	3.09	8	2.64	9
Lack of opportunities	9	2.81	2.75	11	2.87	8
Lack of support from coach	10	2.78	3.13	6	2.43	10
Distance to travel	11	2.62	3.08	9	2.16	11
Family or partner conflict	12	2.47	2.94	10	2.00	13
Perceptions of activity	13	1.72	1.36	16	2.08	12
Lack of support from friends	14	1.69	1.94	13	1.45	15
Class discrimination	15	1.53	1.57	14	1.49	14
Gender discrimination	16	1.39	1.52	15	1.26	16

Note:

- n=154
- Ranking from 1 being the highest constraint factor to 16 being the lowest.
- The means show how a factor impacts performance. The higher the mean, the more that factor is considered to be a constraint to performance.
- The top 5 constraints that were most agreed within the survey are in bold.
- Use of related leisure words were used, i.e., horse for event rider survey and agent for opera singer survey.

#### *Summary of constraints.*

The event riders and opera singers perceived similar constraints. Overall, event riders and opera singers ranked: poor coach, lack of time, lack of money, lack of self-confidence and poor horse/agent as the five highest constraints that can impede individual success.

#### **Personal experiences.**

The respondents listed three opportunities (Table 5.26) and three constraints (Table 5.27) that they had *personally* experienced. As the question did not require participants to list

separately internal or external experiences, a mix of internal experiences (for example, lack of motivation), and external experiences (for example, lack of events) were reported. The respondents clearly identified that having a good coach was the most important factor to enhancing performance (Table 5.28). External support, (people who provided the performers with aid and/or encouragement) received the second overall highest ranking from respondents in relation to opportunities (Table 5.28).

The experience of an event or being selected in a company was the third highest opportunity, followed closely by having a good horse or agent. Achieving planned goals and being placed or winning competitions were fifth and sixth experienced opportunities respectively (Table 5.28).

Table 5.28  
*Opportunities personally experienced that enhanced performance*

Experienced Opportunity	Overall Rank	Overall Frequency	Eventing Rank	Eventing Frequency	Eventing Percent	Opera Rank	Opera Frequency	Opera Percent
Good coach	<b>1</b>	138	<b>2</b>	63	27.3	<b>1</b>	71	32.5
Having external support	<b>2</b>	116	<b>1</b>	69	29.9	<b>3</b>	47	20.3
Being involved in an event / selected in a company	<b>3</b>	74	6	10	4.3	<b>2</b>	64	27.7
A good horse / agent	<b>4</b>	69	<b>3</b>	55	23.8	<b>5</b>	14	6.1
Achieving goals	<b>5</b>	39	<b>4</b>	21	9.1	<b>4</b>	18	7.8
Being placed in competition / Winning competition	6	26	<b>5</b>	13	5.6	6	13	5.6

Note:

- Each respondent listed 3 major opportunities experienced.
- Rankings from 1 being the most important opportunity experienced to 6 being the least.
- The top 5 opportunities that were most agreed on within a survey are in bold.

The personal constraints experienced by riders and singers were similar. Over 20% of event riders listed travel/time as the highest constraint experienced. Injury [to the horse], the second highest constraint experience, partner issues were listed as third, finding a good coach fourth and becoming unmotivated/disillusioned the fifth constraint experienced (Table 5.29).

Lack of professional employment was the highest constraint experienced to opera singers, with 28% of respondents finding performance work difficult to obtain in Australia. Because

of this it was not surprising to see that becoming unmotivated or disillusioned in opera was a close second, with time/travel third, finding a good coach fourth and money the fifth constraint experienced (Table 5.29).

Table 5.29  
*Constraints experienced that affected performance*

Experienced Constraints	Overall Rank	Overall Frequency	Eventing Rank	Eventing Frequency	Eventing Percent	Opera Frequency	Opera Percent	Opera Rank
Professional work / or lack of performances/events	<b>1</b>	85	6	20	8.65	65	28.14	<b>1</b>
Travel/Time	<b>2</b>	81	<b>1</b>	47	20.34	34	14.72	<b>3</b>
Finding a good coach	<b>3</b>	69	<b>4</b>	37	16.02	32	13.85	<b>4</b>
Became unmotivated / disillusioned	<b>4</b>	67	<b>5</b>	25	10.82	42	18.18	<b>2</b>
Injury (Horse / Voice)	<b>5</b>	57	<b>2</b>	39	16.88	18	7.79	6
Partner issues	6	48	<b>3</b>	38	16.45	10	4.33	7
Money	7	40	7	19	8.23	21	9.09	<b>5</b>
Having children I stopped for a while	8	15	8	6	2.60	9	3.90	8

Note:

- Each respondent surveyed listed 3 major constraints they had experienced.
- Rank from 1 being the major constraint experienced to 8 being the lowest.
- The top 5 constraints that were most agreed on within a survey are in bold.

Overall, opera singers ranked money as the number one constraint experienced that impeded their success in this leisure activity (Table 5.27). However, only 21 opera respondents (9.09%) had personally experienced constraints from the effects of a *lack of money* (Table 5.29).

Unlike event riders who ranked injury the second highest constraint experienced, opera singer respondents' ranked injury as their sixth constraint. However, as these responses were based on personal experiences some respondents may not have personally experienced voice injury to rate it as a higher constraint (Table 5.29).

#### *Summary of personal experiences.*

There were similarities in both event rider and opera singer responses to their personally experienced opportunities and constraints. The highest ranked opportunity experienced by respondents related to their interpersonal relationships with others, such as having a good

coach and having external support. Constraint experiences also related to structural issues, such as finding professional work or high-level events in Australia, followed by the constraints of travel/time. Coaches, an interpersonal issue, although ranked as the third highest constraint personally experienced, were also ranked as the highest opportunity to enhancing performance. The effect that coaches had on respondents is further explored in the following section.

### **Coach importance to high performers.**

Event riders and opera singers both indicated that *a good coach* was the major opportunity to an individual to advance their performance level (Table 5.28). The importance of the coach was confirmed with *finding a good coach*, ranked as the third overall highest constraint experienced and one of the main causes of failure by an individual (Table 5.29).

The ranked characteristics of a good coach (Question 28) were: truthful (1), good communication (2), knowledge of the activity (3), understands the individual's needs (4), is supportive (5), knows their own limits (6), knows the individual's abilities (7) and gives useful feedback (8). Several fundamental differences from the ANOVA test (Table 5.30) were noted. The major differences (Sig. level .000) related to characteristics listed in Table 5.30 as: performance experience, horse or vocal skills, political connections, supportive, always complimentary, always there for me, knows important people and gives useful feedback.

Using an ANOVA test there were small significant values (below Sig. <.05) that indicated differences between event riders and opera singers regarding good coach characteristics (Table 5.30). Taking the information from Table 5.30, outcomes were explored further.

Table 5.30  
*Characteristics of a good coach*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Good communication	Between Groups	1.461	1	1.461	4.514	.035
	Within Groups	49.195	152	.324		
	Total	50.656	153			
Knowledge of the activity	Between Groups	.318	1	.318	2.345	.128
	Within Groups	20.623	152	.136		
	Total	20.942	153			
Performance experience	Between Groups	15.591	1	15.591	18.358	.000
	Within Groups	129.091	152	.849		
	Total	144.682	153			
People skills	Between Groups	.786	1	.786	.670	.414
	Within Groups	178.156	152	1.172		
	Total	178.942	153			
Horse/vocal skills	Between Groups	34.604	1	34.604	29.213	.000
	Within Groups	180.052	152	1.185		
	Total	214.656	153			
Understand my needs	Between Groups	1.662	1	1.662	4.376	.038
	Within Groups	57.740	152	.380		
	Total	59.403	153			
Political connections	Between Groups	33.662	1	33.662	30.011	.000
	Within Groups	170.494	152	1.122		
	Total	204.156	153			
Supportive	Between Groups	3.740	1	3.740	4.537	.035
	Within Groups	125.299	152	.824		
	Total	129.039	153			
Friendly	Between Groups	3.143	1	3.143	3.294	.071
	Within Groups	145.013	152	.954		
	Total	148.156	153			
International level	Between Groups	.416	1	.416	.352	.554
	Within Groups	179.299	152	1.180		
	Total	179.714	153			
Truthful	Between Groups	.318	1	.318	.654	.420
	Within Groups	73.948	152	.487		
	Total	74.266	153			
Always complimentary	Between Groups	17.558	1	17.558	19.293	.000
	Within Groups	138.338	152	.910		
	Total	155.896	153			
Always there for me	Between Groups	20.239	1	20.239	17.996	.000
	Within Groups	168.701	150	1.125		
	Total	188.941	151			
Knows their limits	Between Groups	5.091	1	5.091	4.491	.036
	Within Groups	172.312	152	1.134		
	Total	177.403	153			
Knows important people	Between Groups	16.890	1	16.890	13.010	.000
	Within Groups	197.325	152	1.298		
	Total	214.214	153			
Knows my abilities	Between Groups	13.740	1	13.740	14.954	.000
	Within Groups	139.662	152	.919		
	Total	153.403	153			
Travels to events/performances with me	Between Groups	.162	153	.162	.175	.676
	Within Groups	140.961	152	.927		
	Total	141.123	153			
Gives useful feedback	Between Groups	18.935	1	18.935	23.652	.000
	Within Groups	121.688	152	.801		
	Total	140.623	153			

Ninety-one percent of event riders felt that it was *very important* (49.4%) or *highly important* (41.6%) for a coach to have experienced high-level competitions (Table 5.31).

Table 5.31  
*How important are a coach's eventing experiences to a high performer?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not important	0	0	0
Somewhat important	4	5.2	5.2
Important	3	3.9	9.1
Valid Very important	38	49.4	58.4
Highly important	32	41.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Over half (54.6%) of opera singers wanted a coach to have international opera stage experience (*very important* 28.6% and *highly important* 26%), almost 17% (16.9%) of opera singers felt that previous experience on the international opera stage was only *somewhat important* for a good coach, with 28.6% being *important* or unbiased. No opera singers ranked coach's experience as *not important* (Table 5.32).

Table 5.32  
*How important are a coach's opera experiences to a high performer?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not important	0	0	0
Somewhat important	13	16.9	16.9
Important	22	28.6	45.5
Valid Very important	22	28.6	74.0
Highly important	20	26.0	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.33  
*How important are a coach's horse skills?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not important	0	0	0
Somewhat Important	0	0	0
Important	7	9.1	9.1
Valid Very important	17	22.1	31.2
Highly important	53	68.8	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

The value that eventers placed on the need for their coach to have horse skills differed from the value opera singers placed on a coach's need to have voice skills. Event riders indicated that a coach with good horse skills was *very too highly important* (90.9%) (Table 5.33).

Although more than 63% of opera singers felt that a coach needed vocal skills (36.4% *highly important* and 27.3% *very important*), 22.1% thought that a coach with vocal skills was *somewhat* (9.1%) or *not at all important* (13%) (Table 5.34). This difference could be a consequence of opera singers requiring several different coaches outside of the singing realm, for example, acting coaches or language coaches, whereas event coaches no matter what equestrian discipline, all require horse skills.

Table 5.34  
*How important are a coach's vocal skills?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	10	13.0	13.0
Somewhat important	7	9.1	22.1
Valid Important	11	14.3	36.4
Very important	21	27.3	63.6
Highly important	28	36.4	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Perceptions of the importance of the coach's political connections showed a broad variance between event riders (Table 5.35). Although 39% of the event riders' stated political connections were *very important* (33.8%) or *highly important* (5.2%), 16.9% considered them as *somewhat important*. Over 27% thought a coach's political connections were *not at all important* to a high performer's success.

Table 5.35  
*How important are an event coach's political connections?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all important	21	27.3	27.3
Somewhat important	13	16.9	44.2
Valid Important	13	16.9	61.0
Very important	26	33.8	94.8
Highly important	4	5.2	100.0
Total	77	100.0	



Table 5.36

*How important are an opera coach's political connections?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Not at all important	8	10.4	10.4
	Somewhat important	8	10.4	20.8
	Important	15	19.5	40.3
Valid	Very important	34	44.2	84.4
	Highly important	12	15.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Unlike event riders almost 60% of opera singers agreed that a coach should have political connections with 15.6% stating it was *very important* and 44.2% *highly important*. Over 19% could be seen as being impartial by answering *important* for this question (Table 5.36).

Table 5.37

*Is it important for a coach to know the right people in eventing?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	12	15.6	15.6
	Somewhat important	25	32.5	48.1
	Important	15	19.4	67.5
	Very important	21	27.3	94.8
	Highly important	4	5.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Knowing the “right” people is closely linked to political connections. Event riders (67.6%) did not believe that if coaches knew the right people in eventing it would assist them in reaching a higher level (Table 5.37).

Table 5.38

*Is it important for a coach to know the right people in opera?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Not at all important	4	5.2	5.2
	Somewhat important	18	23.4	28.6
	Important	5	6.5	35.1
Valid	Very important	43	55.8	90.9
	Highly important	7	9.1	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

In contrast, 64.9% of opera singers thought that their coach could assist them further if they knew the right people in the industry (Table 5.38).

Few event riders (9.1%) thought that coaches who gave compliments improved their performance (Table 5.39).

Table 5.39  
*A characteristic of a good eventing coach is use of compliments?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	17	22.1	22.1
	Somewhat important	30	39.0	61.0
	Important	23	29.9	90.9
	Very important	3	3.9	94.8
	Highly important	4	5.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

However, useful feedback was welcomed by 94.8% of event riders. It should be noted that good feedback could also incorporate compliments (see Table 5.40).

Table 5.40  
*A characteristic of a good eventing coach is giving feedback?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Important	4	5.2	5.2
	Very important	12	15.6	20.8
	Highly important	61	79.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Opera singers concurred with event riders in relation to coaches who gave compliments, as only 2.6% found this type of coach useful. It was interesting to see that 14.3% of opera respondents were undecided in answer to this question (Table 5.41).

Table 5.41

*A characteristic of a good opera coach is giving compliments?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not at all important	44	57.1	57.1
Somewhat important	20	26.0	83.1
Important	11	14.3	97.4
Very important	1	1.3	98.7
Highly important	1	1.3	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

A large number of opera singers (74.1%), were comparable to event riders regarding coach feedback. Opera respondents found coach feedback was important to reaching a high performance level (Table 5.42).

Similarly, to compliments, 15.6% of opera respondents stated *important* in their decision on coach feedback (Table 5.42).

Table 5.42

*A characteristic of a good opera coach is giving feedback?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not at all important	4	5.2	5.2
Somewhat important	4	5.2	10.4
Important	12	15.6	26.0
Very important	22	28.6	54.5
Highly important	35	45.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

High performers had varied responses in regards to a coach always being available for them. Less than half of the number of event riders (44.2%) characterised a good coach as someone who they can rely on at any time (Table 5.43).

Table 5.43

*A good eventing coach is always there?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not at all important	8	10.4	10.4
Somewhat important	21	27.3	37.7
Important	14	18.2	55.8
Very important	21	27.3	83.1
Highly important	13	16.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

However, only three of the opera singers (3.9%) thought that a good characteristic for a high performance coach was to be always there. No opera respondents considered a coach who is always there as *highly important* (Table 5.44).

This response about a coach *always being there* led to further exploration into the expectations of a high performer in relation to coach support.

Table 5.44

*A good opera coach is always there?*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not at all important	12	15.6	18.2
Somewhat important	22	28.6	46.8
Important	40	51.9	98.7
Very important	3	3.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

The majority of event riders listed coach support as being one of the major contributors to improvement with 23.4% recognising coach support as *very important* and over half of respondents (66.2%) saying that support from a coach was *highly important*. No event rider respondents considered support as being *not at all important* (Table 5.45).

Table 5.45

*A characteristic of a good eventing coach is support?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Important	8	10.4	10.4
	Very important	18	23.4	33.8
	Highly important	51	66.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Opera singers also ranked support from a coach as *very important* (28.6%) and *highly important* (54.5%). However, 6.5% claimed that coach support is *not at all important* with over 10% of opera respondents having no personal preference (Table 5.46).

Table 5.46

*A characteristic of a good opera singing coach is support?*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all important	5	6.5	6.5
	Important	8	10.4	16.9
	Very important	22	28.6	45.5
	Highly important	42	54.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

The very high response of 89.6% for event riders and 83.1% of opera singers shows that coach support is *very important* or *highly important* for high performance success.

*Summary on the importance of coaches to high performers.*

Event riders and opera singers ranked highly a good coach who was able to develop them for success. A coach, who is truthful, has good communication, specific activity knowledge, is willing to understand an individual's needs, is supportive, knows their own limits and the individual's abilities, and gives useful feedback, is a coach that high performers will seek out. Additional political knowledge within the leisure activity is also advantageous to high performers. A coach's support and the high performer's success can alter throughout their life and leisure stages. Responses to the high performer's life and leisure stages and effects on performance are reported in the next section.

**Leisure constraints through life stages.**

Constraints that occur in an individual’s life, can also affect their leisure life.

Table 5.47

*Have there been any difficult stages in your life that affected your leisure? (Event Riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	53	68.8	68.8
	No	24	31.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

This was apparent in event riding with 68.8% of event riders stating that they had experienced difficulties that directly affected their sport (Table 5.47).

Table 5.48

*If you had a chance to start again would you do anything differently? (Event Riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Attend more events	41	53.2	53.2
	Start riding earlier	4	5.2	58.4
	Find a good coach earlier	32	41.6	100.0
Total		77	100.0	

When asked what they would have done differently if given the chance to relive their leisure pursuit of event riding (Question 21) 53.2% said, “attend more events,” and 41.6% of event riders said, “they should have found a good coach earlier in their horse riding discipline” (Table 5.48).

Opera singers stated that they had experienced difficulties in their life that affected their singing (71.4%) (Table 5.49). The majority of respondents (61%) wished that they had started singing earlier and over 23% of opera singers noted that during their singing experience they should have found a good coach earlier (Table 5.50).

Table 5.49

*Have there been any difficult stages in your life that affected your leisure?(Opera Singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	55	71.4	71.4
	No	22	28.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.50

*If you had a chance to start again would you do anything differently? (Opera Singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nothing	1	1.3	1.3
	Start singing earlier	47	61.0	62.3
	Find a good coach earlier	18	23.4	85.7
	Market myself more	11	14.3	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

*Summary of life stage constraints.*

It was found that event rider and opera singer respondents went through stages in their personal lives that contributed to additional constraints in their leisure activity. Not finding a good coach earlier and starting a leisure activity at a younger age were common issues among event riders and opera singers. An individual develops personal characteristics specific to them throughout their lives; these intrapersonal characteristics may also affect their leisure performance. The following section explores personal attributes that relate to high performance characteristics.

**Personal attributes relating to high performance characteristics.**

Individuals often have personal *attributes* that are recognisable in the development of high performance *characteristics*. To find what specific characteristics support high performance, the respondents ranked certain characteristics they thought assisted event riders and opera singers in reaching a high performance level.

The characteristics ranked by event riders as *highly important* to performance were; hardworking (1), motivated (2), determined (3), focused (4) and confident (5). The characteristics seen as *not at all important* to assisting event rider performance were: friendly (14), quiet (15), pigheaded (16), emotional (17) and loud (18) (Table 5.51).

Opera singers ranked performance characteristics as *highly important*, were; hardworking (1), determined (2), motivated (3), confident (4) and strong minded (5). The characteristics that opera singers found *not at all important* to high performance were; team oriented (14), emotional (15), pigheaded (16), quiet (17) and loud (18) (Table 5.51).

Table 5.51  
*Ranking of high performance characteristics of event riders and opera singers*

Perceived Characteristics	Overall Rank	Overall Mean	Event Riders Rank	Event Riders Mean Score	Opera Singers Rank	Opera Singers Mean Score
Hardworking	<b>1</b>	4.67	<b>1</b>	4.90	<b>1</b>	4.45
Motivated	<b>2</b>	4.60	<b>3</b>	4.86	<b>3</b>	4.34
Determined	<b>3</b>	4.58	<b>4</b>	4.81	<b>2</b>	4.35
Focused	<b>4</b>	4.53	<b>2</b>	4.87	6	4.19
Confident	<b>5</b>	4.51	<b>5</b>	4.78	<b>4</b>	4.25
Positive	6	4.43	6	4.74	7	4.13
Strong minded	7	4.36	7	4.52	<b>5</b>	4.21
Independent	8	4.02	10	4.03	8	4.01
Competitive	9	3.95	9	4.27	11	3.64
Calm	10	3.85	8	4.31	13	3.40
Opportunist	11	3.75	11	3.83	10	3.68
Intelligent	12	3.66	12	3.55	9	3.77
Friendly	13	3.21	14	2.82	12	3.60
Team Oriented	14	3.05	13	2.88	14	3.22
Pigheaded/Stubborn	15	2.14	16	1.97	16	2.32
Emotional	16	2.09	17	1.71	15	2.48
Quiet	17	1.89	15	2.04	17	1.75
Loud	18	1.60	18	1.66	18	1.55

Note:

- Ranking from 1 being the most important characteristic an event rider/opera singer can possess to 18 being the least important characteristic.
- The means show how important each characteristic is to being a successful event rider/opera singer. The higher the mean, the more that characteristic is considered important.
- The five overall highest rankings are in bold.

It was interesting to note that the characteristic “strong minded” was ranked by event riders as seventh and opera singers as the fifth most important factor, yet pigheaded, commonly



associated with being strong minded, was ranked sixteenth by both groups, suggesting a negative connotation associated with this characteristic.

Both event rider and opera singer respondents were asked to rank the personal characteristics *highly important* in obtaining a high performance level. Table 5.51 shows that the overall defining characteristics were classed as: hardworking (1), motivated (2), determined (3), focused (4), and confident (5).

The overall five characteristics from the list of 18, generally seen by respondents as *not at all important* were: team oriented (14), pigheaded (15), emotional (16), quiet (17) and loud (18) (Table 5.51).

Despite both pursuits requiring teamwork, event riders and opera singers ranked *team oriented* and *friendly* low on the scale of importance, at 13 and 14 respectively (Table 5.51). Within a team environment, an individual's behaviour can impede or enhance performance outcomes. How an individual's behaviour can affect high performance is discussed in the next section.

### ***Talent versus behaviour.***

Respondents were asked to distinguish personal characteristics in relation to talent (Table 5.51). To distinguish which attribute is the most important to high performance, talent or behaviour, and in an endeavour to find which personal characteristics correlated with talent or behaviour, an ANOVA test was used. From an ANOVA test (analysis of variance) and a *t*-test, there were only three characteristics that showed statistically significant results (95% confidence interval) in perceived success characteristics between event riders who believe talent is more important than behaviour or vice versa (Table 5.52). The event rider characteristics were:

- Quiet (rated more highly with subjects who valued behaviour)
- Motivated (rated more highly with subjects who valued talent)
- Hardworking (rated more highly with subjects who valued talent)

No other “successful characteristics” were identified by event riders as being substantially different in relation to whether talent or behaviour is valued more (Table 5.52).

The *t*-tests for opera singer responses showed seven characteristics that are statistically significant (95% confidence interval) in perceived successful characteristics. These characteristics and the importance between the attributes of talent and behaviour were (Table 5.53):

- Confidence (rated more highly with subjects who valued behaviour)
- Determined (rated more highly with subjects who valued behaviour)
- Emotional (rated more highly with subjects who valued behaviour)
- Opportunist (rated more highly with subjects who valued talent)
- Pig-headed (rated more highly with subjects who valued talent)
- Competitive (rated more highly with subjects who valued behaviour)
- Hardworking (rated more highly with subjects that valued talent)

No other *successful characteristics* were seen as being statistically different in relation to whether the attributes of behaviour or talent is valued more by opera singers (Table 5.53).

The only similarity between event riders and opera singers when comparing talent versus behaviour was the characteristic - hardworking, as this was associated with talent in both groups.

Table 5.52

*Personal characteristics of event riders in relation to talent*

Characteristic		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Strong Minded	Between Groups	.853	2	.427	.919	.404
	Within Groups	34.367	74	.464		
	Total	35.221	76			
Friendly	Between Groups	1.034	2	.517	.433	.650
	Within Groups	88.420	74	1.195		
	Total	89.455	76			
Confident	Between Groups	.747	2	.373	2.210	.117
	Within Groups	12.500	74	.169		
	Total	13.247	76			
Focused	Between Groups	.644	2	.322	2.960	.058
	Within Groups	8.057	74	.109		
	Total	8.701	76			
Determined	Between Groups	.427	2	.214	1.357	.264
	Within Groups	11.651	74	.157		
	Total	12.078	76			
Team Oriented	Between Groups	1.861	2	.930	.732	.484
	Within Groups	94.087	74	1.271		
	Total	95.948	76			
Quiet	Between Groups	4.687	2	2.344	3.200	.046
	Within Groups	54.196	74	.732		
	Total	58.883	76			
Emotional	Between Groups	2.305	2	1.153	2.164	.122
	Within Groups	39.409	74	.533		
	Total	41.714	76			
Motivated	Between Groups	1.293	2	.647	5.881	.004
	Within Groups	8.135	74	.110		
	Total	9.429	76			
Opportunist	Between Groups	.155	2	.077	.054	.948
	Within Groups	106.651	74	1.441		
	Total	106.805	76			
Pig-headed	Between Groups	21.820	2	10.910	8.763	.000
	Within Groups	92.128	74	1.245		
	Total	113.948	76			
Loud	Between Groups	1.312	2	.656	1.280	.284
	Within Groups	37.909	74	.512		
	Total	39.221	76			
Calm	Between Groups	1.421	2	.710	1.807	.171
	Within Groups	29.098	74	.393		
	Total	30.519	76			
Independent	Between Groups	2.093	2	1.046	1.766	.178
	Within Groups	43.855	74	.593		
	Total	45.948	76			
Competitive	Between Groups	.009	2	.004	.007	.993
	Within Groups	43.264	74	.585		
	Total	43.273	76			
Hard Working	Between Groups	.627	2	.314	3.547	.034
	Within Groups	6.542	74	.088		
	Total	7.169	76			
Positive	Between Groups	.700	2	.350	1.288	.282
	Within Groups	20.105	74	.272		
	Total	20.805	76			
Intelligent	Between Groups	1.705	2	.852	1.331	.270
	Within Groups	47.386	74	.640		
	Total	49.091	76			

Table 5.53

*Personal characteristics of opera singers in relation to talent*

Characteristic		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Strong Minded	Between Groups	2.013	2	1.007	3.605	.032
	Within Groups	20.662	74	.279		
	Total	22.675	76			
Friendly	Between Groups	10.766	2	5.383	4.438	.015
	Within Groups	89.753	74	1.213		
	Total	100.519	76			
Confident	Between Groups	3.444	2	1.722	4.743	.012
	Within Groups	26.867	74	.363		
	Total	30.312	76			
Focused	Between Groups	.624	2	.312	.985	.378
	Within Groups	23.454	74	.317		
	Total	24.078	76			
Determined	Between Groups	4.988	2	2.494	7.519	.001
	Within Groups	24.545	74	.332		
	Total	29.532	76			
Team Oriented	Between Groups	36.565	2	18.282	21.584	.000
	Within Groups	62.682	74	.847		
	Total	99.247	76			
Quiet	Between Groups	1.038	2	.519	.421	.658
	Within Groups	91.273	74	1.233		
	Total	92.312	76			
Emotional	Between Groups	33.822	2	16.911	16.597	.000
	Within Groups	75.398	74	1.019		
	Total	109.221	76			
Motivated	Between Groups	2.256	2	1.128	3.095	.051
	Within Groups	26.965	74	.364		
	Total	29.221	76			
Opportunist	Between Groups	5.046	2	2.523	3.468	.036
	Within Groups	53.837	74	.728		
	Total	58.883	76			
Pig-headed	Between Groups	53.516	2	26.758	24.949	.000
	Within Groups	79.367	74	1.073		
	Total	132.883	76			
Loud	Between Groups	1.548	2	.774	1.708	.188
	Within Groups	33.542	74	.453		
	Total	35.091	76			
Calm	Between Groups	2.985	2	1.493	1.234	.297
	Within Groups	89.534	74	1.210		
	Total	92.519	76			
Independent	Between Groups	1.189	2	.594	.883	.418
	Within Groups	49.798	74	.673		
	Total	50.987	76			
Competitive	Between Groups	18.276	2	9.138	15.530	.000
	Within Groups	43.542	74	.588		
	Total	61.818	76			
Hardworking	Between Groups	3.484	2	1.742	8.260	.001
	Within Groups	15.607	74	.211		
	Total	19.091	76			
Positive	Between Groups	.053	2	.026	.060	.942
	Within Groups	32.648	74	.441		
	Total	32.701	76			
Intelligent	Between Groups	3.327	2	1.664	1.250	.292
	Within Groups	98.465	74	1.331		
	Total	101.792	76			

Table 5.54

*Which do you feel is the most important factor in reaching a high performance level in event riding?*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ability	33	42.9	42.9	42.9
	Behaviour	32	41.6	41.6	84.4
	Both	12	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

When asked to choose between ability and behaviour as the most important factor in reaching a high performance level, 42.9% of event riders chose ability as the most important factor, with 41.6% of respondents stating behaviour. A small majority, 15.6% stated both ability and behaviour were of equal importance to event riding success (Table 5.54).

Table 5.55

*Which do you feel is the most important factor in reaching a high performance level in opera singing?*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ability	20	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Behaviour	33	42.9	42.9	68.8
	Both	24	31.2	31.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

The most important factor to success was behaviour according to 42.9% of opera singers. A higher number of opera singers 31.2% believed that both ability and behaviour was necessary to reach high performance success than those who chose just ability (26%).

*Summary of talent versus behaviour.*

The characteristics that were seen as highly important overall were: hardworking, motivated, determined, focused and confident. Those characteristics that were seen as least important by both groups were: team oriented, pigheaded, emotional, quiet and loud. The only similarity between event riders and opera singers when looking at talent versus behaviour was the characteristic hardworking, as this was associated with talent by both groups.

When given a choice between an individual's talent or ability and their behaviour, an individual's behaviour was seen as a stronger factor to high performance success in both event riding and opera singing.

### **Motivational Techniques.**

In the latter part of the survey (i.e., Question 28) respondents were asked about techniques or methods they had personally used that had improved their performance. The techniques discussed in this section were described by event riders and opera singers as motivational, or were methods of concentration that aided performance.

The majority of event riders used positive thinking techniques (83.1%) to enhance their performance (Table 5.56).

Table 5.56  
*Positive thinking (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	64	83.1	83.1
No	13	16.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Aligned with positive thinking was visualisation. Over 83% of event riders also used visualisation to improve their performance (Table 5.57).

Table 5.57  
*Visualisation (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	64	83.1	83.1
No	13	16.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Positive thinking and visualisation were also popular with opera singers. A high number of opera singers used positive thinking (89.6%) as a way of developing their state of mind prior to performance (Table 5.58).

Table 5.58  
*Positive thinking (Opera singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	69	89.6	89.6
	No	8	10.4	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Eighty-two percent of opera singers used visualisation to improve their performance (Table 5.59).

Table 5.59  
*Visualisation (Opera singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	63	81.8	81.8
	No	14	18.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Seventy six percent of event riders acknowledged they used ‘being in the zone’ or had ‘a flow experience’ when they focused on their activity (Table 5.60).

Table 5.60  
*The Zone (Event riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	59	76.6	76.6
	No	18	23.4	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Opera singers (100%) were unanimous regarding the successful effects ‘getting into the zone’ or ‘flow’ had on opera singers and their performance (Table 5.61).

Table 5.61  
*The Zone (Opera singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	77	100.0	100.0

Two seemingly contradictory techniques, adrenaline rush (Table 5.62 and 5.63) and deep breathing (Table 5.64 and 5.65), were listed as useful high performance techniques for both event riders and opera singers.

Table 5.62  
*Adrenaline rush (Event riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	44	57.1	57.1
	No	33	42.9	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Adrenaline is naturally produced in high stress or physically exciting situations, often found in event riding. Over half (57.1%) of event riders used their ‘adrenaline rush’ to give them an edge in competition (Table 5.62). A noticeably higher proportion of opera singers (84.4%) also used their ‘adrenaline rush’ to give them an ‘edge’ in performance (Table 5.63).

Table 5.63  
*Adrenaline (Opera singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	65	84.4	84.4
	No	12	15.6	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.64  
*Deep breathing (Event riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	51	66.2	66.2
	No	26	33.8	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Deep breathing, a well known meditation technique was used by a large majority of event riders (66.2%) and opera singers (79.2%) (Tables 5.64 and 5.65).



Table 5.65  
*Deep breathing (Opera singers)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	61	79.2	79.2
No	16	20.8	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.66  
*Meditation (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	15	19.5	19.5
No	62	80.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Sixty two event riders did not use meditation as a success technique (see Table 5.64). A higher number of opera singers (49) did not use meditation - even though it is often associated with developing deep breathing techniques (see Table 5.65).

Table 5.67  
*Meditation (Opera singers)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	28	36.4	36.4
No	49	63.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Intrinsically motivated behaviour is not free of external forces such as social influences. The use of external motivators, such as audience reactions, family and coach support, divided the event riders as 51.9% used external motivators to assist them win competitions, and 48.1% did not (Table 5.68). Unlike event riders, the majority of opera singers surveyed (88.3%), used external motivators to enhance their performance compared to 11.7% that did not (Table 5.69).

Table 5.68  
*External Motivators (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	40	51.9	51.9
No	37	48.1	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.69  
*External motivators (Opera singers)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	68	88.3	88.3
No	9	11.7	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

*Summary of motivational techniques.*

Within this section event riders gave similar responses to opera singers in terms of the successful motivational techniques they preferred, including; positive thinking, visualisation, being in ‘the zone’, adrenaline, deep breathing, meditation and external motivators. Both types of leisure performers effectively used similar techniques or methods to enhance their performances.

**Perceptions of elitism and class in sport and art.**

Several questions in the survey under the sub-heading of *Society and Your Leisure* related to elitism and class (i.e., Questions 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16). These questions related to each respondent’s perception of social class (i.e., Question 12), elitist activities (i.e., Questions 13 and 16), and international perceptions (i.e., Questions 14 and 15). This section reports the results of these responses relating to perceptions of elite leisure pursuits.

The majority of respondents, event riders (59.7%) (Table 5.70) and opera singers (75.3%) (Table 5.71) described themselves as middle class. The second largest classification was working class event riders 33.8% (Table 5.70) and opera singers 18.2% (Table 5.71), with only 5 respondents (6.5%) from each activity describing themselves as upper class.

Table 5.70

*How event rider respondents described their social class*

Classification	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Working	26	33.8	33.8
Valid Middle	46	59.7	93.5
Upper	5	6.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Table 5.71

*How opera singer respondents described their social class*

Classification	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Working	14	18.2	18.2
Valid Middle	58	75.3	93.5
Upper	5	6.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

To find out what leisure activities event riders and opera singers perceived to be elitist, respondents were given a list of 17 selected leisure activities (Figure 5.3). A cut off point for elite versus non-elite was 50%. Within both leisure fields, outcomes of elitist perceptions were similar. Event riders found both eventing (80.5%) and opera (79.2%) were highly recognised elite activities, with yachting (87%) seen as the most elite activity out of the 17 given. Ballet (75.3%), classical music (75.3%) and snowskiing (68.8%) were also perceived as being elite activities (Figure 5.3).

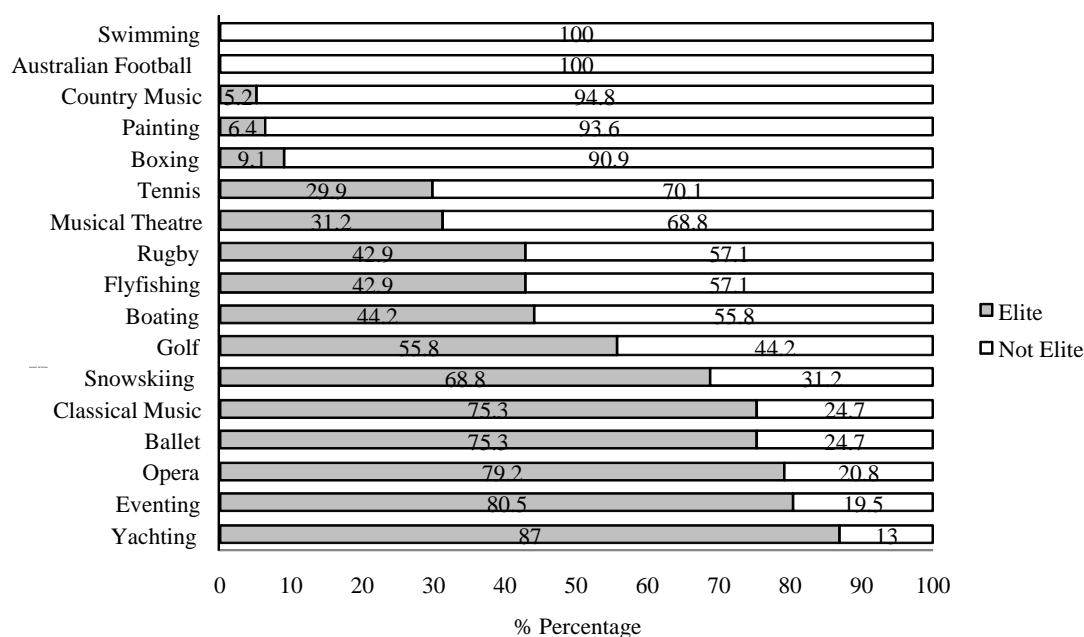


Figure 5.3 Event riders' perceptions of elite leisure pursuits

The activities perceived to be least elite by event riders were: boxing (9.1%), painting (6.4%), country music (5.2%), swimming (0%) and Australian Football (0%). Swimming and Australian Football received 100% non-elite status by all of the event riders (Figure 5.3).

The opera singer respondents also selected eventing (77.9%) and opera (90.9%) as being highly perceived elite activities (Figure 5.4). It was noted that two opera respondents stated that they were unsure what eventing was, although they still listed it as an elitist activity. As well as opera, the opera singers listed ballet (90.9%) as the most elite leisure activity, followed by yachting (89.6%) and classical music (85.7%). Musical theatre (23.4%), painting (15.6%) and swimming (9.1%) were seen as being less elite. Opera singers, as with the event riders, listed boxing and Australian Football, with the addition of country music, as being 100% non-elitist (Figure 5.4).

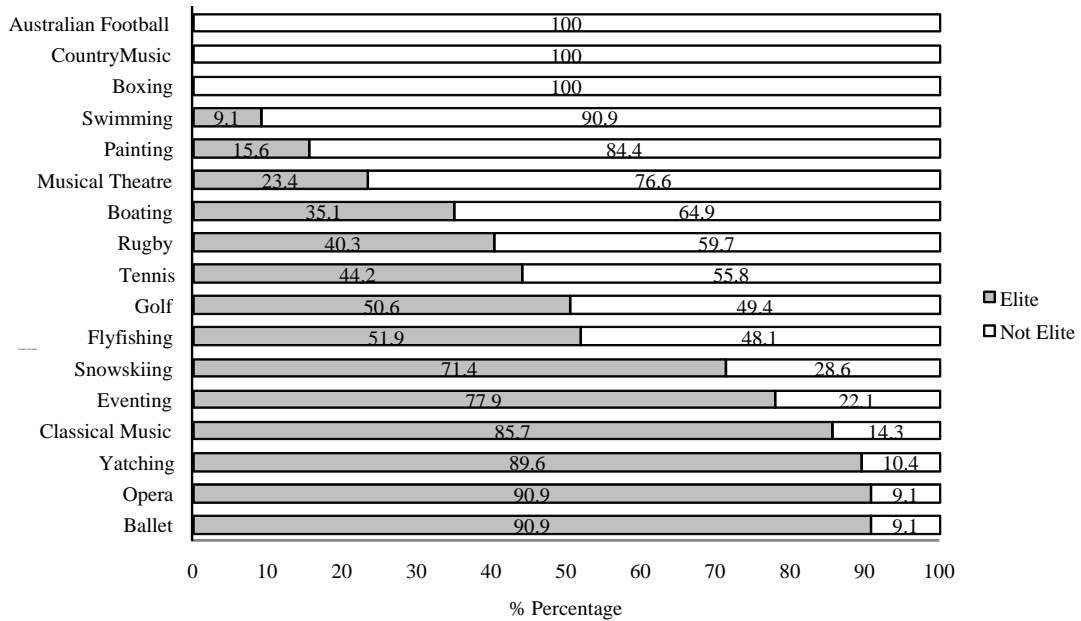


Figure 5.4 Opera singers’ perceptions of elite leisure pursuits

Leisure activities that were not on the survey list, but were noted under “other” by individual survey respondents as being elitist, included the following: car racing, acting, pop-stars, polo, dressage and aviation.

Using the above data and to develop a clearer picture, respondent answers on leisure activities were then ranked to provide further information on leisure activity perceptions. A measure of central tendency, the mean, was used. A ranking from 1 to 17, with 1 being the most elite activity, to 17 being the least elite activity was used. By this method a mean closer to 1 shows an activity considered more elitist (Table 5.70).

From this analysis the overall outcomes of the top five elite activities received from both groups, were: Ballet (1), Opera (2), Yachting (3), Classical Music (4) and Eventing (5).

The five least elite activities ranked by both groups were Painting (13), Swimming (14), Boxing (14), Country Music (16) and Australian Football (17). Australian Football showed a mean of 2.00 as no respondent from either group classed Australian Football as being elitist (Table 5.72).

Table 5.72  
*Rankings of perceived elitist leisure activities*

Leisure Activity	Overall Rank	Overall Mean	Eventing Ranking	Eventing Mean	Opera Ranking	Opera Mean
Ballet	<b>1</b>	1.11	<b>=4</b>	1.25	<b>=1</b>	1.09
Opera	<b>2</b>	1.15	<b>3</b>	1.21	<b>=1</b>	1.09
Yachting	<b>3</b>	1.17	<b>1</b>	1.13	<b>3</b>	1.10
Classical Music	<b>4</b>	1.19	<b>=4</b>	1.25	<b>4</b>	1.14
Eventing	<b>5</b>	1.20	<b>2</b>	1.19	<b>5</b>	1.22
Snow Skiing	6	1.30	6	1.31	6	1.29
Fly Fishing	7	1.46	9	1.57	7	1.48
Golf	8	1.52	7	1.44	8	1.49
Tennis	9	1.58	12	1.70	9	1.56
Rugby	10	1.60	9	1.57	10	1.60
Boating	11	1.63	8	1.56	11	1.65
Musical Theatre	12	1.73	11	1.69	12	1.77
Painting	13	1.89	<b>=14</b>	1.95	13	1.84
Swimming	<b>=14</b>	1.95	<b>=16</b>	2.00	14	1.91
Boxing	<b>=14</b>	1.95	13	1.91	<b>=15</b>	2.00
Country Music	16	1.97	<b>=14</b>	1.95	<b>=15</b>	2.00
Australian. Football	17	2.00	<b>=16</b>	2.00	<b>=15</b>	2.00

Note:

- $n=154$
- A mean closer to 1 shows a leisure pursuit that would be considered elitist.
- The five overall highest ranks are in bold.

#### *Summary of perceptions of elitism and class in sport and art.*

Both the activities of eventing and opera singing were perceived by respondents as being elitist in Australia. However, it appears from the data collected that social class, as described by respondents, did not stop individuals from participating in event riding or opera singing. The perceptions of event riders and opera singers relating to elite and non-elite leisure activities were similar in outcomes.

#### **Elitism and its association with education and income.**

Income and education are linked with every class in some way. Individuals who have a higher income and higher education are generally perceived to be associated with upper (or elite) class (Chapter 2). However, when using a regression analysis on these responses from event rider variables of income and education, only an extremely weak relationship (0.031 of

the data) was found (Table 5.73). This result shows that there was no statistical evidence in this study that links an event rider’s educational background to their current earnings or their leisure activity.

Table 5.73  
*The relationship of event rider income compared with their past education*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.176(a)	.031	.005	.573

a. Predictors: (Constant), What is your average income? What is your highest education completed?

Both variables (education and income) were also found to be insignificant predictors of self-reported social class for event riders in Australia (Table 5.74). This could have been confounded by the addition of *Other Education* as a variable in the survey; however, excluding *Other Education* still had no effect on significance of income, education and social class relationships for event riders.

Table 5.74  
*The relationship of event rider income and education to their social class*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.780	.229		7.786	.000
	What is your highest education completed?	-.060	.067	-.105	-.903	.370
	What is your average income?	.043	.032	.155	1.337	.185

a. Dependent Variable: How would you describe your social class?

A stronger, although still weak relationship (0.139 of data), was found with opera singers using a regression analysis on the variables of income and education (Table 5.75).

Table 5.75  
*The relationship of opera singer income compared with their past education*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.372(a)	.139	.115	.457

a. Predictors: (Constant) What is your highest education completed? What is your average income?

Only the variable, *education* was found to be a significant contributing variable with 95% confidence - sig .001 (Table 5.76).

Table 5.76

*The relationship of opera singer income and education to their social class*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	
	(Constant)	.956	.325		2.940	.004
1	What is your average income?	.008	.025	.037	.328	.744
	What is your highest education completed?	.248	.074	.383	3.359	.001

a. Dependent Variable: How would you describe your social class?

A smaller number of event riders (27.3%) had completed a university qualification compared to opera singers (68.8%). The statistical equation that explains it best is  $social\ class = .956 + .008 \times income + .248 \times education\ level$  where education, income and social class are ordinal numbers used to code the data (see Table 5.76). This is due to the comparatively younger age of the event riders (31% under 21), some of who may have still been at university. Only 3% of the opera singers surveyed were under 21.

*Summary of elitism and its association with education and income.*

There were relatively very weak relationships linking event riding and opera singing to a respondent's income, education and social class (social class was based on respondents' self-reporting of the class to which they thought they belonged). The views in this section related to survey respondents currently active in the two leisure pursuits; it did not represent overall societal views of elitism, and its subsequent relationship with event riding and opera singing. Results suggest that the social class was not an influential factor for these performers in event riding and opera singing in Australia and appeared not to be related to respondents' personal income or educational level.



**Elitism in Australia.**

In this study, social background did not appear to affect individual constraints. It was the degree of influence individual *perceptions* had that could constrain an individual in their leisure goals. To find out what event riders and opera singers thought about elitism in the fields of sport and art in Australia, and how they viewed the perceptions of others in relation to their activities, the perceptions from each group were analysed (Questions 12, 13 and 14).

Over 76% of event riders thought that certain activities, from both the sport and art fields, were seen as elitist in Australia (Table 5.77).

Table 5.77

*Do you think that some people classify certain activities as elitist? (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	59	76.6	76.6
No	18	23.4	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Almost all opera singers (97.4%) suggested that people in general perceive certain sport and art activities as elitist (Table 5.78).

Table 5.78

*Do you think that some people classify certain activities as elitist? (Opera singers)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	75	97.4	97.4
No	2	2.6	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

When asked if there was elitism in the sport of eventing in Australia, 62.3% of event riders said, “yes” (Table 5.79).

Table 5.79

*Is there elitism in the sport of eventing in Australia? (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	48	62.3	62.3
No	29	37.7	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

When asked if there was elitism in Australian in the art of opera 80.5% the majority of opera singer respondents said, “yes” (Table 5.80).

Table 5.80

*Is there elitism in the art of opera in Australia? (Opera singers)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	62	80.5	80.5
No	15	19.5	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Event riders (81.8%) responded that there was elitism in the sport of eventing in other countries (Table 5.81); with 19.5% suggesting that, elitism in event riding was worldwide (see Table 5.80).

Table 5.81

*Is there elitism in the sport of eventing in any other country? (Event riders)*

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	63	81.8	81.8
No	14	18.2	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Over 90% of opera singers reported that they believed that opera was perceived to be elitist in other countries (see Table 5.80), with over 37% of opera singers suggesting that elitism in opera was worldwide (see Table 5.83).

Table 5.82

*In your opinion is there elitism in opera in any other country? (Opera singers)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Undecided	2	2.6	2.6
Valid	Yes	70	90.9	93.5
	No	5	6.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

When asked which country they viewed as being elitist in relation to the sport of eventing, 46.8% said, “England” (Table 5.83).

Table 5.83

*Countries where elitism is perceived (Event riders)*

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Undecided	6	7.8	7.8
	England	36	46.8	54.5
	USA/America	8	10.4	64.9
Valid	Germany	2	2.6	67.5
	Europe	10	13.0	80.5
	Worldwide	15	19.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

Over half (51.9%) of the opera singers named “England” as the country they perceived to be elitist in relation to opera (Table 5.84).

Table 5.84

*Countries where elitism is perceived (Opera singers)*

		Frequenc	Valid Percent	Cumulative
	Undecided	5	6.5	6.5
	England	40	51.9	58.4
Valid	USA/America	3	3.9	62.3
	Worldwide	29	37.7	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	

*Summary of elitism in Australia.*

Event rider and opera singer respondents agreed that there was the perception of elitism in both their leisure activities. However, opera singers considered Australia was more elitist towards the art of opera than event riders towards the sport of eventing. Both groups recognised elitism on an international scale, believing that England was highly elitist in relation to the leisure pursuits of event riding and opera singing. This perception of elitism within some leisure activities could enhance constraints and opportunities within event riding and opera singing

**Summary of Chapter Five**

Similarities were recognised in both event rider and opera singer viewpoints within this chapter. There were a higher number of females to males who responded to the survey and a noticeable age difference between respondent groups, with event riders commencing their leisure pursuit earlier than opera singers. Both event riders and opera singers were strongly influenced by their mothers.

More opera singers classed themselves as professional compared to event riders. Opera singers also had higher career aspirations - they wanted to develop opera singing into a career. Although event riders had performance goals and there were pathways to careers in event riding, the majority did not see eventing as a major career move.

Opportunities that promoted success were perceived to be similar in event riding and opera singing. Both groups ranked the right attitude towards training, personal determination, having a positive mindset, talent and coach support, as the five most important opportunities an individual needed for success.

Both event riders and opera singers perceived similar constraints. A poor coach, lack of time, lack of money, lack of self-confidence and lack of funding were the five highest constraints respondents found that impeded individual performance. Constraints personally experienced by event riders and opera singers were also similar, and included; finding professional work or high-level events in Australia, travel/time and coaches. Paradoxically coaches were ranked

as the third highest constraint as well as being the highest opportunity to enhancing performance by eventers and singers in this survey. This suggests that making the correct coach choice is integral to high performance.

The characteristics a good coach should possess to assist high performers succeed consisted of; truthfulness, good communication, knowledge of the leisure activity, an understanding of the individual's needs, supportive, know their own limits and the individual's abilities, and a giver of useful feedback. Respondents who were currently at a high performance level also suggested that political knowledge in coaches was advantageous to high performance success.

Two leisure regrets, finding a good coach earlier and starting a leisure activity at a younger age, were common among event riders and opera singers. Results showed that respondents from both activities had experienced constraints throughout stages in their lives, such as being too young to drive and relying on external support; these personal constraints consequently affected their leisure activity. Results also showed that respondents found opportunities and negotiated constraints using intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural ways, for example developing appropriate behaviours could assist them to overcome issues in a team situation or personal attributes can support skill development. Characteristics recognised by respondents as highly important to high performance success, included hardworking, motivated, determined, focused and confident.

Event rider and opera singer respondents used similar well-known techniques to support their successful high performance. Both groups utilised positive thinking, visualisation, adrenaline rushes, deep breathing, the zone and external motivators to assist them to succeed.

Techniques were dependent on the individual and the situations they were in. A contradiction occurred in the analysis on adrenaline rush, deep breathing and meditation techniques. The technique of using adrenaline increases breathing whereas deep breathing techniques slows breathing. The use of either technique may be dependent on circumstances. For example, in event riders, the dressage phase needs calmness and the cross country requires speed and agility.

While the majority of performers reported themselves as 'working or middle class' this did not constrain respondents from participating in both leisure activities, even though they suggested that event riding and opera singing are perceived as elitist activities in Australia. The perceptions of event rider and opera singer constraints relating to elite and non-elite leisure activities showed relatively weak relationships linking event riding and opera singing to a respondent's income, education and self-reported social class.

Respondents agreed that there were perceptions of elitism in both event riding and opera singing in Australia, perceptions that may increase constraints within these two leisure activities. They also recognised that elitism in both activities was noticeable on an international scale.

Chapter 6 draws together the findings from this quantitative and the qualitative phase (Chapter 4) of this study. The findings are discussed in the context of the research questions and the purpose of the study.

## Chapter 6

*“The first rule in opera is the first rule in life: See to everything yourself.”*

*Dame Nellie Melba*

*Australian Opera Singer*

*1865-1931*

### **Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations**

Three years ago a thought turned into an extra long journey of exploration that explored two leisure fields in sport and art in an attempt to find an answer to a complicated, yet reasonably simple question: Why do some individuals reach a high performance level? This question, often asked by talented and not so talented individuals, led to a frame of enquiry that spanned several years of focused research. As with every academic study, three specific research questions were framed to resolve one seemingly simple question.

This study explored the constraints and opportunities in event riding and opera singing that affect the personal journeys individuals take from a hobby to a professional level. This final chapter provides an overview of the study followed by findings drawn from the research questions. Findings are developed into a conceptual framework that is supported by a conceptual diagram. This diagram shows the stages of a high performer’s leisure life incorporating constraints and opportunities within each stage. This is followed by strategies for overcoming constraints and the four C’s to successful high performance. The chapter concludes with recommendations for high-level performances and also for future research.

### **Overview of this study**

The purpose of this study was to explore leisure constraint negotiation in two leisure pursuits, event riding and opera singing. It explored the personal strategies that two individuals used to lessen and negotiate constraints to enable them to reach a high performance level. The study also looked at broader factors relevant to intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural influences that shaped people's everyday leisure behaviours, increasing the understanding of

leisure participation from a more personal perspective, as recommended by Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997). This structure follows Jackson's (1997) suggestion of offering positive modifications and extensions to research that make productive contributions to constraint knowledge. The structure also took heed of the suggestion of MacNamara et al. (2010b) that opportunities lead to the commitment necessary to achieve high performance.

This study explored the lived experiences of two individuals through a series of in-depth case study interviews, gathering information that was historical as well as current [at the time of the study], and leisure industry-related as well as personal. The case study method was a suitable approach initially. However, to broaden knowledge in relation to information gained from the key informants, other leisure participants of various performance levels, in the areas of event riding and opera singing were interviewed using focus groups. The outcomes from the focus group interviews supported the case study findings and increased information on the lived experiences of event riders and opera singers more generally. The use of external support agents, such as coaches and parents, also provided constructive and additional qualitative information. The qualitative method as the major phase of data collection provided rich data from personal experiences encountered by individual performers throughout their leisure activity. The final phase validated findings through a survey of a larger sample of eventers and opera singers. The mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies allowed for an exploration of concepts that combined the strengths of each method.

The relationship between an individual's lived experiences and their leisure pathway has long been uncertain, often influenced by a variety of factors (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001, p. 4). Using a mixed method approach allowed for a richer and deeper account of constraints and opportunities experienced by an individual, that are often difficult to obtain using a single method design. In this study, the use of qualitative interviews provided rich and thick data from the participants, both men and women, about their experiences in the sport of event riding and the art of opera singing. The addition of the quantitative data allowed for validation of the findings and drew from the experiences of a wider cross-section of event and opera performers from around Australia. The mixed method approach was employed to



great advantage in extending the understanding of both unexplored and well-theorised areas in leisure, specifically relating to constraint negotiation.

Approaching the study in this way covered the issue of ‘what makes a high performer?’, an issue that was lacking in past research. This study incorporated a variety of factors that can influence high performers. Using event riders and opera singers showed that many constraints and opportunities are common to both the high performance athlete and artist.

### **Response to Research Questions**

The main purpose of this study was to explore and identify specific areas of an event rider and opera singer’s life that assisted them in becoming a high performer. The findings obtained from the qualitative and quantitative research suggest that the individual development of a high performer is a complex process where family-related issues, environmental events, skill acquisition and personality characteristics are crucial constituents. In this section, each of the three research questions is answered combining findings from interview participants, survey respondents and literature.

Addressing this study from an individual’s viewpoint allowed a focus on specific life circumstances and occasions. These included coping strategies, leisure placement in everyday lives, and constraints negotiation, and demonstrated an original and broader pathway of research. This pathway gave an informed perspective of the way individuals can negotiate constraints to reach their high performance goals.

The three research questions are summarised and explained independently. Several issues raised within each of the questions were found to inter-relate, especially those relating to external support agents, such as parents and coaches, critical success factors and future plans.

**Research Question 1: What opportunities and constraints affect an individual's pursuit of a high performance leisure activity?**

The initial focus of this study, and the first question, was to identify the opportunities and constraints that affect an individual's pursuit of a high performance leisure activity. The interviews, then surveys, were used to develop a list of identifiable opportunities and constraints that would influence high performance progression in both leisure activities (see Table 6.3):

Table 6.3  
*Top five identified opportunities and constraints*

Five Top Opportunities	Five Top Constraints
1. the right attitude to advance in the activity	1. having a poor horse or agent
2. personal determination	2. poor coaching
3. a positive mindset	3. lack of time
4. talent and ability to progress and develop talent	4. lack of money
5. interpersonal support incorporating the right coach	5. lack of self-confidence

It became noticeable early in the interview process that common constraints and opportunities mentioned in the literature were also similar for the participants in this study. For example, external support, finding a good coach and personal determination were viewed as opportunities, and time, money and poor coaching, common constraints (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Jackel & Wollscheid, 2007; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Shannon, 2006; Stebbins, 2007). However, as the study progressed, it became clear that individuals defined the term *constraint* differently.

Event riders and opera singers had all experienced, and were concerned by, constraints in their leisure pursuit and individual high performers sought out opportunities in an attempt to deal with identifiable constraints. Many high-level performers in this study interpreted a constraint as more of a hindrance to their personal goals rather than as a barrier that stopped them from participating or progressing. Participants acknowledged that constraints were legitimate, a normal part of life, and a normal part of climbing the performance ladder, as Sally (age 19, EvFG) said, "I deal with issues [constraints] as a whole." Participants analysed

problems from a life view; they negotiated constraints and proceeded in their activity rather than being obstructed by a barrier.

The futures of high performers are determined by their success in dealing with constraints and broadening their skills in finding opportunities. However, constraints did not act alone; there was usually another factor behind the perceived constraint that acted as a catalyst for the problem to arise. An example given by Madeleine was the high cost associated with travelling to an international competition; this constraint was directly linked to her relative lack of money. Madeleine overcame this by finding opportunities to fundraise. Another example of the constraint ‘merry-go-round’ is the fact that some participants needed to work to financially support their activity, which in turn led to less participation and training time.

Constraints and opportunities also merged with the work-leisure paradigm in this study, as some participants related their leisure activity to work, while others who were working in the leisure activity, stated that it was also their leisure pursuit. Madeleine had not heard the term serious leisure used to describe her activity, nor did Maria relate it to opera. Their remarks confirmed Stebbins’ observation that, “the general public is largely unaware of the concept of serious leisure” (Stebbins, 1998, p. 19). Stebbins (1997, p. 121) had noted that *amateurs* and *professionals* perceive themselves as *either* amateurs or professionals, but this study found a blurring between these two roles once an individual reaches the high performance stage of their activity. Neulinger (1981) had much earlier noted that categorising an activity as work or leisure depended on the individual’s experience.

Classification of event riding or opera singing as part of an individuals working or leisure life was determined by the individual’s definition of leisure and their life experiences. This supported research on work-leisure perceptions by Neulinger (1981) and Parker (1972). In this study Maria pointed out that making a career from a ‘leisure pursuit’ could also cause constraints, as leisure activities were not viewed as ‘a real job’ by some people. This view affected Jack’s (age 29, OpFG) continuation in opera as a career and was also recognised by Neil Warren-Smith (1983, p. xi) in his biography. When he told people he was an opera singer, they would reply “very nice, but what do you do for a living?” Reconciliation of the differing views on what constitutes work in a leisure activity and how an individual high

performer deals with constraints arising from the work-leisure paradigm once again depended on the mindset of individuals and perceptions of society.

*Summary of research question 1.*

In this study, individuals differed in what type and how much they were affected by constraints, as an individual's perception of what constituted a constraint stemmed from their learned experiences. In the minds of high performers the more efficient they were in dealing with these constraints, the more leisure goals they achieved. In contrast, opportunities were seen as extremely significant and were constantly sought after to assist in reaching a high performance level. Although every participant in this study experienced some type of constraint throughout their leisure life it was how effectively the individual recognised, and then utilised, opportunities that directly affected their success. Leisure was dependent on the high performer's perception of what opportunities were available to them and what constituted a constraint, which was the deciding factor to high performance success.

**Research Question 2 - What strategies have successful athletes and artists used to overcome intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints on their path to high performance?**

Outcomes from the first question led to the second question relating to strategies used successfully by athletes and artists to overcome intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints on their path to high performance. Throughout this study individuals who wished to progress in their chosen leisure activity were influenced, both positively and negatively, by the three types of constraints. Exploring these factors in relation to the leisure activities of event riding and opera singing, key informants and focus group interviews revealed that individuals were able to achieve their leisure goals if they:

- had external support while young
- received continued support during their amateur phase through effective coaching
- were motivationally committed
- could identify opportunities
- and were able to plan and think strategically

These findings support the study by Johnson et al. (2006, p. 133) that also revealed that physical and psychological predispositions dictate future ability to high performance. Conversely, those who could not successfully seek opportunities or negotiate constraints did not achieve high-levels of performance.

Participants in this study asserted that individuals who had poor skills in seeking opportunities did not reach their goals no matter how much talent they had. These opportunity-seeking skills were associated to the performers' upbringing and were acquired through learning. As Freeman (2000, p. 1) stated, "There is no lack of evidence to show that an individual's development, outlooks and achievements are influenced by the life-style of the families in which they grow up, and that from the beginning, the urge to learn is tempered by opportunity." Knowledge on how to seek out opportunities in this study came not only from families but also from peers and coaches. Having talent does not make the high performer. The support structures nurture an individual that encapsulates a high performer.

### *Strategies.*

Strategies alone could not create success. Before strategies could be devised and applied an individual required personal attributes that would enable them to become a high performer and successfully reach their goals. At the commencement of a leisure pursuit, showing some innate talent was an obvious pre-requisite, although the individual's behaviour and attitude to learning played an important role throughout the high performer's life. The emergence of personal attributes that lead to talent enhancement, an intrapersonal factor, was seen to occur at any age in the two activities and was noticeable at the end of the first transition phase when an individual turned an enjoyable hobby into a competitive amateur stage. Dependent on the individual's social support, environment and opportunities these natural abilities were either strengthened or diminished. Not all participants commenced their leisure activity as a child, although findings revealed that many participants in this study wished that they had started their activity, or started their training, at an earlier age. Throughout this study key informants, focus group participants and survey respondents, no matter what age they had commenced the activity, all wanted to become high performers, and were devoted to developing their talent to reach their individual goals. These findings reflect those of Gagné

(1997, p. 2) who noted that, ‘children of any age and adults can improve and develop talent in a specific field.’

*Intrapersonal strategies.*

Although talent was viewed as a pre-requisite to becoming a high performer, it was not the catalyst to high performance. The developmental process was closely linked to natural ability *and* the individual’s intrapersonal characteristics. This study showed that a successful high performer is hardworking, motivated, determined, focused and confident; attributes that can be enhanced and learnt. This evidence supports previous psychological and physical studies of athletes in relation to talent (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Abbott, Collins, Sowerby, & Martindale, 2007; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001; Johnson, Tenenbaum, & Edmonds, 2006; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010b; MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). Csikszentmihalyi et al., (1993, p. 742) also noted that, “commitment to activities were related to an individuals’ motivational characteristics more than their actual level of competence or ability.”

A successful strategy incorporating behavioural characteristics was the positive use of ego. Ego is a behaviour associated with exploration, manipulation and autonomy (Reiss, 2004), and in this study was directly related with high performers by interview participants. According to psychologists ego occurs in individuals who have elevated mood states and have a deeper focus on attention (Havitz & Mannell, 2005, p. 173). Such individuals were also characterized as being autonomous, non-doubting and unconventional (Sandgren, 2005). In this study, the participants revealed that having high self-esteem promoted ego, and if the ego was channelled correctly, it served the individual well when aiming at increasing leisure goals. However, if incorrectly used it had a negative effect and became a constraint as suggested by Benabou and Tirole (2001). According to Reiss (2004, p. 186) behaviour traits that set people apart are those traits that are unusually strong or unusually weak compared with the norm. Examples of this effect were evident in the high-level event riders or opera singers who displayed an unusually strong desire to win, showing strong self-confidence. Their strategy was to channel their self-confidence to motivate themselves to attain leisure goals.

Performance techniques such as deep breathing, positive thinking and visualisation, were also part of an individual's strategy to improve performance and motivation. Factors that increased intrinsic motivation, flow and drive, were viewed as a major strength, and significantly assisted the performers by making them confident and believe in their abilities that in turn increased their competitiveness. These observations reflect previous studies that found high performers to be emotionally stronger, have higher productivity, higher motivation and drive, and lower levels of anxiety than the average person (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Freeman, 2000). Performance techniques aided the study participants in various ways: by controlling pre-performance tensions, visualising success, or assisting them to channel nerves into positive adrenalin rushes. The appropriate technique depended on the individual or the activity, for what worked best for one person or one role, was not suitable for another. Experience with, and knowledge of, performance techniques was required to gain optimum proficiency. The participants believed that it was therefore important that they were coached on a range of motivational techniques during their training.

#### *Interpersonal strategies.*

Interpersonal factors, specifically external support agents, such as parents, coaches and peers, strongly affected the development of high performers and their continuation in a specific leisure activity. These agents provided a range of support mechanisms to guide and develop the talent and skills of the performer. Developing strategies that incorporated external support agents, such as finding a coach that suited their style and level of riding or singing, or using positive feedback to develop self-esteem and motivation assisted individuals in reaching their goals. In this study, parents provided the stable base for the young performer and also the material and cultural resources to nurture their child's talent.

The parents interviewed came from culturally rich backgrounds, not necessarily based on wealth, but based on a dynamic environment, where opportunities, stimulation and verbal communication were freely available. Similar findings were reported from studies of talented children by both Gagné (1997) and Freeman (2000). Other previous studies also suggested that parental relationships were crucial factors in a child's development (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001; McCrossin, 2004). In the present study, parental attitudes and expectations

were found to assist in the mindsets of high performers. The findings reveal that the richer and more supportive the relationship was with family members, the more impact the external support agent had on the individual good or bad – at any age during their leisure life. Other studies on parents and high performers, also reported that parents were needed more for emotional and financial support than technical support especially in the early stages (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010b), while coaches gave technical support and advanced individual skills in the latter stages.

Individuals needed to develop close coach relationships to achieve high performance. Strategically aligning themselves with coaches who were or had been high performers, were renowned for their training ability, and had industry knowledge assisted individuals to reach a high-level. Coaches who provided excellent skills in training did not necessarily have to have friendly personalities at the high performance level. At the higher levels, coaches needed to possess the characteristics of a good coach; recognised in this study as being truthful, having good communication and being knowledgeable in the activity, they also needed to understand an individual's needs, provide support, know their limits and those of their student and give useful feedback. Past research supported the findings that high performers require different things from their coaches at different stages in their development (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001). Coaches, who encourage positive intrapersonal behaviour and provided interpersonal resources, were vital in establishing high performance.

Interpersonal support did not have to be continuous throughout a person's leisure life; it could, and did change often overtime. There were two critical situations in a high performer's leisure life when interpersonal support became significant to the individual - in times of need, and at times of achievement. For example, when a mother or father provided funding or transport to assist their child in the leisure activity or when a coach provided support and encouragement to an individual during their rise in performance level.



*Structural strategies.*

Structural factors were some of the constraints that high performers found difficult to overcome, as these factors were usually out of the control of individuals. For example, participants in this study stated that an individual could not alter the lack of competitions and events; or affect corporate governance issues, such as policies and regulatory procedures. However, industry grants, selection processes and performance opportunities - all industry related - were all opportunities for high performance strategies. Madeline asserted that learning how to recognise funding sponsors and write grant applications gave individuals additional skills to seek further funding opportunities through the industry. Development of internal industry knowledge and interpersonal links, such as getting to know influential people within the industry, and understanding political relationships, specifically relating to power, influence or conflict, assisted high performers in the selection process. According to focus group participants, when up against an equally talented competitor, individuals who were known to selectors had a better chance of being recognised and being selected.

*Summary of research question 2.*

Becoming an Olympic rider or international opera singer, does not just happen; it takes a high-level of dedication, practice and time. If riders and singers were confident about their horse or voice abilities, they were able to focus on their own personal activity demands. This personal focus, according to Beauchamp and Whinton (2005, p. 246), strengthens their own self-efficacy, and contributes to their overall performance abilities. In this study, it was at the amateur level that planning and using successful strategies became significant opportunities in achieving future high performance goals.

Goal achievement created challenges that maintained intrinsic motivation and were dependent on the requirements of the individual; some wished to reach an international level and others wanted to improve their current skills. For each goal, strategic planning was necessary to ensure they followed a specific pathway. High performers needed to develop short, medium and long-term strategies to enable them to achieve desired goals systematically. By doing this, performers could self-assess their own abilities, and in some cases, it allowed them to deviate onto another pathway of success. In this study, for example,

a mediocre showjumper became a high performing event rider, and a state level soprano became an international mezzo-soprano.

### **Research Question 3 - What does the term 'elite class' mean to high performing event riders and opera singers?**

The third research question arose from the historic connections found between the two leisure activities - specifically relating to social class. When exploring event riding and opera singing it was important to understand how these activities were perceived within society, and whether society's perceptions contributed further to opportunities and constraints.

When discussing the term elite in relation to event riding and opera singing it was stated by participants that society in general associate this term with 'having money'. Further exploration into the term elite confirmed that all social class types, working, middle and upper, participated in both leisure activities and that leisure choice of participants was not solely dependent on income. However, elite type groups did occur within the leisure activity dependent on individual performance status. This coincided with Shaver and Tudbull's (2002, p. 2) statement that a shift from a community to an association is paralleled by change from a society, based on ascribed roles, to one structured on the basis of individual achievement.

Historically, event riding and opera singing were perceived as within the realm of the elite or upper class. Participating or spectating was commonly associated with wealth or having a high standing within society. The participants in this study reported that event riding and opera singing in Australia were more open to participation compared with other western countries, such as England and USA. Changes in leisure and societal perceptions, and a degree of economic levelling in western societies have made these previously elite leisure activities more accessible to all classes (Kelly, 2000; Stell, 1991). Participants reported their backgrounds from all classes of society, with the majority from the working and middle class sectors giving support to this perceptual change. A more important outcome in this study was the view that non-participants continue to associate event riding and opera singing with the

elite class, this had an effect on support and funding opportunities for participating individuals.

To support further that non-participant perceptions affected performance success, this study found that event riders and opera singers also viewed other leisure activities according to their own perceptions. These perceptions were based on personal viewpoints, rather than on accurate representations of the actual activity and the participants themselves. Cultural perceptions in relation to what is or who is elite, were seen to be influenced by societal views - views according to participants that constantly changed dependent on that particular leisure activity's marketing strength. As Lemann (2000, p. 77) suggested, "in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the elite are not born, they are made." The outcomes of this study supported the perception that activities commonly presented in the media, general literature or film associated with working class individuals or lower-socio economic activities, such as, Australian Football, boxing and country music continue to be perceived as non-elitist. According to participants, society's perceptions of sport and art activities result in additional constraints for leisure participants; specifically relating to funding opportunities and government grant schemes.

Peterson and Kern (1996), in their paper on the changing tastes of high status Americans, stated that 'the criteria of distinction centres not on what a person consumes, but on the way items of consumption are understood.' In Australia, both activities studied - event riding and opera singing - were seen to be elitist by those who did not understand them. According to participants once an individual experienced the activity, as an audience member or as an active participant, the experience led to increased knowledge, and perceptions of elitism were reduced.

### ***Summary of research question 3.***

Study participants perceived that society equated the term elite with 'having money'. Yet participants in both activities represented the working, middle and upper classes. Class choice of participants was not solely dependent on income. Although both event riding and opera singing were selected as two of the top five most elite leisure activities by both groups, when asked to rate generalised activities such as horse riding and singing respondents did not

find them at all elitist. Event riding and opera singing participants unanimously agreed that those people who are not involved in or do not attend equestrian or opera events, perceive these leisure activities as elitist, because of their lack of knowledge of the activity.

### **Overall Summary of Research Questions.**

Findings from the research questions are based on personal thoughts and perceptions that reflect how individual participants - women, men, athletes, artists, parents or coaches - thought at that moment in time. Event riders and opera singers in this study felt that costs were affordable and opportunities were freely available to the average person wanting to participate in both leisure activities. However, how individuals dealt with the constraints of entering and continuing in the leisure activity was very dependent on the mindset and life experiences of each individual.

The important findings from this study were the interaction between intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints with their corresponding opportunities. Findings revealed that understanding and developing skills in opportunity seeking were paramount to an individual's success in event riding and opera singing. Introduction to an activity by a family member, peer or from an individual's curiosity is the start of an individual's leisure pursuit. To succeed an individual must become aware of constraints and develop skills in handling these constraints, preferably before they arise. Once on the pathway of increasing, higher level leisure participation an individual needs to develop skills, not only in the activity itself, but also in the areas of coping with constraints and recognising opportunities.

The presumption that social class is directly related to participation in event riding or opera singing does not apply. This study provides the foundation that the term elite does not actually have anything to do with money within a leisure activity itself; it is a cultural or societal, socially perceived constriction, and confirms that historical perceptions of having money or social standing related to participation for certain leisure events is no longer valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is the external constraint perceptions an individual has relating to elite social groups that need to be addressed.

The hobby, amateur, professional pathway an athlete or artist travels to reach a high performance level is well studied; the additional knowledge that can be enhanced through findings within this study is on the development of opportunity-seeking skills and successful strategies an individual needs to learn to negotiate constraints. This area of knowledge is one that all participants in this study had to develop through learned experiences. By using findings from the research questions a conceptual framework will be developed that will provide additional knowledge on negotiating constraints through successful strategies and opportunity seeking.

### **Introduction To The Emergent Conceptual Framework**

The study of constraints and constraint negotiation adds to the knowledge of academic leisure research. However, the participants of this study focused on the opportunities and developing ways to overcome constraints. This study therefore, placed more emphasis on the approach taken to identify opportunities, utilising related factors that assist individuals in successfully achieving high performance. The overall findings provided an example of a leisure life pathway, indicating what an individual can expect to experience if they wish to become a high performer.

This study found that participants persevere from a hobby level to a high performance level by successfully dealing with the differing constraints associated in their selected leisure pursuits. This correlates with previous research (Stebbins, 2007; Veal & Lynch, 2006). The belief that individuals at a high performance level undertake serious leisure was also supported (Stebbins, 2001). The six interrelated qualities (see Chapter 2) associated with serious leisure stated by Stebbins (2007, p. 11-13) were recognised in the outcomes of this study, that is:

1. individuals who wished to be high-level performers persevered
2. individual high performers planned to reach personal goals
3. individuals who attained high performance level had the ability to develop a career
4. individual high performers continued to build their skills and knowledge
5. individuals obtained benefits from their activity specifically as rewards and self-esteem
6. individuals developed deep social and cultural relationships within the activity
7. individuals could identify strongly with their chosen activity

Samdahl (2000, p. 127) stated that new focused research should give a solid, scholarly field of inquiry to leisure research. This study led to the creation of a conceptual framework, which is explained in the next section (see Figure 6.1). It relates specifically to the two leisure activities of event riding and opera singing, incorporating influences of individual, environmental and social viewpoints. By providing initial guidance through a new conceptual framework, individuals seeking a high performance level can restructure their leisure lives to reach goal attainment.

Constraints and opportunities in some instances have a complementary relationship; for example, a lack of money can be overcome through sponsorship, or a lack of time can be overcome by lifestyle changes. To further expand and simplify the development of the conceptual framework, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints, those associated with a high performer's leisure life, were incorporated along with correlating strategies. Strategies that can be used at various stages in a high performer's life to overcome or influence successful constraint negotiation.

This study also found that those who engaged in the serious leisure activities of event riding and opera singing encountered costs and rewards (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Stebbins, 1992). Performing and being chosen for a specific role was seen by Maria and Lucy (age 24, OpFG) as a well earned reward, while Madeleine and Jenny (age 25, EvFG), found external factors outside of the performance arena as rewards, such as seeing their young horses or young riders improve in training. An element of high performance success was how individuals negotiated constraints, and distinguished opportunities, by assessing and accepting personal costs (in their chosen leisure field), versus their perceived benefits or rewards (Robinson, 1999).

During a serious leisure journey, three distinct stages were recognised that exposed individuals to constraints and opportunities, the Introductory Stage; Developmental Stage; and finally the High-level Performance Stage, discussed later in this chapter (see Figure 6.1). It confirmed that an individual who understands the high performance pathway was able to distinguish opportunities, and by using these opportunities was able to counteract constraints. The importance of an individual understanding, or being able to recognise, an opportunity,

gave them an added advantage over other more talented individuals, to reach their performance goals. This outcome is similar to, and supportive of, research conducted by Gould et al. (2001) on the three development stages of Olympic Champions.

Therefore, the conceptual framework developed in this study is not a constraints framework, but a framework to increase knowledge of opportunities and indicate a pathway to goal achievement. Within this framework features common to high performers have been noted and will assist in providing an understanding of a leisure pathway throughout the life of a high performer. How high performers deal with constraints and recognise opportunities throughout this leisure pathway are then described relating to constraints and opportunities of each leisure stage. From these findings, four specific attributes that can contribute to constraints or can influence opportunities were recognised and explained further (see Figure 6.2).

The framework recognises some of the multiple constraint processes that can take place within the three leisure stages. However, as some research suggests there are limitations in focusing solely on constraints in leisure participation (Henderson, 1997; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). Therefore a broader approach was undertaken in this study, supporting suggestions, that linked constraints to other aspects of an individual high performer's lived experiences (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010b), and adding to the knowledge of constraint negotiation.

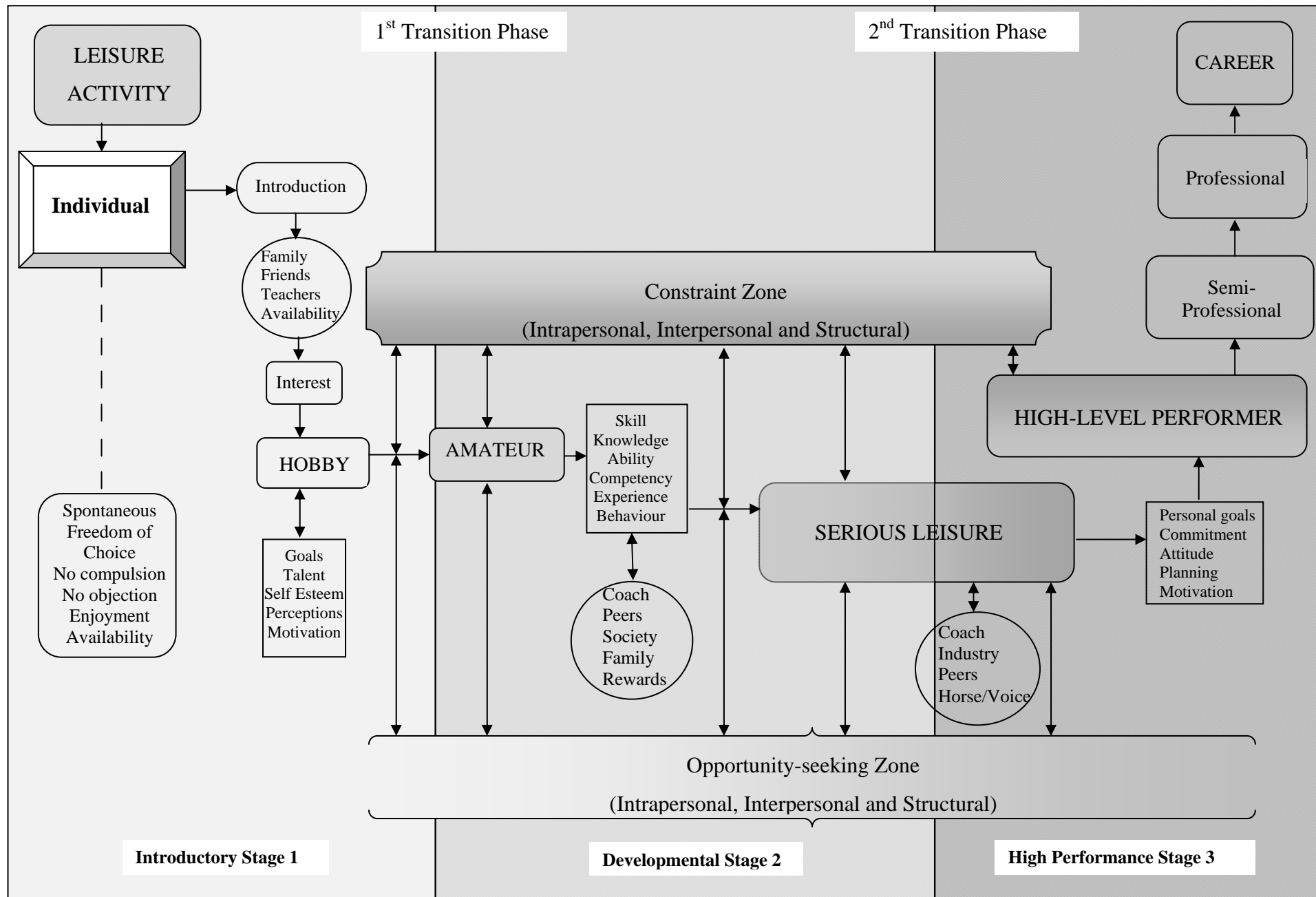


Figure 6.1 A conceptual framework of the pathway to high performance.



### **The Conceptual Framework**

The final conceptual framework (Figure 6.1) provides a logical and diagrammatic overview of the skills that individuals develop to recognise opportunities to negotiate constraints. This section explains the overall features of the conceptual framework to illustrate the journey of a high-level performer from a hobby to professional level during the three fundamental stages in a high performer's leisure life:

1. Introductory Stage
2. Developmental Stage
3. High-level Performers Stage

Constraints and opportunities are complex systems influenced directly and indirectly by a variety of personal, social or environmental factors - specific to an individual. This framework extends current knowledge by focusing on the positive side to constraint negotiation, therefore the framework overview discusses and emphasises the avenues for opportunities found within this study, without expanding on specific constraints.

Although this framework was developed for high-level performers, it is applicable to individuals at any stage of their leisure life - from the initial choice of activity through to developing it into a career. The framework has a continuous flow on effect, with some areas blending. This framework may be used in a stepping stone fashion as a way of reaching an end goal.

#### **Conceptual framework diagram explained.**

This section has three sub-sections. The first explains the framework pathway, simplifying the three stages of an individual's leisure pathway. The second provides a table of strategies used by participants to show how certain opportunities in an individual's leisure life can overcome constraints. The third sub-section shows how goal achievement - either reaching a high-level of leisure performance or choosing to make a career from their leisure activity – can be attained.

***The framework pathway.****Stage 1 – Introductory stage.*

The left third of the framework indicates the Introductory Stage. When an individual selects or is introduced to a leisure activity his or her leisure journey commences. The first stage in this framework is described as the *introductory* or like stage. Although past research suggests athletes ‘love’ the first stage of an activity (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2001, p. 4), in this study ‘like’ has been used as participants suggested they ‘liked’ the activity, but did not ‘love’ the activity immediately.

Interpersonal support is instrumental in the individual taking up the activity. The amount and type of support received by the individual at this stage played an integral part in the development of an individual high performer. Event riders and opera singers did not start their activity with a career or Olympic aspiration in mind. They were exposed to active lifestyles and encouraged to participate for fun and developmental reasons, individuals were influenced in their leisure choice by family, siblings, teachers or peers, for example, a mother who rode horses, or a friend who sang in the school choir.

In the first stage, interpersonal support agents needed an understanding of the particular activity, although did not have to be active in it themselves. This was revealed when Madeleine identified that her father, who did not ride horses, was a “rock” and was “always there” when she needed him. Apart from being introduced to an activity by an individual, some participants wanted to join people in an activity for the social interaction, or because the activity was freely available to them at the time. Madeleine joined the local pony club to socialise with other farming children, whereas Jack’s (age 25, OpFG) curiosity in opera singing enticed him to try it.

The factors that motivate the individual to continue from the introductory hobby stage to a higher performance stage are dependent initially on the individual’s *talent*. Having some talent was classed as the most important characteristic to continue at this early phase. An individual’s talent at the introductory stage was based on their ability to learn skills needed for that particular leisure pursuit. Confidence to continue is also required and is gained from interpersonal support, for example parents, coaches or judges. This confidence comes

from others who are respected by the individual, who tells them they have “talent” and in turn gives them *confidence* in themselves to continue - increasing their self-esteem.

During the first stage of a leisure journey, the individual’s major constraint is the lack of availability to the preferred leisure activity, followed by the availability to continue and, in the case of young participants, lack of support from parents. At this stage, skills in opportunity seeking are limited to those learned from peers.

After the initial introduction to the leisure activity, if the individual’s interest grows, their skills, knowledge and experience will continue to develop. This becomes the first of two transitional phases between the three stages. At this transition phase, the individual has three choices; to continue in the hobby activity, develop it further to an amateur level, or drop out. This choice is made by them alone, and is dependent on their interest in the activity. At the end of the introductory stage, the first transition phase takes place - the transition phase from hobbyist to amateur.

#### *1<sup>st</sup> Transition Phase.*

In the latter part of the Introductory Stage, individuals increasingly enjoy participating in the activity and begin to recognise their talent. Talent at the developmental stage was closely linked to the individual’s attitude, psycho-behaviours, such as determination and self-esteem, and their ability to use their skills to progress further. These personal attributes play an important part in the individual’s decision to continue in their chosen leisure activity. At the developmental stage, the individual begins to recognise opportunities provided by parents and other support agents. Parents at this stage were seen as having active and financial roles, as well as an emotional investment, in the outcomes of their child’s activity, concurring with Sandgren’s study on opera singers (2005).

Opportunity-seeking skills are enhanced at this stage through listening to advice and watching other higher-level individuals perform. Individual performance levels also rise as they gain the ability to handle challenges and achieve successful results. Intrapersonal influence increases confidence and the love for an activity one has, this enhances their knowledge that they are ‘good at it’. Associated with confidence, a characteristic that

develops due to continued success is *ego* (Markstrom, Li, Blackshire, & Wilfong, 2005). Thinking that one is good at their leisure activity provides the individual with *intrinsic-motivation*; putting into effect a self-transition from a hobby to an *amateur* level. At this second stage, the *developmental* stage, individuals change their mindset from doing the activity for the fun of it, to wanting to improve to reach a goal, such as; winning a ribbon or being selected for the school choir.

### *Stage 2 – Developmental Stage.*

Increased skills, knowledge and experience acquired during the introductory stage, strengthen further in the second stage, shown in the middle third of the framework. At this stage of the conceptual framework, the *developmental* stage, the individual goes from the *amateur* level to a *serious leisure* participant. From there they can progress, if desired, to a higher performance level. Performance levels of an individual rise with the ability to handle challenges and achieve positive results, by focusing their minds away from negative emotions such as frustration, impatience, anger, fear, resentment or sadness, participants can effectively transform inner experiences into ones of challenge.

The participants identified their top two opportunities experienced as interpersonal, for example having a good coach and having external support (i.e., parents, coaches). Their top two constraints, however, were structural, for example, professional work/lack of professional performances/events, and travel/time. At this, stage both an event rider and an opera singer need to have a good coach to provide them with the skills and training for further development. Coaches were identified as an equally important contribution to constraints and opportunities. Individuals who identify their coach as a constraint require the confidence to change coaches, and have the knowledge of what characteristics a good coach should possess. During the developmental stage a transitional stage for coach change, dependant on the needs of the individual, occurs.

The structural constraints of the lack of time and lack of finances proved two of the most discussed constraints at this stage. This supports previous research on constraints (Jackel & Wollscheid, 2007; Stebbins, 2001). At this point, the participant's interest in the activity motivates them to find the necessary time and finances to continue. A common method of

overcoming these constraints was to alter personal timetables and obtain income-earning work that supported their leisure activity needs.

The effect other people have on junior riders and singers during this developmental stage was also a constraint, leading many developing athletes and artists to discontinue the leisure activity. The key informants experienced and spoke about this. At the developmental stage individuals were confronted by external interpersonal relationships, they were criticised or resented by some of their peers because of their success, or as Madeleine called it the “*tall poppy syndrome*.” This finding supports literature that suggests a person’s beliefs about their performance capabilities can be affected through verbal persuasion by others, leading to altered self perceptions (Bandura, 1994; Beauchamp & Whinton, 2005; Benabou & Tirole, 2003). Overcoming interpersonal constraints required intrapersonal intervention; individuals at this stage develop positive beliefs about their own abilities based on their own and other’s perceptions. Successful high performers counteracted these ‘negative’ comments by their positive mindset and their knowledge that they were good at the specific activity.

At the developmental stage the constraints experienced by the individual intensifies, often leading to a discontinuation of the leisure activity or a decision to keep the activity at a hobby level. To compensate for the increase in constraints more opportunities arise in the developmental stage. Opportunity-seeking skills assist the high performing amateur to develop throughout this stage.

At the end of the developmental stage, the second transition phase occurs when the individual decides to achieve a higher performance status.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Transition Phase.*

The participants in this study knew their limits and goals. It was up to the individual to self-assess, and recognise what high performance level they would be able to reach during the developmental stage. Because of increasing confidence and developing skill sets, including knowledge, ability, successful performance experiences and personal lifestyles, self-assessment at this transition phase was possible. This self-assessment affected their

decision-making processes in relation to advancing their leisure activity. Decisions to pursue the activity further at the developmental stage were based on an individual's success in the activity and their lifestyle. Increased training and performance requirements were pivotal decision points for an individual who wished to advance to the next stage.

At the developmental stage, motivational factors increased mental and physical abilities. These abilities were important due to the increased constraints found at this stage. However, in turn, these abilities also gave an individual significant insight into what opportunities were available to them, and how they could utilise opportunities for their personal leisure gain and negotiate constraints.

### *Stage 3 – High-level Performance Stage.*

If the individual continued in the chosen activity, he or she would advance to the final stage of becoming a high-level performer, represented as the High-level Performance Stage on the right hand third of the framework. At this stage, the leisure activity pathway provided three choices:

1. To stay at a *serious leisure amateur* level;
2. To become a *semi-professional* making some of their income from a part-time career in the activity;
3. To develop their career and become a full-time *professional* making their income from their leisure pursuit.

Any of the above three serious leisure choices were achievable at the High-level Performance Stage.

Each choice was reliant on five important elements related to the individual and their approach to high performance. The five important elements were personal goals, commitment to the activity, personal attitude, strategic planning and intrinsic motivation. These elements had a flow-on effect that related to high performance outcomes. All five elements collectively, were directly related to high performance and assisted the individual in choosing their leisure pathway.

*The first element – personal goals* - To reach a higher level in an activity an individual was very reliant on what level they wanted to reach. For example, their goal could be to reach a national eventing level like Jenny (age 25, EvFG) or sing on the international stage like James (age 36, OpFG). Some were happy to stay at their current level and did not wish to achieve further goals. Others had goals that were set by an external factor, such as Karen (age 24, EvFG) who chose to assess her goals, not by her abilities, but on her horse's abilities. Without a personal goal, individuals restricted their ability to direct themselves. They lost control over where they wanted to be because of a loss of awareness and their lack of desire (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Stein & Edwards, 1998). This was seen in Bob (age 35, OpFG) during his developmental stage when he was not allowed to continue in his degree due to a coach's opinion of his singing ability. This restricted Bob's progress - a constraint was put in the way of his goal - and for a while, he lost the desire to pursue his goal. His drive, passion and strong personal belief in his singing, however, allowed him to return, find a supportive coach, and continue to achieve his own goals in opera singing.

*The second element – commitment* – Individual commitment affected continuation in the leisure activity. Individuals who wanted to reach an international level were extremely committed. High performing riders and singers, trained between five and seven days a week; the closer to their goal the more committed they became. They had to have the right attitude to be able to commit to an activity; therefore, commitment was closely identifiable to the third element - the individual's attitude.

*The third element – personal attitude* - At the high-level performance stage, talent was surpassed by an individual's attitude. At this stage, the individual needed to possess and exhibit positive ways of behaving, show the ability to continue, and develop their skills and knowledge successfully. The right attitude was paramount to success as it controlled personal behaviours, often seen in the high-level performance stage, such as ego and excessive emotion. To assist development of self-control high performers learned to utilise normally negative emotions or feelings, such as nervousness, and turn them into positive outcomes. For example, adrenalin production experienced by all athletes and artists prior to competition can cause body shakes and increase fear, yet is controlled positively by high performers to increase focus, willpower and enthusiasm. This aids the high performing individual to deal with difficult or stressful situations.

*The fourth element - strategic planning ability* - This issue was linked closely to commitment. Planning the leisure activity requirements around their lifestyle was important to all study participants in relation to achieving higher goals. For example, Madeleine had to plan her daily work activities around her extensive training and competition activities. Strategic planning was noticeable in differing extents. High performance level key informants, such as Maria, planned several years in advance to ensure her family life was also planned around her singing life. At the lower level, Melanie (age 17, EvFG) the youngest participant, planned her riding around her schoolwork and social life. High performers approached their goals by using a stepping stone approach. The majority needed to work to support their leisure activity while organising their “free time” to train their horse or voice to a higher level. As with business entrepreneurs, this stepping stone approach developed into strategic decision-making and planning that enabled goal achievement in the high-level performance stage.

*The fifth element – motivation* - Linked to all four previous elements; the fifth one was the individual’s motivation. This was the most important element recognised throughout the three leisure stages. Without motivation the above four elements in an individual’s leisure life would not be possible. Motivational attributes of high performers included both intrinsic and extrinsic influences, specifically intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types. These motivational types determined and influenced personal development and drive throughout the three stages in an individual’s leisure life. The high-level performer progresses through the leisure stages of *like to*; to develop into a more defined *want to* attitude, to finally developing an all-consuming drive of a *need to* attitude.

At the high-level performance stage, the main motivational factor recognised was *reward through flow*. Rewards boosted motivation and included both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The main intrapersonal rewards at the high-level performance stage were self-determination, self-esteem, satisfaction, enjoyment and fulfilment. High performers expressed their attitudes as “I can do this,” “I can do anything” in support of their motivational drive, often suggesting that this “feeling” was a reward in itself. High performers wanted an instinctive awareness such as “being in a vacuum” or “feeling charged” as it motivated them to perform better.



Extrinsic self-actualisation rewards included interpersonal and structural types such as monetary gain, winning, applause, and recognition. In the first two leisure stages, winning and monetary gain was highly rewarding, although as the individual improved during the latter part of stage 2 and throughout stage 3, being recognised by peers or audience participants as doing well was seen as a greater external reward. During these developmental and high-level performance stages, individual recognition increased their chances of goal accomplishment as it promoted their abilities to national selectors or opera directors.

The second and third choice at this level was where the blurring of work and leisure occur, dependent on what goal the individual personally wanted to achieve. The notion of leisure as ‘free time’ defined by Stebbins (2007) becomes altered at the high-level performance stage. At this stage ‘free time’ is dependent on the individuals ‘state of mind’ and is not dependent on time or nature of the activity, a blurring occurs between work and leisure at this point. This reinforces the work-leisure paradigm suggested in earlier works by Iso-Ahola (1979) and Neulinger (1981) as work is determined by the individual’s perception of leisure. With careers in leisure pursuits, due to resultant ambiguities in society and personal perceptions, a career from a ‘leisure pursuit’ may not be viewed as ‘a real job’.

### **Strategies for Overcoming Constraints**

While advancing through the three leisure stages an individual will come across constraints, of varying significance. Throughout this study, common threads or patterns arose in relation to constraints and corresponding opportunities used to overcome these constraints. Important developments in opportunity-seeking skills were the successful strategies and techniques used to negotiate constraints.

To negotiate the constraints discussed in this study a successful strategy that led to opportunities, appropriate for each level of performance, was required. In Table 6.4 the constraints are separated into intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types, along with their corresponding strategies, the right hand column shows the level of activity at which particular strategies were effective.

Table 6.4  
*Constraints and strategies for overcoming constraints*

Constraints	Strategies for overcoming constraints	Appropriate level
<b>Intrapersonal Constraints</b>		
<i>Hobby (H), Amateur (A), Semi-professional/Professional (P)</i>		
Lack of enjoyment of activity	Change coach, seek alternative activity	H, A, P
Lack of confidence	Use of imagery, develop skills, peer support	H, A, P
Lack of self-esteem	Positive thinking, speak to support agents	A, P
Lack of talent	Develop ability through training, speak to coach, re-think what you want to do	H, A
Lack of events	Speak to industry	A, P
Nerves	Use yoga, meditation, deep breathing techniques	A, P
<b>Interpersonal Constraints</b>		
Lack of support	Speak to peers, find mentor	H, A, P
Poor coaching	Change coaches	A, P
Negative feedback or comments	Associate with positive thinkers, self confidence	A, P
Family responsibilities	Develop a lifestyle plan, communicate	A, P
<b>Structural Constraints</b>		
Politics	Use politics to own advantage, increase your knowledge on who's who	A, P
Industry funding	Explore optional funding	A, P
Lack of money	Find alternative income source, sponsorships	A, P
Lack of time	Develop a lifestyle plan	A, P
Unable to reach goal	Develop a stepping stone goal plan, change horse/vocal range, change coach, know yourself, look at alternatives	H, A, P

There are similar constraints at all three levels of a high performer's pathway, although respondents reported that constraints intensified during the amateur to serious leisure transition. There are no obvious determining conditions for this table, it was recognised that one or more strategies could be used to deal with a particular constraint, dependent on the individual, their performance level and their environment.

### **The 4Cs to High Performance Success**

A model depicting four specific attributes that can contribute to constraints or can influence opportunities, supplements the conceptual framework and constraints table. The four attributes to high performance success are - Conditioning, Change, Choice and Control.

The 4Cs can be used to describe the development of personal success strategies, premised on an individual's initiative to succeed. Individuals who plan to overcome constraints by developing personal success strategies incorporating the four Cs will have a stronger competitive advantage over others. High performers are unique; they are *conditioned* by life experiences, no two high performers are alike; each high performer has different backgrounds, training and goals. Throughout a leisure life, *change* occurs continually. Each individual makes a *choice* regarding a leisure pathway to suit their goal, the individual then needs to *control* what they do within that activity to achieve those goals.

This model (see Figure 6.2) emphasises the high performance attributes an individual requires to reach their individual high performance goals. The attributes named in the outer circle contribute to the individual high performer (inner circle). In the model, each attribute received the same level of importance, as each attribute can have a negative or positive affect on a high performer, dependent on the individual's leisure stage. Directional arrows are not used in this model, as life experiences occur indiscriminately and can occur through intrapersonal, interpersonal or structural causes.

Serious leisure event riders, and opera singers, condition themselves to perform continually at a high-level. This conditioning was achieved through their own determination and self-motivation, and through their coaches via vigorous training. In this study, a continuous sequence of stages occurred in a high performer's life throughout their leisure pathway. An individual may choose to change their conditioning to take control of a specific situation, or an individual may control their choices to bring about a change, which will alter their conditioning. For example, a rider chooses to change coach to re-condition their training so they can control their leisure pathway or a singer conditioned to a certain singing genre chooses a different genre, controlling their voice in order to follow a personal leisure choice.

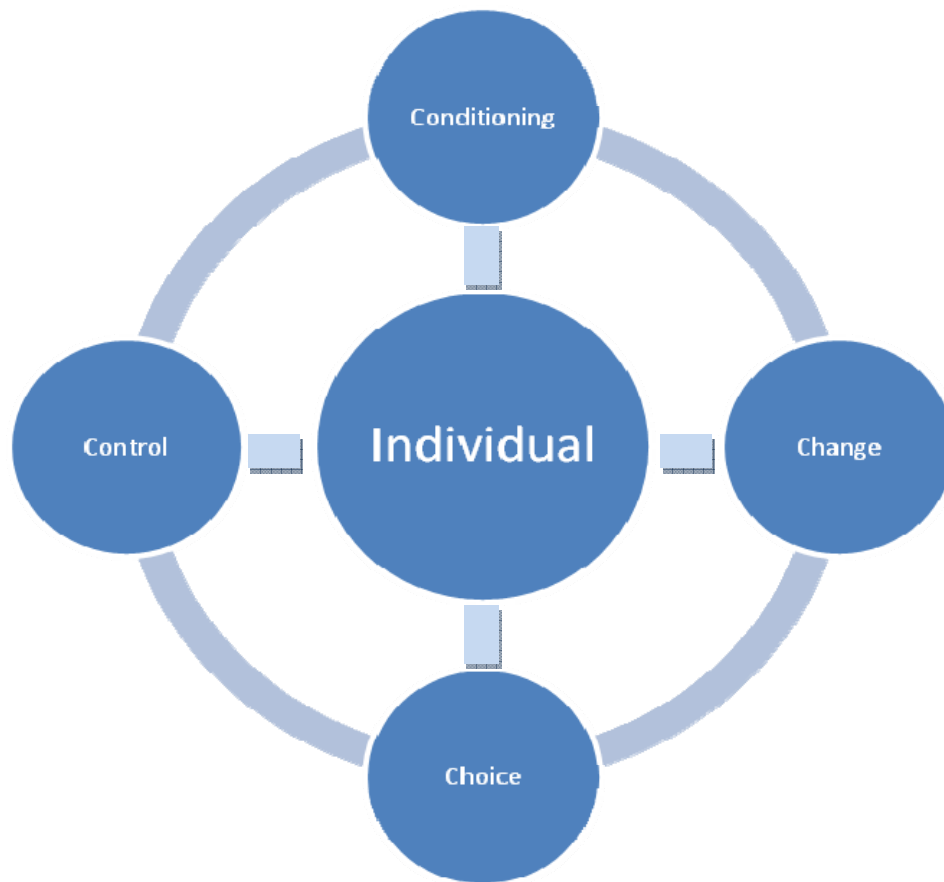


Figure 6.2 *Continuous high performance success model*

The 4Cs to high performance success are constant and are applicable to all individuals it is the situations found in an individual's life that alter the leisure pathway and their course towards high performance.

### **Framework Summary.**

The conceptual framework was developed to show how some individuals who undertake leisure activities successfully develop personal strategies to negotiate constraints in an effort to reach a high-level of performance. The important findings from this study were the interaction between intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints with the corresponding intrapersonal, interpersonal or structural opportunities. This understanding of the stages that an athlete or artist goes through during their high performance pathway offers strategies to negotiate and to overcome constraints by using known opportunities.

The framework was simplified into three interactive stages, Introductory, Developmental and High Performance, in order to address personal, social and environmental factors. Less emphasis was placed on psychological issues, such as mindsets or behaviour, although these are important in relation to the way individuals interact with their environment, and a greater emphasis on providing a sociological view, using personal experiences, was incorporated. This sociological view allowed intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural types to be combined as a guide for aspiring athletes and performers seeking strategies to achieve high performance goals.

To achieve success individuals need to progress through the three stages of the framework and develop a pathway of least resistance. By utilising the 4Cs to high performance success - conditioning, change, choice and control (see Figure 6.2), during their leisure journey, individuals were able to deal with known constraints before they impeded progress. Having additional knowledge that opportunities were available to them to overcome unknown constraints also influenced performance outcomes.

The importance of understanding different types of constraints, and the opportunities available to individuals to overcome these constraints, is one of the most important aspects in understanding how an individual becomes a high performer. Looking at an individual's whole life experiences, incorporating constraints and opportunities, directly and indirectly related to the leisure activity, broadens our knowledge on high performance success adding to research knowledge.

### **Recommendations for High Performer Development**

The findings in this study show that most high performing event riders and opera singers did not start their leisure activity with Olympic or international aspirations in mind. Instead, they were exposed to active lifestyles and encouraged to participate for fun and developmental reasons. Only later, after they fell in love with the activity, did they develop high performance goals. New research incorporates external influences to facilitate the improvement of high performance development (MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010a). This study presents a new body of work that strengthens the understanding of performance success, looking at a high performer's lived experience.

Throughout their leisure life, high performers require external support systems to guide them effectively through the introductory, developmental and high performance framework stages. The following recommendations are derived from the interviews, survey and the literature. As in the framework, the recommendations are grouped into strategic influencers of high performance development and include opportunity seeking as a coping skill. Recommendations are then addressed to the strategic influencers - individuals, parents, coaches and industry.

### **Opportunity-seeking skill development.**

Opportunities, like constraints, surround athletes and artists throughout their leisure life. Few models of high performance systematically encourage the development or deployment of opportunity-seeking skills. Developing an individual's ability to recognise opportunities as well as constraints would provide a more positive training focus.

Findings from this study showed that intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural factors influenced the development of high performance attributes. The areas of influence included:

- The individual themselves
- Family (e.g., mothers, fathers, siblings and partners)
- Support groups (e.g., friends, teachers and peers)
- Support groups within the leisure industry (e.g., coaches and agents)
- Industry related support (e.g. funding, competitions, judges and officials)

However, four of the influences mentioned above were distinguished as the main influencers of high performance:

- Individuals
- Parents
- Coaches
- Industry

Influencers are accessible to leisure participants. It is the participant themselves who must choose to change constraints by seeking out strategic opportunities.

***Recommended strategies for individuals.***

Individual characteristics relating to high performers found in this study supported outcomes of past research. Moreover, this study presented definite individual attributes that an individual needed to focus on during their transitional high performance stages.

Successful individuals need:

- The right attitude to advance in the activity
- Personal determination
- A positive mindset
- Ability to progress in the activity
- Interpersonal support incorporating the right coach

Individuals who succeed have goals and are willing to go towards those goals by pursuing opportunities. Opportunity seeking emerged as one of the most important parts of a high performers learned skill set. To develop opportunity-seeking skills individual performers need to:

- Be willing to change perspectives or attitudes
- Communicate with peers who have overcome similar constraints
- Observe and be able to recognise successful opportunities
- Prepare and plan for anticipated constraints
- Actively seek out positive influences
- Act immediately to improve existing circumstances
- Maximise exposure to opportunities

High performers develop their own strategies to promote opportunity-seeking skills. To initiate skill development a learning environment enhancing opportunity-seeking skills was required. Most opportunity seeking skills, according to this study commenced with their support networks, specifically their parents and coaches.

***Recommended strategies for parents.***

When an individual develops talent and shows a liking of the leisure activity, they should be educated as to the most productive ways to foster opportunity-seeking skills. It became clear that parents were instrumental in the introductory stage of a high performer and the individual's success during the early years.

In the introductory stage, an individual is introduced to an activity and develops a liking for it. This liking was related to the fun they experienced and the encouragement received from parents, siblings or friends. Parents also provided financial support and instilled values significant to successful high performers. These values are:

- Hardworking
- Self-confidence
- Positive attitude

These initial values are driven during the individual's early childhood years. The importance of teaching these initial values by parents is paramount to a high performer's success. Additional support given to the individual within the introductory stage also related to parental support involving money, equipment and transport when the child shows an interest in the activity. Where the child appear to be talented, parents could be guided on how to develop their child's leisure activity to the next level with the support of the coach and industry.

***Recommended strategies for coaches.***

In the second transitional stage, the developmental stage, the coach provided necessary skills and techniques required for the development of talent. Coaches who exhibit the types of characteristics that create successful athletes and artists are not necessarily suited to coach all individuals. Moreover, motivational coach techniques are also dependent on the individual and what they are being taught. Practical advice on opportunity seeking should be emphasized in coach training as an additional coaching technique.

To develop opportunity-seeking skills within a training session a coach could:

- Develop ways to convey opportunity-seeking examples using their own lived experiences
- Analyse an individual's needs and advise an individual of opportunities available to counteract those needs
- Incorporate opportunity skilling sessions as part of regular training schedules



In the high performance stage, an individual continues to develop their skills through practice and coaching to reach a personal performance goal. It is during this final transitional stage that an individual decides to become a professional or develop a lifestyle career around their leisure activity. Coaches need to recognise opportunities that develop their own and the high performer's needs. Technical knowledge and industry assessments are commonly used to produce skilled, accredited coaches. Industry, therefore, has an indirect and direct influence on individual success.

*Recommended strategies for industry.*

Along with intrapersonal and interpersonal influencers, structural influences such as the industry itself can affect an individual's performance success. Appropriate resources need to be available through the art or sport industries to improve future development of their high performers. These resources are not only required by the individual high performers their parents and coaches also require them. Industry could guide parents on how to develop their child's leisure activity to the next level by providing suitable resources aimed solely at parents on the induction of their child into the sport or art activity. Opportunity-seeking information to support parents and coaches could be conveyed through industry platforms in a number of ways. For example:

- Produce written guides on available opportunities.
- Provide a range of industry based opportunities that can influence individual and coach performances.
- Develop structured web portals that focus on dissemination of opportunity seeking information
- Use personal testimonials, workshops and video clips to develop opportunity skill development

High performers struggled with industry constraints, specifically during the developmental to high performance stage, these constraints included:

- Political cliques
- Insufficient performance events or competition at a high level
- Lack of funding support

To deal with these specific constraints industries could:

- Develop workshops to minimise bias at the official level
- Undertake a feasibility study to assess events and competitions available
- Undertake a national survey of the requirements of performers
- Disseminate information direct to high performers on funding opportunities
- Provide workshops on developing personal sponsorship

The findings of this study suggested other avenues for further research. These avenues fall into two further categories, industry and perceptions of serious leisure.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The above recommendations reflect event rider and opera singer views in one study. Other leisure activities may differ. This study offers some directions for future research to explore support techniques of high performers. It will also allow industry to develop new methods of marketing and disseminating information to ensure their corporate, government and societal views support, build and develop closer links to current leisure activities in Australia.

Several avenues for further research are recommended and they fall into five areas of focus: Opportunity seeking as a coping skill, replication of the study with different leisure groups, gender based opportunity-seeking, exploration inside the leisure industry and perceptions of serious leisure.

#### ***Opportunity-seeking as a coping skill.***

This study uncovered opportunity seeking as a positive strategy used by individual high performers to reach goals. Although constraints are highly researched, more work needs to be done to extend the knowledge of opportunity seeking and develop fresh perspectives within leisure fields rather than focus on constraints. Using individual lived experiences a clearer picture of the ways individuals cope with constraints to reach personal goals will develop. A greater understanding of opportunity seeking and its effect on constraints will advance academic knowledge and promote further exploration into these issues.

If constraints can be anticipated and opportunities developed during a leisure life, the pathway to high performance success can be eased. The development of a high performance opportunity-seeking model to promote the success of individuals and improve their ability to cope with constraints would add a new focus for further research on high performance.

***Replication with different leisure groups.***

This study covered a wide cross-section of event riders and opera singers. Because of the low numbers and the focus on high performers, it was not possible to compare the opportunity-seeking skills of individuals at different stages of their leisure life. Replicating the methods used in this study, using samples large enough to allow statistical comparisons between individuals at the three leisure stages, could pinpoint the beginning of opportunity-seeking skills and what constraints were overcome.

This study was based in Australia but replication is needed to see how many of the factors are relevant in other cultures around the world. It would be interesting to ascertain if views of event riders and opera singers from other countries were aligned with the perceptions of Australian participants in this study.

There is also a need to replicate this study within other leisure groups listed in Table 5.70, concentrating on the same issues that have emerged as a result of this study. Replication of this study with different leisure groups will further explore constraint negotiation and develop opportunity-seeking skills in athletes and artists across different activities, settings and populations.

***Gender based opportunity seeking.***

This study tapped two apparently gender neutral leisure activities where males and females competed equally. Another area of interest for future study would be to explore specific opportunity-seeking coping skills based on gender. A study that correlates opportunity-seeking skills by studying male and female lived experiences will enlighten any specific

gender differences. The emphasis on gender could also offer different perspectives on coping and opportunity-seeking skills.

*Exploration inside the industry.*

Exploration into the experiences of officials inside the industry, such as coaches, selectors and management using a similar approach applied in this study, would enable a deeper understanding of constraints and opportunities from an industry viewpoint.

Perceptions of different types of sport and art activities can affect participation rates and therefore industry growth. Assumptions of societal perceptions towards industry growth found in this study will open new research opportunities in the leisure, business and sociological fields.

*Perceptions of elitism in serious leisure.*

The changing dynamics in leisure participation have changed society's perceptions of serious leisure. Although findings from this study indicated that some sport and art activities have developed to become commonplace, others are still perceived to be elitist. Perhaps participants' views in this study are biased towards their activity. Studying non-participants on their perceptions of elitism in certain leisure activities might offer a different perspective.

Participants in this study suggested that perceived non-elite activities attracted more funding and sponsorship, due to their potential for wider recognition through the media and promotion to the general populous. Analysis of magazine and newspaper content and media coverage on leisure activities would be enlightening. Future research on the effect of media, marketing, and branding on society perceptions, corporate sponsorships, leisure popularity and participation would make a valued contribution to serious leisure and future leisure development. This focus would provide a basis for critiques in Media, Business and Leisure classes in schools, colleges and universities.

### **Concluding Comments**

We do not know much about high performer success, even after a concentrated look at their lives. The performers themselves do not find it easy to explain. How do you make clear the way you successfully ride a horse or sing opera, if you are not already a high performing rider or singer? Individuals who took part in this study tried to explain how they successfully negotiated their constraints, their way. Whether this works for everyone is questionable. However, by researching others and then adopting their approach to negotiating constraints, categorising different ways to recognise opportunities and understanding the different success techniques used, others can adapt these findings to suit their own requirements.

This study explored successful strategies used by individual high performers to negotiate constraints providing increased knowledge in leisure research. Although some issues that arose may be similar to previous research outcomes, this study was designed to assist in the understanding of constraints and opportunities from an individual's perspective including how constraints affect an individual's leisure pursuit, and how opportunities successfully overcome these constraints. Incorporating the Flow Theory, exploring intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, and developing a framework (Figure 6.1) focusing on intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural factors, relating to constraints and opportunities, gave the study a balanced approach. This approach clarified relationships between intrinsic motivation, an individual's ability to negotiate constraints, and the external factors that supported or hindered an individual's rise to a high performance level.

There is a need for a change in the study of constraints in leisure. The suggestion that people can confront and negotiate leisure constraints implies that constraints are not fixed; they actively shape and transform individual leisure lives by interacting with personal preferences, perceptions, environment and patterns of behaviour. Cultural experiences and personal societal opinions can also alter perceptions of what is or is not a constraint. Whatever their personal goals, future high performers need to realise the scope of their abilities, they need to broaden their skills in seeking out opportunities and deal with negative constraints. Strategies used to negotiate constraints by the focus groups concurred with the strategies used by the two key informants. Peer group findings also supported the

key informants' comments that making the most of opportunities helped to overcome the constraints experienced while striving towards their personal goal. High performers need to focus on the positive. It is the adaptability of an individual in dealing with constraints and their ability to seek out opportunities, which defines and makes a high performer. As Maria said:

I don't want to get to fifty and kind of look back and think 'gosh, I should have done that,' wondering where it may have taken me – you know the 'I wish I had' type of thought.

*Footnote:* On the completion of this thesis the two key informants had reached their leisure goals, one competed at and won a medal at an Olympic games and the other is currently singing opera professionally in England...They both still love what they do.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A - Focus Group Participant Details*

#### *Focus Group Participant Details*

<b>Leisure Pursuit</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Annual Income</b>	<b>Social Class</b>
Event Rider	John	M	31	Single	\$65,000	Middle Class
Event Rider	Karen	F	24	Single	\$25,000	Middle Class
Event Rider	Sally	F	19	Single	\$9,600	Middle Class
Event Rider	Susan	F	21	Single	\$50,000	Upper Class
Event Rider	Jenny	F	25	Single	\$36,400	Working Class
Event Rider	Melanie	F	17*	Single	\$3,640	Middle Class
Opera Singer	Steve	M	23	Single	\$10,400	Middle/Upper Class
Opera Singer	Jack	M	29	Married	\$25,000	Middle/Upper Class
Opera Singer	Bob	M	35	Single	\$15,600	Working Class
Opera Singer	Simone	F	25	Single	\$17,200	Upper Class
Opera Singer	Lucy	F	24	De Facto	\$25,000	Working/Middle Class
Opera Singer	James	M	36	Single	\$15,000	Working Class

- *Names have been changed to protect identity of participants.*
- *Social Class classification as perceived by the participants themselves.*
- *\*Melanie had not turned 18 at the commencement of the Focus Groups but wanted to participate, her parents gave written and verbal consent to the researcher to allow Melanie to take part.*
- *The average age of FG Participants was 25.5 years, with ages ranging from 17 to 36.*



*Appendix B – Letter of Informed Consent (Key Informants)*

**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**“From Cantor to Canter: Negotiating constraints in serious leisure pursuits: A comparative study of motivational life experiences in the challenging leisure pursuits of a high performing athlete and artist.”**

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**Letter of Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in this study that explores how individuals negotiate constraints within serious leisure pursuits. This study is specifically focusing on the leisure activities of eventing (Sport) and opera (Art).

Your personal experiences will be the major component of a PhD thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University. My name is Lorraine O’Neill and I have been involved in the sporting and art fields for over 20 years. I am very interested to hear and explore your experiences.

Should you volunteer to participate, you will be asked about your personal experiences within your chosen leisure pursuit from your early day’s level to your current high performance level. You will be asked to be available for two interviews, at a time and place of your choice (in Western Australia). Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour and with your permission, all interviews, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If at any time you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and any information you have provided will not be used in this study. This study is approved by the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee.

We will discuss issues of confidentiality and protection of your identity prior to any interviews taking place. All tape recordings and transcripts will be coded and securely held. You will be welcome to access them on request. Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or contact Supervisor Dr Sue Colyer on (08) 6304 6304.

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If you are willing to participate in the study described above, please sign below.

Participant’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix C – Letter of Informed Consent (Parents and Coaches)*

**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**“From Cantor to Canter: Negotiating constraints in serious leisure pursuits: A comparative study of motivational life experiences in the challenging leisure pursuits of a high performing athlete and artist.”**

---

**Letter of Informed Consent – Parents and Coaches**

You are invited to participate in a study that explores how individuals negotiate constraints within serious leisure pursuits. This study is specifically focusing on the leisure activities of eventing (Sport) and opera (Art).

Your personal experiences will be part of a case study being developed for a PhD thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University. My name is Lorraine O’Neill and I have been involved in the sporting and art fields for over 20 years. I am very interested to hear and explore your experiences.

Should you volunteer to participate, you will be asked about interpersonal experiences you have had with a chosen individual, discussing your views about the individual’s commencement in their chosen leisure activity to their current high performance level. You will be asked to be available for two interviews, at a time and place of your choice. Each interview is expected to last at least one hour and with your permission, all interviews, will be tape recorded and transcribed. If at any time you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and any information you have provided will not be used in this study. This study is approved by the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee.

We will discuss issues of confidentiality and protection of your identity prior to any interviews taking place. All tape recordings and transcripts will be coded and securely held. You will be welcome to access them on request. Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or contact Supervisor Dr Sue Colyer on (08) 6304 6304.

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If you are willing to participate in the study described above, please sign below.

Participant’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix D – Letter of Informed Consent (Focus Group)*

**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**“From Cantor to Canter: Negotiating constraints in serious leisure pursuits: A comparative study of motivational life experiences in the challenging leisure pursuits of a high performing athlete and artist.”**

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**Letter of Informed Consent – Focus Group**

You are invited to participate in a study that explores how individuals negotiate constraints within serious leisure pursuits. This study is specifically focusing on the leisure activities of eventing (Sport) and opera (Art).

Your personal experiences will be a component within a focus group discussion that is part of a PhD thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University. My name is Lorraine O’Neill and I have been involved in the sporting and art fields for over 20 years. I am very interested to hear and explore your experiences.

Should you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to discuss your personal experiences within your chosen leisure pursuit from your early days to your current performance level. You will be required to take part in a focus group consisting of between 6 and 10 men and women. The focus group discussion is expected to last approximately one hour and will be tape recorded and transcribed. Your identity will be kept anonymous. If at any time you wish to withdraw, you are free to do so and any information you have provided will not be used in this study. This study is approved by the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee.

We will discuss issues of confidentiality and protection of your identity prior to the focus group taking place. All tape recordings and transcripts will be coded and securely held.

Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or contact Supervisor Dr Sue Colyer on (08) 6304 6304.

---

If you are willing to participate in the study described above, please sign below.

Participant’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix E - Survey*

**EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS & PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**“From Cantor to Canter: Negotiating constraints in serious leisure pursuits: A comparative study of motivational life experiences in the challenging leisure pursuits of a high performing athlete and artist.”**

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**Survey**

You are invited to participate in a study that explores how individuals negotiate constraints within serious leisure pursuits. This study is specifically focusing on the leisure activities of eventing (Sport) and opera (Art).

The aim of this research is to identify how people negotiate constraints successfully in their chosen leisure pursuit from a *hobby* to a *professional* level. The findings are expected to help other athletes and artists as they pursue their chosen “leisure” career.

Your personal experiences will be compared to findings from a major case study currently being analysed for a PhD thesis for the School of Marketing, Tourism and Leisure at Edith Cowan University.

My name is Lorraine O’Neill and I have been involved in the sporting and art fields for over 20 years. I am very interested to explore your experiences.

If you volunteer to participate, you will need to fill in the attached survey. The survey focuses on experiences individuals may have experienced from the commencement of their chosen leisure activity to their current performance level.

You are not obliged to put your name onto this survey ensuring the protection of your identity. This study is approved by the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee.

Your input will be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, you can contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or contact my Supervisor Dr Sue Colyer on (08) 6304 6304 or s.colyer@ecu.edu.au.

If you are willing to participate in the study described above please fill in the attached survey and return it via the postage paid envelope attached.

By completing and returning the survey you are demonstrating your agreement to participate in this study. As the survey is anonymous withdrawal at a later stage will be difficult as your survey will not be identifiable.

Thank you.

Lorraine O’Neill

Appendix F – Eventing Survey

**High Performance - Eventing Survey 2007**

*This is a confidential survey. Please read the Information Letter carefully as it provides details of the survey project. By completing the survey, you are consenting to take part in this survey. You are not required to provide your name as part of the survey; therefore, any contact details you supply will be completely voluntary.*

*Participants must be 18 years or over or provide written parental approval to participate.*

**About Your Sport of Eventing**

1. At what age did you start riding horses? \_\_\_\_\_
2. At what age did you start competing in the sport of eventing? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why did you start eventing? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many horses do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many hours a week on average do you currently spend on your sport? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
6. How much on average does it cost you per week to undertake this sport? \$\_\_\_\_\_
7. Is this activity your primary source of income?  Yes  No
8. Would you like eventing to become your full-time profession?  Yes  No
9. Are any of your family members involved in eventing? (tick all that apply)  
 Spouse/Partner  Children  Father  Mother  Father  Other  
 \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where have you competed?  
 In your own State  Yes  No  
 Interstate  Yes  No  
 Overseas  Yes  No
11. Which do you feel is the most important factor in reaching a high performance level in eventing:  
 Talent or  Behaviour

Why?

---

**Society And Your Sport.**

12. How would you describe your social class?

- Working Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Class

13. Do you think that some people classify certain activities as elitist (meaning only available to a select few)?

- Yes  No
- (If Yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_)

14. Is there elitism in the sport of eventing in Australia?  Yes  No

15. In your opinion is there elitism in the sport of eventing in any other country?

- Yes  No
- (If Yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_)

16. Tick the box of the sport or art activities you think are seen as being elitist? (Tick as many as you wish)

- |                          |                          |                |                          |                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Opera                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Snow Skiing    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Boating         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |
| Eventing                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yatching       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rugby           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |
| Painting                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aust. Football | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fly fishing     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |
| Boxing                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Golf           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Horse riding    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |
| Ballet                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tennis         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Classical Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |
| Swimming                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Country Music  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Musical Theatre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                |                          |                 |

If there are any other art or sport activities you think are perceived as being 'elitist' please list them:

\_\_\_\_\_

**High Performance - Characteristics of Eventers**

17. Please circle a number from 1 (Not At All Important) to 5 (Highly Important) that best describes the characteristics of a successful eventer. Circle as many or as few as you wish.

Successful characteristics are....	Not At All Important				Highly Important
Strong minded	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Confident	1	2	3	4	5
Focused	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Team oriented	1	2	3	4	5
Quiet	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5
Motivated	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunist	1	2	3	4	5
Pig Headed	1	2	3	4	5
Loud	1	2	3	4	5
Calm	1	2	3	4	5
Independent	1	2	3	4	5
Competitive	1	2	3	4	5
Hard working	1	2	3	4	5
Positive	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify) :					
i.	1	2	3	4	5
ii.	1	2	3	4	5

**Why Do You Participate in Eventing?**

18. Please circle a number from 1 (Not At All Important) to 5 (Highly Important) that best describes what is important to you in the sport of eventing. Please respond to all statements.

Eventing is important to me because ...	Not At All Important				Highly Important
I enjoy the adrenalin rush	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy the social interaction	1	2	3	4	5
I am extremely competitive	1	2	3	4	5
I want to ride at the Olympics	1	2	3	4	5
I like a sport that has prestige	1	2	3	4	5
I want to keep fit	1	2	3	4	5
I have friends/family involved	1	2	3	4	5
I want to win lots of prize money	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have anything else to do	1	2	3	4	5
I like the attention when I do well	1	2	3	4	5
I couldn't do anything else	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify):					
i.	1	2	3	4	5
ii.	1	2	3	4	5



**Your Aspirations and Future Plans**

19. How would you classify yourself as an Eventer?  
 A hobbyist / amateur  
 A semi-professional  
 A professional
20. Have there been any stages in your life when you had difficulties that affected your sport participation? (*E.g. had children, got married/divorced, bad coaching, unmotivated, boredom, found other interests*).  
 Yes  No  
 (If Yes, please explain what \_\_\_\_\_)
21. If you had a chance to take up Eventing all over again would you do anything differently?  
 Yes  No  
 (If Yes, please explain why \_\_\_\_\_)
22. When you ride do you like ... (tick one box only)  
 To win?  
 To improve your techniques and skills?  
 To just enjoy the day?  
 Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_
23. Your level at the moment is...  
<sub>1</sub> \*\*\*\*CNC      <sub>5</sub> Intro.  
<sub>2</sub> \*\*\*CNC      <sub>6</sub> Pre-Novice  
<sub>3</sub> \*\*CNC      <sub>7</sub> Preliminary  
<sub>4</sub> \*CNC      <sub>8</sub> Other level : \_\_\_\_\_
24. Your aim for the future is to.... (tick one box)  
 Compete at a World Cup or Olympic Level  
 National level  
 Compete at a State  
 You are content with your current level
25. What other interests do you have outside your leisure activity of Eventing e.g. reading, going to the pub, deep-sea fishing etc?  
 Please list : \_\_\_\_\_

**Factors Affecting Performance**

26. Please circle a number from 1 (Not At All Important) to 5 (Highly Important) that best describes how important each factor is in the improvement of your sport. Please respond to all statements.

Factors that <i>have helped improve your performance are...</i>	Not At All Important				Highly Important
Having money	1	2	3	4	5
Having the right attitude	1	2	3	4	5
Having a positive outlook on life in general	1	2	3	4	5
Having the ability to seek opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving negative feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving positive feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving support from your friends	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving support from your coach	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving support from your family	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving funding support from the EFA	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving funding support from the government	1	2	3	4	5
My gender	1	2	3	4	5
My personality	1	2	3	4	5
My riding ability	1	2	3	4	5
My determination	1	2	3	4	5
My riding at an early age	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify) :					
i.	1	2	3	4	5
ii.	1	2	3	4	5

27. Please circle a number from 1 (Not At All Important) to 5 (Highly Important) that best describes factors that have held you back in your sporting performance. Please respond to all statements.

Factors that <i>have held back your performance</i> are...	Not At All Important				Highly Important
Finding the right coach	1	2	3	4	5
Finding the right horse	1	2	3	4	5
Family commitments	1	2	3	4	5
Family/Partner conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of funding support	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of time	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of competitions	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of money	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of support from your friends	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of support from your coach	1	2	3	4	5
Class discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
Gender discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
The perception that eventing isn't a 'serious' sport	1	2	3	4	5
The distance to travel to competitions	1	2	3	4	5
The politics within the sport.	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify):					
i)	1	2	3	4	5
ii)	1	2	3	4	5

**Coach Characteristics**

28. Please circle a number from 1 (Not At All Important) to 5 (Highly Important) that best describes how important the following coach characteristics are to you. Please respond to all statements.

A good coach ...	Not At All Important				Highly Important
Has good communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Has sound knowledge of the sport	1	2	3	4	5
Has eventing experience	1	2	3	4	5
Has good people skills	1	2	3	4	5
Has good horse skills	1	2	3	4	5
Has an understanding of your needs	1	2	3	4	5
Has political connections in the sport	1	2	3	4	5
Is supportive	1	2	3	4	5
Is friendly	1	2	3	4	5
Is an Olympic level rider	1	2	3	4	5
Is truthful	1	2	3	4	5
Is always complementary	1	2	3	4	5
Is always there for you	1	2	3	4	5
Knows their limits	1	2	3	4	5
Knows people who are important in the sport	1	2	3	4	5
Knows your abilities	1	2	3	4	5
Always travels to events with you	1	2	3	4	5
Always gives useful feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please specify):					
i.	1	2	3	4	5
ii.	1	2	3	4	5

**Performance Techniques**

29. Have you ever used any of the following techniques/methods to help you with your sport?

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Positive thinking – e.g. “I can do it” or “I am going to come first”             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Focusing – e.g. ‘getting into the zone’ concentrating only on what you are doing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Meditation   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Heighten emotions – e.g. increase adrenalin via butterflies/ nerves, anger       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Deep breathing   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Visualisation e.g. imagining what you are about to do                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Using External Motivators – e.g. Coaches, applause, family, rewards etc          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Other (please specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**About You**

30. Are you...  Male  Female

31. How old are you?

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> 18 - 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> 31 - 35 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub> 46 - 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>10</sub> 71 - over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> 21 - 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> 41 - 45 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>8</sub> 51 - 65 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> 26 - 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> 36 - 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>9</sub> 66 - 70 |  |

32. What is your highest education completed?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> Primary School | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> TAFE/College | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> High School    | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> University   |   |

33. What type of area do you live in?

- Rural / Semi rural area  
 Suburbia  
 Inner City

34. What is your marital status?

- Never married  Defacto  Married  Divorced  Widowed

35. Do you have any dependents in your care (e.g., young children, aged relatives, etc.)?

- Yes  No  
 (If yes how old are they? \_\_\_\_\_)

36. What is your average annual income?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> \$10,000 or less  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> \$41,000 – 50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>9</sub> 81,000 – 90,000   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> \$11,000 – 20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> \$51,000 – 60,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>10</sub> 91,000 – 100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> \$21,000 – 30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub> \$61,000 – 70,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>11</sub> 101,000 - over   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> \$31,000 – 40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>8</sub> \$71,000 – 80,000 |   |



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